‘God’s Marvelous Deeds’:

The Felician Sisters in New England 1976–2009

Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, CSSF

Felician Sisters
of North America

2025

‘God’s Marvelous Deeds’:
The Felician Sisters in New England, 1976-2009

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Printed by the Felician Publications and Studio Arts Office
14150 Newburgh Road
Livonia, Michigan 48154
USA

ISBN: 979-8-218-62272-5

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DEDICATION

With gratitude
to the daughters of Mary Angela Truszkowska
in North America,
Our Lady of Hope Province,
who this year celebrate 150 years.
May we continue to be 'God's marvelous deeds'!

Preface

'God's Marvelous Deeds' recounts the story of the Felician Sisters in New England and eastern New York from 1976-2009. Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell, archbishop of Hartford, first used the phrase in 2005, as principal celebrant and homilist for the Eucharistic liturgy celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice. He concluded his homily that day thanking the Felician Sisters who "taught us what love means, witnessing the Spirit's action in your lives." Acknowledging their legacy of compassionate, joyful service, Archbishop Mansell said, "I thank you for continuing to be God's marvelous deeds."

It is the story of Felician Sisters living and working in New England and eastern New York, who sacrificed everything and responded to a call to follow the gospel while educating children, healing the sick, and guiding and encouraging those seeking spiritual and personal development. It traces the years while the sisters were recovering from near bankruptcy in 1971 and still accommodating to the drastic changes that Vatican Council II as well as a society experiencing changes on every level brought to their personal and community lives.

Even though the sisters saw decreasing numbers of young women entering the community and the number of active religious plummeting as the number of retired and infirm sisters grew, they were filled with hope, and they continued to selflessly answer the call to serve people in need, much like their Foundress, Sophia Truszkowska. The book narrates the efforts of the *Journey in Hope* as it restructured the provinces in North America into one province to maintain, nourish, and promote the Felician mission, bringing it to fullness of life, meeting the needs of the times in the Church and society, culminating with the establishment of the new Our Lady of Hope Province in 2009.

The book explores individual lives as a reminder that a religious congregation is much more than its administrators or its institutions. Teachers, nurses, musicians, cooks, seamstresses, centenarians, writers, social workers, artists, historians, formation personnel--all played a significant role in developing and enriching the community.

This history could not have been written without the help of many people who prayed, provided documents, sent emails, and shared memories. They agreed to interviews, reviewed the manuscript, and made helpful suggestions. I am especially indebted to Mary Ann O'Donnell, PhD, whose copy reading is flawless, and whose editorial questions, concerns, and perceptive comments enabled me to strengthen the text. My thanks do not do justice to the wonderful work she did. I thank her sincerely. I offer special thanks to Sister Mary Fidelia Janas in Warsaw, our congregational historian, whose professional background and knowledge of the Felician Congregation, brought an important level of expertise to the accuracy of the data. I want to thank Sister Grace Marie Del Priore for her prompt and unfailingly gracious assistance as she aided my work in the archives. I wish also to thank my sisters here in Enfield and throughout Our Lady of Hope Province, too many to name, for their kindness in supplying me with information, support, and collegiality. Finally, I am deeply grateful to our sisters in Detroit, Michigan, for their hospitality during my stays with them.

This has been a good book for me to write. The extensive research and writing have enriched my knowledge of and perspective on the history of the Felician Congregation, particularly the former Our Lady of the Angels Province. I hope my careful retelling, crafted from historical documents and living memory, is a tribute to the legacy of Enfield's Felician Sisters.

Chapter 1
Mother Bernarda Mary Jarosz, 1976 – 1982
That God would be praised and glorified

Sister Bernarda Mary Jarosz, who was appointed provincial superior on September 19, 1976, accepted stewardship of Our Lady of the Angels Province in very difficult years.

While the country was celebrating its 200th birthday of independence from British rule, it was just two years removed from Richard Nixon's resignation as president during the Watergate scandal and one year removed from the fall of South Vietnam and its takeover by communist North Vietnam. These events followed a bloody nine-year war in which nearly 58,220 American soldiers were killed or wounded.[1]

United States self-confidence and self-esteem were understandably shaky. The economy was sluggish, and unemployment was high with nearly eight per cent of the labor force out of work. High inflation was especially impacting the poor. Voters looked to Jimmy Carter, a one-term governor and peanut farmer from Georgia, to help close the books on an awful decade and to lead the country.[2]

The Catholic Church, too, was in turmoil.

A crucial "right to die" decision in March by the New Jersey Supreme Court allowed a comatose woman named Karen Ann Quinlan to be removed from a respirator, and a July 2 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court reinstituted the death penalty. Pope Paul VI, who had occupied the Chair of St. Peter since 1963, appeared increasingly weary and sad—visibly distressed that what he called the "smoke of Satan" was smothering the Vatican II renewal of the Church, a renewal he hoped and prayed for.[3]

The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice had just completed its 17th General Chapter in Rome, Italy, during the summer of 1976. At the Chapter, elected delegates continued to take an in-depth look at who they were as Felician Sisters in the light of the tasks of renewal mandated by Vatican II. Assisted by her council, Mother Bernarda Mary assumed responsibility for enacting the decisions of the Chapter as well as coping with an aging community, sisters leaving the community, the declining numbers of new vocations, and the impact of these on community life as well as on the Congregation's mission.

In 1976, Our Lady of the Angels Province included 322 professed sisters in final vows, ten sisters in annual vows, and one novice, for a total of 333 sisters.[4] In her *History of the Sisters of the Congregation of Saint Felix of Cantalice,* Sister Mary Bonaventure Grabowski reports that by 1976, the median age of the Enfield sisters had risen to sixty-nine years, with almost fifty sisters past the age of eighty-five. In addition to Our Lady of the Angels Convent, the provincial house in Enfield, Connecticut, the province maintained thirty-nine houses, distributed throughout seven states and fourteen dioceses.[5]

By 1982, membership in the province was reduced by the deaths of forty-six senior sisters, forty of whom had spent at least fifty years in the community. Twenty-five sisters withdrew from the community, including two sisters in annual vows.

As of December 31, 1981: Professed sisters

Final vows	268
Annual vows	3
Novices	1
TOTAL	272[6]

Different understandings of the Vatican Council

In *Called to Serve*, a history of Catholic women religious in American life from the colonial period to the present, Margaret M. McGuinness notes that about 25 percent of religious congregations believed that the changes in the lives of women religious were far too radical and went beyond what was called for by the Second Vatican Council. By 1971, a group of major superiors began to break away from the Conference of Major Superiors of Women and form their own group, Consortium Perfectae Caritatis (CPC). The new organization took its name from *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965), the document that dealt with general principles for the renewal of religious life and directed religious institutes to return to the original inspiration of their institute and to adapt those principles to the changed conditions of contemporary times. The new organization quickly gained support from church leaders and in 1971, Rome noted its approval and support of CPC.[7]

The consortium eventually became the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), and along with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), was officially recognized by the Vatican as a legitimate organization composed of congregations of women religious. According to Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio, the two groups reflect "two different theologies based on different interpretations of Vatican II":

> Members of the Leadership Conference embrace modernity and the work of the council as the Holy Spirit breathing new life in the church ... [focusing] on the Incarnation as the central point of renewal. Members of the Conference of Major Superiors, by contrast ... emphasize communion through proclamation of the faith, a clear Catholic identity, and the centrality of the cross. This is not a conflict between those who are faithful to the council and those who would return to a preconciliar church. Nor is it between those who are faithful to the tradition and those who have succumbed to the modern world. Rather, the conflict is about two different understandings of the council and how to carry its work forward.[8]

Acting with prudent deliberation, the Felician Sisters in the United States chose to walk a cautious path toward renewal, but this slow pace led to unrest among some sisters who were eager for change. The Consortium meetings were well-attended and included Felician provincials from across North America. As the representative of the Enfield province, Mother Bernarda listened to eloquent speakers, including cardinals, bishops, and seminary deans who developed themes such as "The Evangelical Life in the Living Church" and "The Identity and Permanence of Religious Consecration in Changing Cultures."[9]

In discussing departures of women religious from their congregations, McGuiness stated that the major reason for exiting a religious congregation

in 1982 was dissatisfaction with community life. This figure increased from forty-eight percent in 1966 to sixty-one percent in 1982. She notes that the 1966 survey had not included "disenchantment with direction of community," but in 1982, the superiors noted that thirty-three percent left for that reason.[10]

Despite their diminished numbers, the sisters continued to carry on cheerfully. The 1981 *State of the Province Report* noted that,

> Although the median age is 69, the sisters have not shirked in their response to serve the needs of the apostolates. In many instances, the age level is past 70. Every type of means to facilitate the presence of a religious in the classroom has been utilized. . . . The local communities have very limited numbers of sisters . . . and so the members are now obliged to take on the added chore of the preparation of meals, additional cleaning duties and extra-curricular tasks which are connected with school and church service. The majority of sisters do stretch themselves to fulfill these obligations, but the years are taking their toll.[11]

It seems clear that leadership offered a major challenge, but Sister Bernarda brought her professional training, rich and diverse experience as a teacher at both the elementary and secondary levels, a director of a residence for high school students, principal, and local minister. To these she added her deep faith, sense of responsibility, and unwavering commitment to and concern for the well-being of the sisters. In "Golden Jubilee Jottings," Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda, provincial historian, wrote that Mother Bernarda's "trust in Divine Providence was unbounded because resignation to God's Will was her strong point which gave her the courage to face daily difficulties. Her straightforward approach with the cooperation of her council was heartening. It was a day-to-day living supported by the community painfully aware for continued personal sacrifice and renewed dedication."[12]

In her letter of appointment as provincial superior to Sister Bernarda, Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka, superior general, reminded her that the stewardship of the province was in her hands and encouraged her to:

> Place your trust into the hands of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who knows and loves His sheep. He will be your Shield and your Rock, and He will guide you along safe paths. The general councilors and I assure you of our support and prayer . . . . and we are confident that with God's grace you will lead the Enfield province into deep spiritual renewal and generous service to the Lord's people.[13]

In her first letter to the sisters, Mother Bernarda acknowledged "the awesome privilege of serving . . . as the provincial superior" and asked the sisters for their prayerful support while promising her prayers for them.[14]

On September 24, 1976, the sisters cast their votes for four members whom they considered best qualified to serve as provincial council members. With the voting completed and having been informed of the election results by phone, sisters from throughout the province gathered at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield, Connecticut, on October 17, to ask for blessings on the new administration and to express gratitude to the sisters of the previous administration, especially Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski, who had been elected a general councilor during the general chapter.

Sister Mary Amandine Zdrok, vicar and first councilor
Sister Mary Alda Kosiba, second councilor
Sister Mary Anastasia Holak, third councilor
Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, fourth councilor

Sister Mary Regis Waszak continued as provincial treasurer and Sister Marianne Los accepted her appointment as director of the novitiate and vocation director.[15]



The provincial administration, 1976-1982.
Seated (l to r): SM Amandine Zdrok and M Bernarda Mary Jarosz, provincial superior;
standing (l to r): SM Alda Kosiba, SM Lawrence Lojko, SM Anastasia Holak, SM Regis Waszak

THE APOSTOLATE

Fully aware of their call to serve the needs of God's people, the new council acted on its challenges immediately, particularly in the areas of spirituality, apostolate, and formation. By the end of November, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, in her role as Director of Education, reported to the council the results of a survey disseminated to pastors, principals, and teachers regarding the future of the parish schools in New England and eastern New York.[16] The purpose of this instrument was to assess whether the schools throughout the province were indeed a definite source of active, Christian life within the parish and how the Felician Community was addressing those needs. After studying the responses, the council reviewed the situation at St. John the Baptist School in Salem, Massachusetts, St. Stanislaus Kostka School in West Rutland, Vermont, and Immaculate Conception School in Kingston, New York. [17]

Early in 1977, Father Francis Strykowski, pastor of St. John the Baptist, informed the council of his decision to close the school in June.[18] Initially, he did not wish the services of the sisters in the parish,[19] but soon after, asked for three sisters to conduct Christian Doctrine classes and a kindergarten, and to care for the altars in the church.[20] Decisions affecting two more schools followed soon after. On February 1, the council decided to withdraw the sisters from St. Lucy Convent in Waterbury, Connecticut as of August 1977,[21] while the Cluster Coordinating Council in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, with the approval

of Bishop Francis J. Mugavero, agreed to close Our Lady of Consolation School as of August 1977. This decision forced the Felician Sisters to abandon their teaching ministry there after 66 years of service in that parish.[22]

By the end of the summer of 1978, Mother Bernarda and her council, facing a critical lack of adequate, qualified religious personnel due to the decline in vocations, departures of sisters, illness, aging, and death, once again seriously discussed the future of St. Stanislaus Kostka School in West Rutland, Vermont as well as St. Mary School in Torrington, Connecticut and St. Joseph School in Florida, New York.[23]

When the sisters withdrew from the West Rutland and Torrington schools as well as the school in Kingston, New York, in 1979, all three closed. In 1981, St. Joseph School in Florida, New York, closed when the sisters withdrew, but Our Lady of Jasna Góra in Clinton, Massachusetts, continued to operate until 2007.[24]

As Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski noted in the "Epilogue" to *Blazing New England Trails: Love and Service,* drastic declines in enrollment that often precipitated tuition increases, and regionalization plans frequently resulted in school closings. The declining number of sisters deterred the provincial council from responding to requests for sisters from bishops and pastors.[25] Aware of their situation, the December 18, 1977, issue of *News Bits*, the province's tool for communicating relevant and valuable information, asked the sisters to "plead with the Lord to send us new members as our ranks are consistently being depleted."

Despite these difficulties, Sister Lawrence asserted that the "spirit of commitment is evident throughout our province," with sisters continuing to extend themselves in apostolic works. As an example, she cited sisters who, because of advancing years, were unable to participate in a full-time apostolate but had accepted part-time service in varied areas.[26]

Because all the North American provinces were experiencing similar difficulties, they activated Apostolate Committees, later known as Education Committees, for the purpose of assessing apostolic involvement within the province. The Committees evaluated the nature of the Felicians' incorporation into the universal mission of the Church, and studied and implemented the "community of faith" involvement in works of the apostolates.[27] In the first meeting of the Apostolate Committee in September 1977, the members selected as the goal for the year to develop personal education through spiritual growth. The theme chosen to proclaim this goal was "The Art of Being a More than Ordinary Teacher." In line with this, emphasis on teacher evaluation shifted from that of an ordinary teacher to the spiritual person who "lives and gives" the message of Christ.[28]

When the Interprovincial Commission of Directors of Education was organized in 1977, it provided its members with the opportunity to share expertise and to exchange ideas in education.[29]

Under the leadership of Sister Lawrence, the Enfield province addressed the spiritual needs of its school personnel through its sponsorship of an annual Principals Association Meeting, extending participation to teachers throughout the school system. Themes developed in the program included: "Faith Community," by Msgr. Patrick O'Neill, former director of education for

the Diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts; "Attitudes – Towards Community, Self, Apostolate Relationships," by Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski, CSSF; "The Call to Ministry," by Sister Mary Julie Weckwerth, CSSF; and "Educator and the Child of the 80's" by Father Guy Puglisi, PhD, vicar for education in the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.[30]

The Education Committee also proposed the idea of honoring the Felician foundress by instituting Mother Angela Days in the province's schools. Prayer services, activity sheets and various materials helped celebrate the anniversary of Mother Angela's death on October 10, her feast day on February 13, and her birthday on May 16. Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz produced a filmstrip entitled *God's Special Sophia* that each school received.[31] In fact, the filmstrip was the winner in the annual filmstrip festival sponsored by Creative Media of Glen Rock, New Jersey.[32]

These efforts seemed very much in keeping with the proposal eventually introduced to the delegates of the 1982 General Chapter. The writer of the *State of the Congregation Report* suggested that the sisters begin to evaluate their apostolates based on the charism of the Felician Congregation. She focused on the example of Felician Foundress Mother Mary Angela for the sisters:

> In her unlimited dedication to others, Mother Angela desired to satisfy man's deepest need—his need for God. Her desire to exert a moral influence on the poor and needy was at the heart of her original inspiration. . . . The challenge is before us. . . . we, too, need to discover our role in the Church today and create the proper means for fulfilling it as responsibly as possible. How will we meet the challenge?[33]

Two noteworthy events closed out the year 1976. Following a lingering illness, the community chaplain at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House, Father Michael Gryglak, CM, died in St. Francis Hospital, Hartford, Connecticut, on December 29. Father Gryglak had served the sisters for twenty-two years, from 1952 until 1974, when he suffered his first stroke and was admitted to St. Joseph Residence in Enfield, which is served by the Little Sisters of the Poor. After the wake at the provincial house on December 31, Most Rev. John F. Hackett, auxiliary bishop for the archdiocese of Hartford, offered the Mass of Christian Burial in the provincial house chapel on January 3, 1977. Father Michael's body was laid to rest in St. Michael's Cemetery in Derby, Connecticut.[34]

On December 22, Mother Mary Columbine Radzilowski, provincial superior of the Livonia, Michigan, province, informed Mother Bernarda Mary that Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka had received word from the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes of approval for twelve years of the new Constitutions, which had been finalized by the delegates of the 17th General Chapter.[35] In fact, the major task of this Chapter was the preparation of these new Constitutions.[36]

Archbishop Paul Augustin Mayer, OSB, secretary for the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, commended the Felician Community "for the zeal and diligence accompanied by prayer, evident in the elaboration of the text."[37] After signing the Decree of Approval, Archbishop Mayer told Mother Mary Amadeus: "Today your Community has renewed its fidelity to the Church with a new bond. May your religious consecration blossom with new zeal for the glory of God, the growth of the Church, and the good of all those to whom you minister."[38]

In her letter to the sisters about the approval from the Sacred Congregation, Mother Amadeus wrote: "To be willing to accept and live our new Constitutions is not enough if we are to effect the hoped-for spiritual renewal within our Community. New wine cannot be poured into 'old wine skins.' We must become a totally new creation—persons who are transformed into Christ."[39]

Writing to the sisters on the 152nd anniversary of Mother Angela's birth (May 16), Mother Mary Amadeus explained that *Response to Love* consists of two separate documents—the Constitutions and Community Statutes. While Constitutions are juridical norms which constitute the fundamental code of religious life in a definitive form that cannot be readily altered, statutes are a secondary text that can be abrogated or modified by a general chapter.[40] Many sisters gathered in Enfield on the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, June 18, to receive the newly approved Constitutions. Following dinner and a solemn Eucharistic liturgy, the sisters again gathered in the chapel for a special prayer service where each received her copy of *Response to Love.*[41]

Responding to their call to service and spiritual leadership of the Felician Congregation, Mother Amadeus and the sisters of the general administration created a plan of action to involve every sister "in the achievement of our Felician goal, as re-defined in our newly approved Constitutions." The plan was an attempt "To coordinate and guide the common effort of the whole Community toward the realization of its aim—cooperating with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world."[42]

The three main objectives of the plan of action, presented to help realize the goal, were: to build a community of faith and love; to revitalize the charism of Mother Angela; and to effect implementation of the new Constitutions.[43] Late in June, Sister Marianne Los joined three members of the Ad Hoc Committee created to formulate a "Study for the Constitutions" at Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, The purpose of the guide was to help the sisters to gain deeper insight into the meaning of the aim, nature, and charism of the Felician Congregation.[44] Sister Mary Alodia Malinka also prepared study guides for the Enfield province. Each sister received a copy of the study guide, consisting of ten planned meetings based on the themes Spiritual Life, Evangelical Counsels, and Community Life. These were disseminated to each province as well.[45]

FORMATION

While vocation programs had been a spontaneous outgrowth of Felician dedication to the mission of the Church, with the dearth of vocations in the post Vatican II era, delegates to the General Chapters of 1968, 1970, and 1976 recognized the urgent need to reestablish an effective vocation ministry. Each of the three chapters made strong recommendations for initiating well-organized programs coordinated by a vocation director.[46]

In his Address to the General Chapters of Religious Orders and Congregations on May 23, 1964, Pope Paul VI had reminded the religious leaders of the responsibility they have in helping young people to choose a way of life and to clearly understand "the special function and immutable importance of the religious state within the Church." He said, this "perfect way of living according to the example and teaching of Jesus Christ . . . . aims at the growth of charity, and its final perfection."[47]

This belief impelled Sister Marianne in the work she was called to do, and the provincial chronicles for the years 1976-1982 are filled with her efforts to model Jesus and invite others to "Come, follow me" in the Felician way of life. Correspondence grew each year as did the number of personal interviews with interested candidates. Seven young women spent a weekend with Sister Marianne to further discern their vocation. Additionally, Sister Marianne organized "Come and See" weekends for eighth-grade girls, as well as high school and college-age women.[49]

Each year, Sister Marianne visited most of the schools in the province where she spoke about a vocation to the religious life. Whenever possible, she invited young women in high school CCD groups to the presentations and even spoke to two classes of students at Kosciuszko Junior High School in Enfield about integrating a career with a religious vocation. Sister Marianne represented the Felician Sisters at diocesan-sponsored Vocation Awareness Days and vocation day programs in several parishes and participated in vocation rallies. Contact sisters in local parishes assumed responsibility for hosting various activities to promote vocation interest among the girls in the schools as well as in the parishes, thereby assisting her in these efforts. [49]

The affiliate program became operative in October 1979 when Marcia Polchlopek (later Sister Marcia Mary) was accepted as an affiliate in a brief ceremony in the provincial house chapel. During weekends designed for the affiliates, they learned about the history of the Felician Congregation, the basic elements of prayer, and the lifestyle of a Felician Sister through active participation in the planned program for the day. The sisters, on their part, shared their gift of community with each affiliate who was invited to spend time in personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and they offered the opportunity to ask questions.[50]



SM Landeline Ptasienski, Archbishop John F. Whealon, and SM Camille Bet of Canada during the Felician Sisters interprovincial meeting of coordinators of formation. (Reprinted with permission from The Catholic Transcript*)*

Meetings of the directors of formation and interprovincial vocation directors helped to set direction during these years as well as to support Sister Marianne and sisters in the North American provinces in their formation and vocation ministry. Discussion focused on topics that included preparing a Handbook for Affiliates, designing vocation posters, initiating an associate program for older women, and establishing guidelines for postulants residing in the novitiate or in local houses. The sisters also exchanged practical suggestions for vocation work at the parish level.[51]

In 1979, from May 6-8, Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House hosted an interprovincial meeting of the Felician Sisters' coordinators of formation. The group compiled a Manual of Formation that included preparing directives for the juniorate. Most Rev. John F. Whealon, archbishop of Hartford, who attended the meeting, exhorted the sisters to be loyal to the special spirit of the community and emphasized the need to deepen their personal prayer life.[52]

As novice director, Sister Marianne assisted Sister Mary Madeline Stephens, novice director for the Interprovincial Novitiate Program in Lodi, New Jersey, for several months in 1977 and 1978. During this time, she conducted classes on the Felician Constitutions, spiritual reading, and Franciscan spirituality. Sister Mary Ann Papiez joined the interprovincial novitiate after her investiture as a novice on August 14, 1976, until her first profession of vows on August 20, 1978.[53]

ELECTION OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Amid their preparation for the new ministry year, on the evening of August 26, 1978, news of the unexpected death of Pope John Paul I—just thirty-three days after his election—reached the sisters, causing widespread sorrow and shock, and setting the stage for the election of John Paul II on October 16. The world community was stunned when the Roman Catholic Church's College of Cardinals elected a Polish Cardinal to become the 264th successor to St. Peter. Karol Cardinal Wojtyla was the first non-Italian Pope chosen for over 400 years and the first Polish Pope ever elected.[54] The new pope, who was fifty-eight, was installed on October 22nd and took the name of John Paul II in honor of his predecessor, who had himself taken the names of both his predecessors—John XXIII and Paul VI.[55] Because he was born and raised in Poland, John Paul's term in the Vatican was a source of pride for Polish people around the world, but to the Polish community, he was more than a religious figure, he was also one of their greatest native sons. They greeted his election with immense joy and exultation.

The new pope was no stranger to the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice. Prior to his papacy, as archbishop of Krakow, he championed the cause for sainthood of Mary Angela Truszkowska, the foundress of the congregation. While still an archbishop, Karol Wojtyla stayed overnight more than once in the sisters' generalate in Rome, including a visit prior to his participation in the Second Vatican Council.[56] Several Enfield Felicians also had the opportunity to meet Cardinal Wojtyła before his election as pope. Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha met him in Krakow at his residence while she and three other Felician Sisters were on pilgrimage from Fall River, Massachusetts. She observed, "The then Cardinal was very interested in our Felician ministry

in the United States and questioned each of us in a caring and encouraging manner. We posed for individual pictures and received his blessing. He even took the time to send a special blessing to the elderly father of a group member. When he was announced as Pope, I brought my photo of the two of us to show my students who were impressed."[57]

Sister Theresa Mary Pietrzak, who was missioned to the generalate in Rome from 1973 to 1979, said she felt privileged to meet the then Cardinal Karol Wojtyła who visited the sisters on Via del Casaletto several times and enjoyed supper with them. "I was chosen to help serve his table. Sensing that I was nervous, he immediately put me at ease. With his spontaneous humor, he made himself the object of laughter. I was touched by his sensitivity to me and his simple and humble manner."[57]

At the local level, on November 12, the Association of Polish Priests of Connecticut organized a Mass of Thanksgiving to celebrate the election of Karol Cardinal Wojtyła as Bishop of Rome, Vicar of the Universal Church, Pope John Paul II. Thirty priests concelebrated the mid-afternoon Mass in Polish in Welte Auditorium of Central Connecticut State College in New Britain, Connecticut. Most Rev. Daniel P. Reilly, bishop of the Norwich diocese, who was present in the sanctuary, offered words of praise about the new pope and encouragement to the attendees. Together with the priests, he bestowed his episcopal blessing on the congregation. Felician Sisters, Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, Bernardine Sisters, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Resurrection, and Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception, as well as 1800 Polish Catholics from across the state, filled the auditorium for the convocation that followed the Mass.[59]

Formation and the sisters in annual vows

Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, who was responsible for the formation of the sisters in annual vows, guided the wholistic development and deepening of the spirituality of these sisters by planning weekends that included time for discussion, reflection, common and private prayer. *Response to Love* and two other texts—*Approaching the Sacred: An Introduction to Spiritual Reading* by Susan Annette Muto and *For the Sake of the Kingdom* by Quentin Hakenewerth, SM—helped these young sisters to discover their identity before God and in the Felician community. In his book *Caring: A Biblical Theology of Community,* Father Thomas Dubay, SM, explores the virtues necessary for individuals to exercise and hold in common to make community life thrive. This, too, formed the basis of discussion, and the sisters found it helpful for their practical living within community.[60]

Sister Marianne conducted classes on the book *Go Repair My House: A Biography of Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska* by Maria Winowska for junior sisters residing in the provincial house during the summer months, thereby continuing their formation in accord with the spirit and charism of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela. Sister Frances Marion Bonczar presented excellent lectures and study outlines on the life and virtues of St. Francis as well as practical applications to community life. Prayer services during those weekends incorporated elements of Franciscan spirituality. These young sisters also took advantage of speakers and discussions that were part of the

Second Novitiate Program which took place at Our Lady of the Angels Convent during the summer of 1979.[61]

Each month, each junior sister also shared her insights on a variety of audio-cassette tapes through correspondence or a personal interview with Sister Lawrence. She used their self-evaluations as well as the evaluation reports from the local communities to determine the strengths and needs of each sister and their readiness to "choose Jesus for my Spouse and Lord, . . . and this Congregation for my family."[62]

Formation also continued to be of paramount importance in the Felician Congregation. In fact, "Formation-A Lifetime Response to Love" was the central theme of the 1978 Bi-Annual Assembly of Provincial/Vice-Provincial Superiors from September 10-24. In her letter of October 6, Superior General Mother Amadeus wrote:

> This is what formation is all about: a constant growth in prayer life – personal and communal; an internalizing of the vows, resulting in a deeper surrender of our lives to the Lord; a deepening of our intimacy with God; a growth in our love of neighbor; a gradual but consistent attaining of the Felician spirit, and seraphic love of St. Francis; an increase of love of the Eucharist, and a continuous striving to acquire the virtues of Mary's Immaculate Heart.[63]

Second Novitiate

An area of formation that always received singular consideration in the Congregation has been the second novitiate program. Administrations at both the provincial and general levels had shown remarkable concern for this phase of religious formation. In North America, where the number of sisters preparing for profession of perpetual vows was large, each province conducted its own second novitiate program. However, by 1977, due to the small groups of sisters, the general administration initiated an Interprovincial Second Novitiate. Sister Mary Camille Bet, general councilor, coordinated and directed the program for the first four summers.[64]

On August 19, 1978, after participating in an intensive two-month program of preparation for perpetual profession of public vows under the direction of Sister Mary Camille and Sister Marianne Los at St. Louis Convent in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, Sister Mary Teresa Carolyn Muraski and Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett pronounced their vows of perpetual profession during the concelebrated Mass of Rite of Profession offered by the Most Rev. John F. Whealon, archbishop of Hartford. Many sisters, parents, relatives, and friends joined the sisters in this memorable event.[65]

In the summer of 1979, Enfield had the privilege of hosting the interprovincial Second Novitiate Program that included two sisters from Enfield—Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko and Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz—two sisters from Buffalo, New York, and Coraopolis, Pennsylvania; and four sisters from Chicago, Illinois, and Lodi, New Jersey. Sister Mary Camille once again coordinated the program, assisted by Sister Marianne.[66]



S Christine Marie Stankiewicz (left) and S Marie JoAnn Lewko, on the day of their perpetual profession of vows with Most Rev. Peter A. Rosazza, principal celebrant and homilist. Standing behind S Christine is Brother Terrence Scanlon, CP.

On August 10, the day before the final profession ceremony was to take place, a line of thunderstorms swept across north-central Connecticut, toppling trees and scattering debris in their path. Tens of thousands of state residents were left without power.[67] Sister Christine remembers that the provincial house also lost power and the evening before the profession ceremony, the sisters gathered in the chapel for a beautiful candlelight prayer service that traditionally preceded this sacred event when the sisters making perpetual profession are dedicated to Our Lady.[68] By the following day, power had been restored, and Sister Marie JoAnn and Sister Christine Marie made their perpetual profession of public vows as members of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice in the presence of Most Rev. Peter A. Rosazza, Hartford's newest auxiliary bishop, in the chapel of Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House.[69]

'DEFEND AND PROTECT US'

Connecticut had barely finished the clean-up from the August storm when a fierce tornado struck without warning in Windsor Locks and Windsor, Connecticut, the afternoon of October 3, 1979, cutting a mile-wide, three-mile-long swath of destruction that left hundreds injured or homeless. Forty of sixty-five houses of a middle-income development in Windsor were left uninhabitable, and twelve structures were destroyed. In fifteen minutes, the tornado, with wind gusts of up to eighty-six miles an hour, virtually demolished the main industrial section of Windsor Locks, causing millions of dollars in damages. The work of emergency medical teams was hampered because millions of dollars' worth of Air National Guard helicopters at Bradley International Airport were destroyed or damaged.[70]

Three persons died because of the tornado, ten were in critical condition, 143 were hospitalized for serious injuries, and another 350 persons received emergency first aid treatment.[71] Bradley International Airport was shut down

and the main terminal evacuated when the building lost power. The tornado demolished most of the vintage warplanes at the Bradley Air Museum, which had one of the largest fleets of airplanes in the country. More than sixty-three aircraft were damaged, and many were destroyed.[72] The tornado also dealt a harsh blow to Suffield 's tobacco industry, causing about $3.4 million in damage to agriculture, most of it related to the tobacco farms.[73] The storm, thought to be rare for New England, was caused by a strong cold front that set off squalls throughout the state. One spawned a massive Midwest style tornado. The storm became one of the costliest single tornadoes in United States history,[74] with damage estimates of $254 million.[75] Governor Ella Grasso, whose home in Windsor Locks was not damaged, filed an application for federal disaster aid.[76] The Enfield province made a generous contribution to assist the tornado victims that Governor Grasso personally acknowledged.[77]

While the sisters prayed that God "defend and protect us, this house, this city, and all your people" (*Prayer for All Times),* that day's issue of *The Hartford Courant* also reported on the visit of Pope John Paul II to New York's Madison Square Garden where he was welcomed by thousands of screaming teenagers for a "Youth in Concert" gathering, during which he spent time with over 20,000 young people from the tri-state area. The pontiff urged the young people to accept responsibility to the Church and to live a life patterned after Christ. "The Church needs you . . . the world needs you because the world needs Christ," he told them.[78]

From October 1-7, 1979, Pope John Paul II made his first papal pilgrimage to the United States, being received enthusiastically wherever he went. Describing himself as "a messenger of brotherhood and peace," he traveled to six American cities preaching a message of freedom and human dignity to millions of Americans. October 1 "was a grand day for the Polish" in South Boston, Massachusetts. Sisters, adults, and children lined Dorchester Avenue near Our Lady of Częstochowa Church to await the papal motorcade.[79] Sister Mary Sylvine Kotlarczyk and a delegation of school children from Holy Trinity Parish in Lowell, Massachusetts, joined the throng lining the motorcade route[80] together with four sisters from Enfield, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Barbara Jean Mary Gasparik, Sister Theresa Mary Gondek, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz.[81] Parishioners carried live red carnations that they showered upon the popemobile as it sped by. The convent chronicler recorded the sisters' reaction to this event. "While disappointed at the all too brief view, everyone was happy to have seen him so close."[82] Along with the crowd estimated at more than 400,000, several sisters braved the soaking rain and participated in the Mass on Boston Common.[83]

The next day, October 2, sisters from St. Stanislaus Convent on East Seventh Street in Manhattan, St. Adalbert Convent in the Bronx, St. Joseph Convent in Florida, New York, and St. Adalbert Convent in Staten Island, New York, joined the delegation from Enfield that included Mother Bernarda Mary, provincial superior, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, Sister Mary Amandine Zdrok, Sister Marianne Los, and Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, a member of the nursing staff at the infirmary, to participate in the Papal Mass offered by His Holiness Pope

John Paul II at Yankee Stadium. Thinking that the Pope's motorcade would pass by St. Stanislaus Church on the Lower East Side, the school children, dressed in Polish costume, along with the sisters, parishioners, and neighbors, waited for two hours. While the group was disappointed when a delay in the Pope's schedule made the stop impossible, "the people experienced great joy and togetherness as they waited. It was like a great block party and the people had a great time."[84]



Father John Bambol, OFM, Conv., pastor of Our Lady of Częstochowa Parish, South Boston, Massachusetts, is surrounded by parishioners awaiting the motorcade of Pope John Paul II.



As the Holy Father comes into view, the crowd becomes ecstatic

Very early on October 3, Sisters from the same New York convents, along with the delegation from Enfield, gathered at St. Patrick's Cathedral to join His Holiness Pope John Paul II in a special Morning Prayer. A sister chronicler wrote: "For three hours we waited joyfully singing hymns, shouting 'Long Live the Pope,' and praying for the Pope. The enthusiasm and joy of all made the hours of waiting seemingly short."[85]

A major theme in the pope's addresses was that the inequitable distribution of the world's wealth threatens individual human rights and world peace. The author of the editorial in the October 4 issue of *The Hartford Courant* wrote: "To the diplomats who heard the papal address, the human beings to whom they ultimately must be responsible, can be too often forgotten in the passions of the moment. The pope asked them to remember."[86]

Unfortunately, on Wednesday, May 13, 1981, the unthinkable happened. Pope John Paul II was holding his regular audience in St. Peter's Square in Vatican City. The Square was crowded with thousands of people, many reaching out and trying to touch him as he drove past in the wide-open truck known as the popemobile. Then shots rang out, and the Pope was sinking onto his side, a bright-red stain spreading across his white cassock. In the attempted assassination, the Pope was shot and wounded by Mehmet Ali Ağca while he was entering the square. The Pope was struck four times and suffered severe blood loss. Ağca was apprehended immediately and later sentenced to life in prison by an Italian court.[87] The assassination attempt drew expressions of shock, horror, and dismay from around the world. In an interview with *The Bangor Daily News*, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, administrator at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, suggested that the fragile political situation in Poland might have had some bearing on the shooting. Describing the popular pontiff as "a man for all seasons," she said, "There may have been some connection," adding, "I'm sure that Communist governments are very much afraid of the pope. They know him to be a dedicated man with a reputation as a powerful world leader who is opposed to violence and tyranny"[88]

Believing that he had been saved by the maternal hand of the Mother of God—it was the feast of Our Lady of Fatima—Pope John Paul later forgave his attempted assassin[89] who was pardoned by Italian president Carlo Azeglio Ciampi at his request and deported to Turkey in June 2000.[90]

Interprovincial tertianship

Simultaneously, with the initiation of an Interprovincial Second Novitiate, an Interprovincial Tertianship Program came into existence in 1977. Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski, general councilor, served as director. Twenty Enfield sisters participated in the six-week program of renewal, the Interprovincial Tertianship Program, offered by the Congregation from 1978-1982. They renewed their spirits, revitalized their energies, gained affirmation, and discovered the enriching bond of community spirit in the uniqueness of each province.[91]

In 1978, four sisters participated in the summer program held in Mount Arlington, New Jersey, under the direction of Sister Mary Landeline. They were Sister Theresa Marie Grochowski, Sister Theresa Mary Pietrzak, Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, and Sister Helen Marie Szymanczyk. Five sisters traveled to Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, Illinois, in 1979, where Sister Mary Landeline once again directed the program. They were Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski, Sister Mary John Fryc, and Sister Stasia Marie Hodyl.[92]



Thirty sisters from the United States and Canada participated in the interprovincial tertianship program that took place at the Felician Retreat Center in Mount Arlington, New Jersey from June 29 to August 8, 1980.

Mount Arlington, New Jersey, was also the site of the program in 1980, where Sister Joanne Marian Kaminski and Sister Constance Marie Tomyl joined twenty-eight sisters from across North America, in the program coordinated by Sister Mary Landeline, assisted by Sister Mary Simplicianna Zawalich.[93] In 1982, five sisters from Enfield enjoyed the summer program (from June 22 to August 7) in Mount Arlington directed by Sister Mary Julia Witkowski from the Buffalo, New York province. Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Carol Marie Saladin, Sister Adele Marie Kosinski, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar absorbed the peace and serenity of Lake Hopatcong while deepening their understanding and appreciation of religious life.[94]

Ongoing Formation

Out of her deep concern for their ongoing formation, Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka reminded the sisters of their serious obligation for their own personal growth and spiritual development. In her letter to the sisters dated October 6, 1978, she wrote: "Spiritual growth, like spiritual life itself, is a dynamic continuous process. Each of us is called by the Father to grow continually into the full stature of His Son, Jesus. Each religious must accept the responsibility to respond actively to this call in full cooperation with the action of the Holy Spirit during her entire life."[95]

Area meetings, initially organized from 1977-1978 to evaluate the "Fundamentals of Formation" seemed to meet with the approval of most sisters who found them to be helpful vehicles for ongoing formation since they provided an opportunity to share insights, discuss common problems and fears, and build community. They were a source of encouragement as they helped the sisters to see that they all shared the same concerns and the same problems. Area meetings also took place during 1978-1979 and 1979-1980.[96]

In 1979, the area meetings focused on spiritual growth, especially in the areas of prayer, the evangelical counsels, and community living. Resources for these discussions were the Felician Constitutions, *Response to Love,* and the special issue of St. Anthony Messenger entitled "Inner Passages," a developmental outline of spiritual growth. The Formation Committee provided an audio-visual slide presentation and a discussion guide that were central to these meetings.[97]

During the area meetings that took place in 1980, the sisters completed the evaluation of the "Fundamentals of Formation." Work on this document began as a project of the Interprovincial Commission of Novitiate Directors both in Poland and in the United States, in response to a directive of the 1968 General Chapter. Delegates to the 1976 General Chapter who thoroughly examined the first draft decided that it needed further study, hoping for final approval at the 1982 General Chapter.[98]

Meanwhile, a systematic study of "Fundamentals of Formation" at both the provincial and local levels involved as many sisters as possible in the evaluation. Within the Enfield province, a Formation Committee member coordinated each area meeting.[99] Ultimately, the four English-speaking members of the Ad Hoc Committee finalized the document in June 1981. Since formation in the Felician community leads to a gradual attaining of the identity of a Felician Sister, the Ad Hoc Committee changed the original title to "Fundamentals of Felician Formation." By December of that year, delegates from the United States, Canada, and Brazil to the Chapter of 1982 received a copy in preparation for approval by the Chapter.[100]

The sisters also took advantage of other ongoing formation opportunities provided by the province.

- Thirty-two sisters enjoyed a prayer weekend at Cardinal Cushing Villa in Gloucester, Massachusetts, from September 22 to 24, 1978. Father Daniel Twomey from St. Ann's Parish in Gloucester developed the theme for the day, "Prayer and Scripture." The sisters left the weekend "with much holy enthusiasm."[101]
- The entire province listened to Sister Mary Felicity Wardzinski of the Buffalo, New York, province, as she conducted sessions in both English and Polish on Felician Foundress Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska and the Felician charism on July 2 and 3, 1979.[102]
- To enable the sisters to deepen their understanding of Franciscan spirituality, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar conducted a Franciscan Study Day at the provincial house on March 22 and again in the New York area on April 26.[103]
- Father Gerald Walker, OFM, Cap., facilitated a workshop on healing for approximately fifty sisters from July 28-30, 1980.[104]
- Almost seventy-five sisters participated in a workshop on Scriptural Prayer presented by Father Gabriel Cusimano, CP, from October 24-26, 1980.[105]

SELECTED WRITINGS

When the letters of Mother Angela became available in August 1978, the sisters were able to "breathe in" her "warm human spirit and her deep faith."[106] Entitled *Selected Writings*, the first volume, "lovingly dedicated . . .

on the sesquicentennial of her birth," contains her correspondence with the sisters of the Congregation. Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka described the letters as "a rich storehouse of spiritual counsels" that "open up to us the treasures of Mother Angela's insights."[107] In her circular letter to the Enfield sisters, Mother Bernarda Mary wrote, "Without doubt, the reading of Mother Angela's letters has given each of us an insight to her greatness."[108] Sister Mary Viterbia Dyka, who had served as provincial superior of the Enfield province from 1964-1970, and Sister Mary Viterbia Kozlowska from Lodi, New Jersey, edited the letters. The cover of the book, designed by Sister Mary Laudine Szyszkiewicz, illustrates the notion that the Felician Sisters became the recipients of Mother Angela's spiritual legacy through her letters.[109]

Spirituality and Community Life



The Constitutions of 1971 describe the Felician Sister as "imbued with an ardent love for the Eucharist, . . . the source of our spirituality and the center of our consecrated life."[110] The Constitutions of 1976 repeat this emphasis and remind each sister that she is to draw her strength from the Eucharist in order "to share his [Christ's] living love with all men."[111]

From the earliest days of her initial formation in the Felician community, each sister is guided in ways to help her experience Eucharist as the center of her life. With her whole heart, she seeks to become Eucharist and to consider how the daily Eucharistic celebration can effect that transformation. Even more, she weaves the connection between the daily celebration of the Eucharist and her daily human experience.

To help the sisters to foster a deeper personal prayer life, Mother Bernarda and the sisters of her council provided an opportunity for a Holy Hour—an hour of silent reflection in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord—every Thursday, from 6 to 7 p.m. in the provincial house, and encouraged the sisters in the local convents to plan similar opportunities.[112] As well, the provincial administration continually reminded the sisters of the priority of prayer in their lives: "We who committed ourselves 'to continual prayer by which we glorify God and experience Him in love' ought to permeate our life with the spirit of prayer, so that we deepen the awareness of the divine Presence in ourselves and see the manifestations of his love in the events of our lives."[113]

Daily adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the provincial house chapel continued, and visits by sisters there, as well as in the local convents, were frequent. Several local houses arranged for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, particularly in preparation for the 125th anniversary of the Felician Congregation. The sisters set aside a specific day each month as a day of spiritual renewal. The provincial administration even arranged for a Polish-speaking priest to conduct a day of renewal at the provincial house each month, giving sisters opportunities for guidance as well as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These sisters also benefited from Holy Hours, Vocation Vigils, and Prayers of Adoration in the Polish language.[114]

With the adoption of *Christian Prayer* in 1977, the sisters praised and worshipped God anew. In the 1981 *State of the Province Report*, the provincial administration shared its observation about an increasing interest in prayer among the sisters. To further foster this desire for prayer, the province, as well as provincial committees, scheduled prayer experiences.[115]

The Spiritual Life Committee embraced the task of introducing the sisters to the "New Testament Way to Community Program," a step-by-step developmental course based on God's word and on the experience of the first Christian communities. Each step of the twelve meetings contained two parts. Part I consisted of texts from God's Word to be prayed over before Part II was used. Part II included a community meeting with questions that were answered by a deep sharing and listening. Sisters from local houses attended regional meetings introducing them to the new program with members of the Spiritual Life Committee acting as facilitators. The sisters were encouraged to come together in gentleness, patience, and love, so that through their praying, sharing, and listening, ultimately, "See how they love one another" would echo throughout each Felician convent as well as the surrounding community. Almost half of the sisters said they found the program beneficial in some way and even more said it helped to build a better community.[116]

Additionally, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl guided a session on Centering Prayer for an interested group of sisters,[117] and Sister Mary Alodia Malinka conducted weekend and directed retreats.[118] The provincial administration testified that the sisters "are striving for a deeper spiritual life and an ever-increasing love for our Lord Jesus Christ and his beloved Mother Mary,"[119] and this served the sisters well as the foundation for their community life. The goals implemented by local communities for building and strengthening community living reflected the spirit of the 1976 Constitutions.

- To create an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding which will make of joyful living.
- To create a community that will cultivate personal growth and deepen our commitment to the service of God, his people, and each other.
- To respond to the call of our Franciscan lifestyle by appreciating each other's work, efforts, and accomplishments.
- To encourage one another in the apostolate and to enhance an atmosphere of trust and openness.[120]

CENTENARY YEAR OF ST. FRANCIS

Celebrating as a group bestows a sense of belonging, something crucial to human fulfillment. At the same time as the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels province began their preparation for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the province, they joined more than 100,000 Franciscans in the United States—including 6,000 men, 40,000 women, and 55,000 secular members of the Third Order—in preparing to observe the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis of Assisi.[121]

North American Franciscans celebrated the International Year of St. Francis from October 3, 1981, to October 4, 1982. With the theme "Let Us Love and Serve the Lord," the celebration focused on the dignity of human life, the gift of creation, and proclaiming the Good News.[122]

Each house received copies of the booklet "Celebrate Francis," compiled by the Felician Sisters in Canada, containing Vesper Services for each month.[123] In her introductory letter to the booklet, Sister Mary Goretti Kuiack, from Holy Name of Mary Vice Province, asked, "What better way can we get in touch with what was precious to Francis than by prayer and reflection?"[124]

In a letter to the sisters, Mother Amadeus called upon the entire Congregation "to join together in praising and thanking God for Francis, His gift to the Church and to the world." Referencing the letter to the Franciscan family from the Ministers General "for the celebration of the eighth centenary of the birth of Saint Francis of Assisi, "I Have Done My Part, May Christ Teach You Yours," she wrote, this "is not a date to be commemorated, but an event of faith to be lived." As spiritual daughters of Saint Francis and a branch of the great Franciscan tree, she called upon the sisters "to be a vital part of this Franciscan current in today's world."[125]

She encouraged the sisters to "Live this eventful year in deep faith," and, in the words of Mother Angela, summoned them to "return to our pristine vigor and strive to incarnate Francis' charism anew in our society in response to our Foundress' plea, "*Pray. . . that the spirit of Saint Francis never wane in our Congregation."*[126]

Throughout the United States, a long calendar of events was planned to honor St. Francis, including seminars, special Masses, educational materials, and even a special comic book, "Francis, Brother of the Universe," that was fifty pages in length, published by Marvel Comics. Terence Cardinal Cooke, archbishop of New York, initiated the occasion by celebrating a Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral.[127]

At the outset of the year of celebration, tributes began to pour in. Among the first was a letter to Franciscans from Archbishop John R. Roach, president of the Roman Catholic bishops of the United States.

"The Church needs Franciscan evangelization," the letter reads. "Theirs is the legacy of St. Francis' popular approach, of getting into the marketplace and speaking to people in their own language and on their own terms." He continued, "The creativity and commitment by which Franciscans touched the hearts of people in the Middle Ages are equally capable of reaching the unchurched and alienated in our times."[128]

As the year of celebration neared its end, Mother Amadeus called on each Felician heart to rejoice with the whole Franciscan family "on the occasion of the canonization of our brother, Blessed Maximilian Kolbe, on October 10, 1982, by His Holiness John Paul II." In her August 15 letter, she urged the sisters to offer prayers of thanksgiving to Blessed Maximilian, asking his intercession "that we may one day witness the beatification of our own Mother Angela."[129]

COMMUNITY LIFE

When the Community Life Committee reactivated in October 1977, the members spearheaded the study of Chapter IV, "Community Life," in the newly approved Constitutions. The insights they gained made it clear that efforts to build faith communities are dependent on God's gifting as well as each sister's cooperation. They acknowledged that no community would ever be free of problems and perplexities, but problems could be overcome and be made bearable and even turned into building blocks for community living. The

members concluded, "It is worth the effort because the results already revealed are tangible and evident."[130]

This group was responsible for organizing an annual Community Day, offering the sisters the opportunity to gather at the provincial house where they renewed the spirit of appreciation for the blessings of religious community living. Both the sisters and the provincial administration came to realize that frequent gatherings foster the growth of the community spirit and create improved relationships among them, thereby deepening strength in unity." [131]

The 1981 *State of the Province Report* noted that despite decreasing numbers, aging sisters, and waning health, the sisters found that "communal life can afford true and sisterly love, increased mutual satisfaction, genuine support and concern on the part of superiors and subjects alike."[130] That concern extended to the sick and elderly members of the province who were designated by the province as of "paramount importance."[133] In this respect, the vicar provincial, Sister Mary Amandine Zdrok, provincial house superior, was greatly esteemed by the sisters for her understanding support that encouraged them and helped them to feel that they were not alone. Her kindness, concern, and time spent with them were key to her effective style of administration. Two sister nurses, who rendered whatever service was needed by the sisters residing on the third floor, assisted her, and lay nurses responded to the physical needs of the sick. Lay people visiting the bedridden patients expressed their amazement at the comfort and care given to the sick as well as the adequate and orderly space provided them. Above all, the sisters felt valued and respected, which enhanced their sense of purposeful living.[134]

The Felician Sisters were not the only religious community coping with the issue of aging members. Helen Rose Ebaugh, who has extensively studied religious orders in the United States, found that from 1966 to 1986, orders saw more than a 30% decrease in numbers, from 181,421 to 126,000. The significant decrease in the number of new members, coupled with the increased number of those who left, resulted in a population of American sisters that was very different from that of just twenty years earlier. She noted that the most dramatic change had been in the age structure within orders. The small cohorts of younger, newer members, coupled with those who left, resulted in an older population of American sisters. In 1966, 17% of U.S. Catholic sisters were over age 65. By 1982, that percentage rose to 38%.[135]

In an interview with the *Hartford Courant* conducted in September 1982, Mother Bernarda Mary Jarosz told staff writer Andrew Walsh that "It's nothing special to be 90 around here," adding, the Felician Sisters "are top-heavy with senior people." Half of the 235 sisters in the province were over sixty-eight, and the largest cohort comprised women in their 80s. The front-page article, entitled "Aging Membership a Burden for Catholic Orders," noted that religious orders rely heavily on investments and gifts for support, and for some communities, "crucial support often comes from the Social Security system." However, the Felician Sisters could never afford to join the Social Security system or private health insurance and pension plans. As a result, the province became increasingly dependent on fundraising projects, such as fairs and bake sales. Mother Bernarda told the interviewer that the financial pressures had increased the order's sense of community. She said, "We're very happy. It's a

whole community effort. No matter what one of us is doing, she knows she's helping the community out."[136]

The reactivation of committees, as well as the organization of several new ones, marked Mother Bernarda's term in leadership. The Life Development Committee sponsored a workshop on "Death and Dying" with Dr. Robert Fitzsimmons, a psychology professor at Central Connecticut State College (now University). The day included a special Eucharistic celebration with communal anointing by Father Stanley Smolenski, assistant pastor, St. Martha Parish, in Enfield. Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk facilitated a stress workshop—a joint effort of both the Education and the Life Development Committees—that the sisters found to be both practical and helpful.[137]

OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS ACADEMY

As Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski wrote in the *Epilogue* to Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda's *History,* significant changes occurred in the Catholic schools of the United States following the Second Vatican Council. By the mid-1960s, enrollment in Catholic parochial schools had reached an all-time high of 4.5 million elementary school pupils, with about one million students in Catholic high schools. However, enrollments steadily declined as Catholics moved to the suburbs, where the children attended public schools. Our Lady of the Angels Academy, founded and sponsored by the Felician Sisters since 1944, experienced a steady decline in enrollment from 1964-1988. The construction of two new high school facilities in town during this time—Enfield High School (1964) and Enrico Fermi High School (1971)—affected the public's perception of quality high school education in the town of Enfield.[138]

Soon after the close of the 1976-1977 school year, Mother Bernarda and her council felt that it was time to study the future of the Academy, and they decided to carefully observe the situation for a year.[139] For the next two years, the school's effectiveness continued to be a point of major concern to both the council and the province at large.[140] Spurred on by recommendations from the General Visitation in 1979, they began an intensive study of the school in May 1979. As the first step, they asked Sister Mary Dulcine Bartosiak, principal, to present the students' opinions regarding the Program of Personalized Education initiated for the 1975-1976 academic year. Of the 91 students enrolled, 82 responded, with 86% of the students replying favorably.[141]

Deliberations continued at a meeting in August when the provincial council formed an Ad Hoc Committee whose work was to present basic information about the Academy to the sisters, disseminate a survey, and summarize their opinions. Members of the committee included Director of Education Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, coordinator; Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, chair; Sister Mary Presentia Kaznocha, and Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha.[142] After receiving approval for the first draft of the survey, the committee circulated it to the sisters throughout the province on October 22. The provincial council received the collated survey results on December 8. A total of 118 sisters took advantage of the opportunity to share their opinion about the school with most expressing a desire to see the Academy continue functioning and offering valuable suggestions regarding increasing enrollment.[143]

Since both Sister Dulcine and Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski, assistant principal, acknowledged that their efforts to recruit new students were falling short,[144] during the meeting of October 21, Sister Dulcine requested permission to employ Total Research Corporation, a market research company based in Princeton, New Jersey. Sister explained that the benefits of this market research would be invaluable to achieving the following three objectives: to determine the "image" of OLA Academy currently held by students, parents, and faculty; to understand better the strengths and weaknesses of the Academy; and to determine any unsatisfied secondary educational needs that might be set by modifying the school's program or admission requirements. The council agreed to pursue the study with the cost underwritten by the school.[145]

On February 20, 1980, Mother Bernarda and the council, along with Superintendent of Catholic Secondary Schools Father Henry C. Frascadore; Richard Burke, planning coordinator for Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford; Sister Dulcine, and Sister Jacqueline met with Dolores Medici, Total Research Corporation representative, to hear the results of the research. The findings indicated the distinctive benefits of hiring a development director to assist in the recruitment program.[146]

At a later meeting held on April 24, upon the advice of both Father Frascadore and Mr. Burke, the provincial council consented to the plan to hire a director of Public Relations and Development for the Academy.[147] Mary Dumoulin, whose two daughters were students at the Academy, attended the Development Institute held at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, during the summer to prepare for this work.[148]

The provincial council agreed to pursue further study of the Academy before making a final decision regarding its continued operation. In her presentation to the provincial council more than a year later, on September 14, 1981, Sister Dulcine sought approval for two proposals she felt would benefit the school: to conduct a public fund-raising campaign for a half million dollars and establish a Board of Directors. Neither met with the approval of the council at this time[149] but at the end of September 1981, the provincial council decided to extend the functioning of the Academy until June 1984 with the condition that the school remain financially stable, and enrollment continue to increase. The council resolved to reconsider the matter after engaging in a subsequent evaluation of the school during the 1983-1984 academic year.[150]

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL

With her election as provincial superior of Our Lady of the Angels Province in September 1976, Mother Bernarda became president of St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine. Having just attended the 17th general chapter of the Felician Congregation in Rome, Italy, she assured the members of the board that, rooted in the tradition of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela's vision of renewing society through compassionate caring of the whole person in all circumstances, the care of the ill and the aging remained an integral part of the province's apostolate. Speaking about the hospital, she said, "With the dedication and loyalty of the medical and hospital staff and with continued cooperation and support of our friends and volunteers, [we] are confident that

the past accomplishments will be duplicated and even exceeded in the years to come."[151]

By the late twentieth century, complex issues surrounded Catholic hospitals. In his comprehensive history of Catholic health care in the United States, Christopher J. Kauffman saw these as an increase in medical sophistication; the pluralism of staff and patient rosters; the involvement of government and outside agencies; and the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual energy that it takes to bring together the worlds of faith and research and healing in a technological age.[152]

By 1976, controversy surrounding the publication of *Humanae Vitae,* that restated the Church's opposition to artificial contraception and affirmed traditional Church moral teaching on the sanctity of life and the procreative and unitive nature of conjugal relations, had subsided somewhat, only to be replaced by the Roe v. Wade decision of 1973. The landmark decision by the Supreme Court on January 22 legalized abortion in the first three months of pregnancy across the United States.[153]

In 1977, when St. Joseph Hospital was challenged to defend itself as a Catholic hospital, the administration recommitted to pro-life values since abortion directly violated the tenets of the Catholic faith as well as of the Felician Sisters who sponsored the hospital. Following several months of careful and intensive study, the Board of Trustees decided to close both the obstetrics and pediatrics departments as of August 1.[154] They also seriously weighed the standards from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology to consider whether the operation was sufficient to support the number of deliveries. The organization set 1,000 births per year as the minimal level. During the twelve and a half years of its operation, the maternity unit at St. Joseph's saw 9,031 births, or an average of 750 births per year, thus falling short of the number suggested for an efficient operation.[155]

The board recognized that the birth rate in the greater Bangor area was low and a single hospital's obstetrics and maternity ward could adequately provide the needed services. St. Joseph's had a more up-to-date maternity ward than Eastern Maine Medical Center. However, the issue was a complex one as a medical understanding of obstetric services went beyond the maternity ward to include the full range of reproductive services, including sterilization and abortion. While St. Joseph's received reassurance from the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare that no pressure would be exerted to perform either, St. Joseph's understood that sterilization is part of a complete obstetrical unit, and that the hospital selected would be required to perform them.[156] Since the Catholic Church does not permit sterilization in its healthcare institutions, the maternity unit at St. Joseph Hospital was officially closed on August 1, 1977.

The following month, on September 13, St. Joseph's officially inaugurated its ambulatory surgical unit, making it the only hospital in Maine with a self-contained surgery unit, enabling patients to have same-day surgery without a costly overnight stay.[157] Two major events marked 1978, the introduction of mammography services in the Radiology Department and the launch of the Corinth Health Center. Together with officials in East Corinth, St. Joseph Hospital opened a clinic to help meet the medical needs in the small town. The hospital provided staff and equipment to this medically underserved

area while the city provided the space.[158] In 1979, a second rural unit was established, the Old Town Health Center.[159] Constructed and dedicated in 1982, the health center was a collaborative project of St. Joseph Hospital with the Old Town Development Group. With just two doctors practicing in the city and one preparing to retire at the end of the year, the arrangement with St. Joseph Hospital best met the area's needs.[160] In 1980, several staff members traveled from St. Joseph Hospital to Indian Island, home of the Penobscot Indian Island Reservation, where they helped to establish a cystic fibrosis clinic. Nearly a quarter of the population lived below the poverty line, and many struggled with alcoholism.[161]

New management services

In their role as the board of trustees for St. Joseph Hospital, Mother Bernarda and her council stepped in to manage ongoing conflict between the executive director and the Felician Sisters.[162] The sisters seriously pondered replacing the executive director and discussed next steps.[163] By the end of June 1979, acting on the advice of Attorney William Regan, legal consultant for the hospital, the provincial council considered hiring Alexian Brothers Health Management, Inc., of Elk Grove Village, Illinois, to provide management services to the hospital while contending with the challenges of medical and technological progress.[164] For seven centuries, the Alexian Brothers had served the disadvantaged of society, caring for the victims of plague-torn Europe, and sending brothers to battlefield hospitals in time of war. Arriving in the United States in 1866, they cared for cholera victims in Chicago and soon earned a reputation for compassion and professional expertise.[165]

During a meeting of the council and Provincial Treasurer Sister Mary Regis Waszak with representatives from St. Joseph Hospital and Alexian Brothers Hospital Management, Inc., the group finalized the contract with the Alexian Brothers on July 2, 1979.[166] In September, the St. Joseph Hospital Board of Trustees contracted with the management corporation of the Alexian Brothers to hire Dale A. Simpson as the hospital's executive director.[167] Sister Mary Edith St. Jean was appointed the hospital's associate executive officer effective January 1, 1980.[168]

From 1979 to 1982, with Simpson serving as chief executive officer, the hospital witnessed several successes, from exhibiting a more positive presence in the community to increasing the census to 84.2% (the number of patients in the facility). Financial and cash management programs accounted for savings of almost $300,000 with the emergency room, ambulatory, surgical, and anesthesiology departments realizing marked gains.[169] But much of this progress was marked by controversy. After just two days as director, Simpson found himself fighting for St. Joseph's when Eastern Maine Medical Center (EMMC) proposed its $14 million expansion plans in September 1979. Simpson said he had no objection to the new obstetrical unit or the parking facility but was not convinced that the Bangor community needed sixty-two additional hospital beds. "The reason that we don't see a need for sixty-two additional (medical surgical) beds is that the beds here aren't filled all the time."[170]

Early on, Simpson identified the problem between the two hospitals as lack of communication. "We aren't talking," he said.[171] He criticized EMMC for failing

to work out procedures with him and the common medical staff for placing patients at St. Joseph who didn't need the special services offered only at EMMC. To develop closer ties to the community, the board of trustees reconstituted its membership to include a majority of lay people for the first time.[172] The change was initiated by the hospital's sponsors, the Felician Sisters, within the framework of new bylaws, and Simpson noted that the Catholic Health Association had, for several years, encouraged greater lay participation on the boards of Catholic hospitals. Patrick McCarthy, chancellor of the University of Maine and a new lay trustee who had been elected president of the board, explained that the change was aimed at "creating a bridge" between the hospital and the community. Simpson added that there had been a lot of interest in the Bangor community from "people wanting to be involved." Additionally, lay people on the board brought expertise that the sisters did not have as well as a greater breadth of views, enabling the board to "be more responsive than we have been."[173]

Following the canonical visitation that had taken place in the Enfield province from March 4 to April 27, 1979, the general administration recommended adding a diocesan representative to the hospital's board of trustees, "preferably a priest knowledgeable in health care."[174]

When the new Board of Trustees began its work on July 10, 1980, (AFSE) the members were:

President	Patrick McCarthy, chancellor, University of Maine at Orono
Vice-President	Joseph Coffin, director, Savings & Loan Association of Bangor
Secretary	Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, CSSF, director, School of Radiology
Treasurer	Charles Carlisle, senior vice president, Northeast Bank of Bangor

Members

Father Paul Coughlin, pastor, St. Mary's Church, Bangor

Harold P. Robinson, president, Robinson-Kenney Oils, Brewer

Maurice Shea III, president, Depositors Trust Co. of Eastern Maine, Bangor

Thomas Needham, hospital attorney, Bangor

Dr. David S. Beebe, St. Joseph's, urology

Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, CSSF, associate executive director

Sister Mary Anastasia Holak, CSSF, provincial council member, director, Enfield Montessori School, Enfield, CT

Mother Bernarda Mary Jarosz, CSSF, provincial superior and president

Non-voting members

Dale Simpson, CEO, St. Joseph Hospital

Dr. Hans A. Holzwarth, president, medical staff

William Regan, legal counsel for SJH, Felician Sisters of Connecticut[175]

Later that year, the provincial council assigned Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski to the position of associate executive director, effective September 1, 1980.[176] She had just earned an MS in Management from the Sloan School at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, held an MS in Public Health from Tufts University, and was a pediatric nurse practitioner. Sister Norberta had previously served at the hospital in leadership roles. Between 1964 and 1968, she oversaw the pharmacy and emergency room, then also supervised the maternity department. At the same time, the council, acting on a directive from the general visitation to prepare sisters for ministry in the health apostolate, assigned three sisters to pursue studies as follows: Sister Mary Julia Janas, medical records; Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz and Sister Mary Rajner, nursing.[177]

At the end of 1980, St. Joseph's launched a campaign for a new critical care unit with a target of $350,000. Largely due to advances in medical technology, St. Joseph Hospital began to address needs in a facility constructed in the late 1960s. Replacement of the critical care unit would ensure that hospital facilities would focus more sharply on the care of the seriously ill. The plan was to move the unit to a more spacious addition on the third floor. Joseph Coffin, head of the fund drive, said that other problems the hospital would need to address in the future included improved access to the emergency room and better parking arrangements.[178]

Two projects completed in 1981 included the purchase of property on the corner of French and Congress Streets for the new sisters' residence and the relocation of the School of Nursing to 325 Center Street[179] and in June, the continued growth in service saw the establishment of the Occupational Therapy Department.[180] But the dedication of the seven-bed critical care unit on September 26, 1981, was the highlight of the year. The new unit, designed to treat the most acute and life-threatening conditions, honored prime hospital benefactors Dr. Samuel J. Rosen and Doris C. Rosen. A community effort of 650 individual gifts also supported the new unit. Most Rev. Edward C. O'Leary, bishop of the Diocese of Portland, officiated at the dedication.[181]

Late that year, the hospital announced plans to institute a hospice program in February 1982. Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, director of social service, served as director of the program that provided support and care to those in the last phases of incurable illness. The community-based hospice provided for patients at home, in the hospital, or in a nursing home.[182]

Hospital returns to Felician management

After three years of management by a professional management group, the Felician sponsors of St. Joseph Hospital decided to return management to the Felician Sisters. According to the provincial council meeting minutes of February 12, 1982, the sponsoring body—the Felician Sisters—"are totally unhappy with his [Simpson's] attitude toward the sponsoring body."[183] On the last day of January 1982, acting on the recommendation of Father Paul Coughlin, board member, the provincial council agreed to appoint Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, associate executive director, as chief executive officer, replacing Dale Simpson.[184] The agreement with the Alexian Brothers and Dale Simpson had been terminated several weeks before because of the desire by

the Felician Sisters to manage its own facility. At the hospital's annual board meeting on March 18, Sister Norberta was voted Chief Executive Officer (CEO) by the SJH Board of Trustees upon Simpson's resignation.[185] Immediately, Chair Patrick McCarthy and three other trustees submitted their resignations "out of frustration over the limited scope of board authority and partly because of fundamental disagreements over management philosophy."[186] The editorial writer of that day's *Bangor Daily News* observed: "Administrative shakeups aren't new to St. Joseph. Over the years, many of the administrative upheavals have stemmed from the fact that, unlike many other local boards of trustees, St. Joseph's board has not enjoyed autonomy. The last word has rested, not with the local board, but with the order of nuns that actually runs the health care facility. Board members have complained that often their responsibilities have exceeded their authority."[187]

The remaining board members, hospital staff, and many friends of the hospital strongly supported Sister Norberta's appointment.[188] In turn, she assured the staff that there would be a change in management style, a change that would more closely reflect the mission of the Church.[189] She firmly believed that St. Joseph Hospital should be a place where special care is taken so that the machinery of the organization does not overwhelm the person and human values are not lost in the name of efficiency. Sister Norberta was supported with the appointment of James Shedno as associate executive officer and new board members Dr. Clara Swan and David Adelman.[190]

Spring and summer focused on future plans for the hospital, a new building phase to house a new emergency room, and new lab and x-ray departments. This ambitious expansion required an alteration of Bangor's land use policies, and although it aimed at modernizing the hospital, the plan did not gain the universal backing of its neighbors and generated concerns about traffic, crime, and safety problems in the area.[191] Writing for the *Bangor Daily News,* Leigh McCarthy said the real issue was the future of controlled growth in the city of Bangor, and she cautioned Bangor's planning board and city council to "come down on the side of logic and carefully drawn procedures," so that all of Bangor could benefit in the long run.[192]

In "Golden Jubilee Jottings," Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda, province historian, wrote that she did not expound on the visible fruits of the health care apostolate in St. Joseph Hospital because of space limitations. However, she said, "The annals relate accounts not only of sick and broken bodies healed, but also of disturbed and broken souls who were given solace and help. The service of the Felician nursing staff was and is known to have given constant evidence of love and sacrifice."[193]

OUTREACH

The *Memoirs of the Congregation Felician Sisters,* compiled after fifty years of the Congregation's existence, are a valuable source of Felician spirituality. In general, this little book contains the Franciscan concept of religious life lived by the first Felicians and includes fragments of the first Felician Constitutions that the sisters desired to transmit to future Felician generations as the express Will of God for them.[194]

According to the *Memoirs,* the first sisters did not choose their diverse forms of charitable acts for themselves but were led by the express Will of God.[195] The Congregation had its origins in social services rendered by the Charitable Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and these "charitable acts became inseparable

from the Felician vocation."[196] The *Memoirs* tell us that the cramped quarters of that attic on Mostowa Street were inadequate, and the sisters' means of livelihood insufficient, so they provided for the orphans, aged women, and those with disabilities by soliciting alms from door to door. Additionally, they were called to serve the sick in the city and in hospitals and to visit the poor and prisoners. Seeking only God's Will, the sisters became convinced that they could not refuse any help or service asked of them in God's name and they did not hesitate to undertake anything that might add to his glory.[197]

In her book *From Nuns to Sisters: An Expanding Vocation,* Sister Marie Augusta Neal, SND, notes that after Vatican II, the way of the vowed life was being called to witness and action in a special way. She cited *Evangelica Testificatio (On the Renewal of the Religious Life According to the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council),* the apostolic exhortation of Pope Paul VI, where he asks religious: "How then will the cry of the poor find an echo in your lives? That cry must, first of all, bar you from whatever would be a compromise with any form of social injustice. It obliges you also to awaken consciences to the drama of misery and to the demands of social justice made by the Gospel and the Church."[198]

Sister Mary Frances Polowniak

It was in this spirit that Sister Mary Frances Polowniak assumed direction of the Pope John Paul II Friendship Center on New York City's Lower East Side in 1980. This worthy social service development, a neighborhood project for the aging, was sponsored by St. Stanislaus Parish on East Seventh Street, and funded through the New York State Office of the Aging and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare under Title III C Service. This community-based senior center provided adults sixty and older, particularly of the local Eastern European community, with recreational and educational activities, nutritional workshops, and daily congregate lunch. Other services included counseling and/or referrals regarding Medicare and Medicaid, housing, food stamps, half-fare cards and easy ride, as well as assistance with finances and legal matters without distinction to race, creed, or country of origin. Basic health screenings and counseling were available twice weekly and Social Security information was provided once a week.[199] Sister Frances said, "My previous exposure to New York City was Radio City, Macy's, Chinatown, so the squalor of the Lower East Side I found extremely repulsive. But the gentle and kind reception given me mollified this feeling and when I plunged into the program and saw what was being done, those externals were less important." Sister Frances reflected that while the needs of people in every city and town were similar to those of people on the Lower East Side, "the number of people requesting services, help and caring is overwhelming."[200]

A nurse with an MS in Gerontology, Sister Frances was well prepared for this position, and she took on the work with zeal and determination to offer her best to bring Christ into the lives of these senior citizens. The sisters supported this new ministry to the poor with their prayers and sacrifices so that through the good works provided at this Center, God would be praised and glorified.[201]

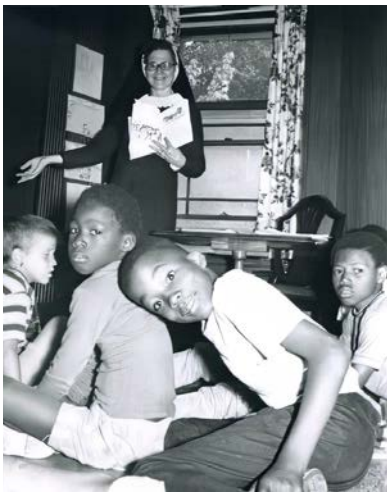
Sister Dorothy Martha M Gallant, social worker

Sister Dorothy Martha M Gallant's tremendous love for people living in poverty was the essence of her life's work. After earning her degree in social

work, she ministered at the Holy Cross Campus of Pius XII Youth and Family Services, Inc., in Rhinecliff, New York, a voluntary agency that provided social services in both residential and community settings for boys thirteen to eighteen years old. Sister Dorothy worked with those designated by the courts as youthful offenders and persons in need of supervision providing care, treatment, rehabilitation, and guidance.[202]

Sister Mary Aloysius Gazda

Before her affiliation with the Office of Urban Affairs of the Archdiocese of Hartford in New Haven, Connecticut, Sister Mary Aloysius Gazda volunteered in the Sisters Urban Center in Waterbury in a summer activities program sponsored by New Opportunities for Waterbury (NOW). Designed to bring recreation and education to those age groups not eligible to participate in the Board of Education's summer school program, NOW served children in two anti-poverty target areas to give them experiences that they might not otherwise have had. Children ranging in age from two-and-a-half to four-and-a-half participated in activities that enabled them to work and learn with other children, preparing them for the time when they became full-time students. Volunteers canvassed neighborhoods to inform parents about the summer activities program and to help needy families to identify their specific problems as well as the agency that could best aid them.[203]



With boundless energy, SM Aloysius Gazda helped coordinate activities enabling children to work and learn with others in areas of Waterbury, CT, facing various social and economic challenges.

By the 1970s, Sister Aloysius worked as coordinator and full-time tutor in "Project Finish," a program designed for adults and young adults, primarily from minority groups, who were determined to obtain their high school equivalency diploma and further their education. The Campaign for Human Development of the Archdiocese of Hartford and its Cooperative Sharing Program funded the program that Sister Aloysius described as "most successful because of its individualized nature."[204]

In addition to serving on the Sisters' Steering Committee on Human Rights,[205] Sister Aloysius served on the Waterbury Area Planning Committee, Cooperative Parish Sharing that worked to draw together suburban and urban parishes for a cooperative effort in financial sharing to meet the needs of the poor in the twentieth century. As coordinator of distribution of food and clothing to the needy, she distributed food and clothing to the poor, Thanksgiving food baskets, hosted Christmas parties for underprivileged children in the Waterbury area, and developed summer programs for them.[206] As a member of the Greater Waterbury area Catholic Interracial Council, she lectured on the "Role of the Church in Social Action."[207]

Sister Mary Teresa Carolyn Muraski

For several years, Sister Mary Teresa Carolyn Muraski, a nurse and emergency medical technician, was a member of the Enfield Police Nurse Corps, riding with police officers in the town ambulance about once a month for four- or five-hour shifts. Because the sisters at the provincial house occasionally used the town ambulance for members who needed to be hospitalized, Sister Teresa's volunteer work was an effort to repay the town for its help and, as she said, "do our share for the community." She added, "It makes us more open and involved in the community. . . . And when we pray in chapel for the people in Enfield, it means more because we know some of them." For her full-time ministry, Sister Teresa worked as a nurse in the infirmary with the forty-eight sisters needing long-term care. [208] In August 1982, the Enfield Police Department honored her with its Good Samaritan Award. In presenting the plaque, Police Chief Walter Skower read, "A Good Samaritan is a person who is willing to help the injured, the sick and those in need without seeking personal profit or recognition." He added, "She was one of ours. A Good Samaritan." Lt. Walter Juniewicz said, "She's one of the most liked and kindest people you'll ever meet."[209]

CANONICAL VISITATION

Canon law requires the superior to visit the houses and members, and the Felician Constitutions also expect the provincial superior to make an annual visitation of all houses of her province.[210] Seen as "a privileged time," visitation has a twofold purpose: one is to help the provincial to see the life of the house, the second is for her to be available to the sisters in a very personal way, thus allowing for more direct communication to occur. It is clearly one of the most important responsibilities of the superior--to be first in the ministry of unity and animation to the province. Mother Bernarda Mary faithfully discharged this responsibility of being present to the sisters and seeing the reality that they lived in.

Since religious life is apostolic by nature, the visitation is also part of realizing that apostolic spirit. Because part of the visitation is to increase the sensitivity of the provincial superior to the apostolic works that the sisters are engaged in, the visit usually included the various institutions of the province as well, thereby creating and sustaining a strong link between the community and the ministry and affirming and strengthening its Felician identity. The

visitation is also an important occasion for the provincial superior, on behalf of the Felician Sisters, to recognize and celebrate the good work done, and thank everyone involved in the ministry for what they have achieved.

Once every six years, the superior general, assisted by her general councilors, also visits each Felician community and works of the province. The custom and practice of visitation is to strengthen and maintain unity, solidarity, and family spirit in provinces and in the Congregation, to encourage sisters to realize their total gift of self to Christ and to recommit that gift to Him, as well as to assist the local communities in fulfilling the apostolic mission in the Church and in the world according to the charism of the foundress.[211]

In her letter to Mother Bernarda and the sisters of the Enfield province preceding her visit (dated February 1, 1979), Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka, superior general, wrote: "This occasion is a time of special blessings because it provides an opportunity for interior renewal and spiritual growth—personal as well as communal. For all of us it will be an encounter with Jesus as we gather in His name to seek Him with greater intensity."[212]

Mother Amadeus arrived in Enfield on March 2, accompanied by four councilors: Sister Mary Anselma Trojanowska, Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski, Sister Mary Mercedia Lukaszewicz, and Sister Mary Camille Bet. The formal opening of the Visitation took place on Sunday, March 4, with a Mass seeking the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, celebrated in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel. Following dinner and the community gathering, the sisters warmly welcomed the visitors.[213]

For two months, the visitors lived with the sisters, speaking with them, listening to them, and sharing with them. "An atmosphere of joy, calm and trust pervaded the days as . . . the sisters shared their joys, sorrows, problems, and concerns with the visitators."[214] Mother Bernarda and the council members briefed the visitators on the various aspects of the province, including the teaching apostolate, teaching personnel and Our Lady of the Angels Academy; the regional meetings; St. Joseph Hospital; finances, Holy Family Infirmary, including patients, sister staff and lay employees.[215] At the end of the Visitation on April 27, Mother Amadeus graciously expressed her appreciation to Mother Bernarda and the council "for uniting the province in a common effort of interior renewal and continued spiritual growth." On behalf of the visitors, she also conveyed gratitude for the warm hospitality extended to herself and the visitors, as well as the sincerity and openness of the sisters during the personal interviews. She encouraged the sisters "to continue working together in unity–as living stones—toward building up the body of your province . . . of every local community . . . in Christ Jesus, for the glory of the Father. We encourage you to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world by re-incarnating Mother Angela's spirit and by living out the Felician charism in its fullest potential."[216]

Her letter included commendations that filled an entire page, and praised the sisters for their "visible spirit of mutual charity—helpfulness to one another, cooperation, acceptance, understanding, and sharing responsibilities; your care, solicitude and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of the sick and elderly sisters; and your enthusiastic dedication in building God's kingdom which is evidenced in apostolates, and the priority which you give to meet the needs of the lives of those you touch." Mother Amadeus asked the sisters

to accept the recommendations offered and to make specific plans for their implementation. The recommendations focused on each sister's personal responsibility, particularly in the areas of spiritual life and community life.[217]

FELICIAN FOUNDRESS MOTHER MARY ANGELA

Felician Foundress Mother Mary Angela was never far from the minds and hearts of her daughters who longed for the day when she would be beatified and canonized. In her letter to the sisters throughout the Congregation, Mother Mary Amadeus, superior general, encouraged them to persevere "in praying the daily petition for her beatification with an even deeper faith in God's power to grant this grace if it is His will." She urged the entire Community to pray to Saint Felix of Cantalice, our patron, for this intention, especially in the novena preceding his feast on May 18. She noted that Cardinal Corrado Bafile, the prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Causes of Saints, was born in Cantalice and had great interest in Mother Angela's cause.[218]

The same letter announced that the first issue of the *Mother Angela Bulletin* (March 1979) had been disseminated to all provinces in the United States and Canada "for the purpose of spreading information about Mother Angela to the laity," including "parishioners, school children, visitors and patients in our hospitals and institutions, and among our families and friends." The bulletin included excerpts of Mother Mary Angela's life, exhortations from her writings, petitions for favors requested, and thanksgiving for graces received. The general administration had appointed Sister Mary Raphael Monczewska as editor as well as a coordinator from each of the provinces to assist her in this work.[219] Sister Mary Noel Falicki served as the first contact person for the Enfield province.[220]

After reminding the sisters of the two required miracles for the beatification process, Mother Amadeus announced a celebration of historic significance for the Felician Community, the unveiling of the sculpture of the five pioneer Felician Sisters on Sunday, May 27, 1979, in Polonia, Wisconsin, the "cradle of the Felicians in America." Located in the memorial grove near the monument



The sculpture of the five pioneer Felician Sisters in the memorial grove in Polonia, Wisconsin.

of Father Joseph Dąbrowski, the memorial is a fitting tribute to the splendid epic of Felician achievements in North America and to the Felician pioneers: Mother Mary Monica Sybilska, Sister Mary Cajetan Jankiewicz, Sister Mary Wenceslaus Zubrzycka, Sister Mary Vincentine Kalwa, and Sister Mary Raphael Swożeniowska.[221]

In her remarks on that day, Mother Amadeus told the sisters gathered, including Mother Bernarda Mary Jarosz, provincial superior, and Sister Mary Regis Waszak, treasurer, who represented the Enfield province, "We need symbols to express our ideals. As human beings we need tangible reminders of heroic deeds of persons who were faith-filled and daring, and whose love expressed itself in self-sacrifice. . . . Now we have our own memorial." Mother Amadeus added,

> It was here at Polonia that our Community was transplanted . . . that we had our beginning in America. It was here–in the frontier land of Wisconsin–that our pioneer sisters suffered adversity in the form of fires, poverty, hostility. It was here that they demonstrated unparalleled trust in Divine Providence. Here they laid the foundation for our Community's apostolates in this country. But they were not left alone. God provided them with a loving father. . . .

Recalling the pioneer sisters' first few years of suffering and adversity experienced in Polonia, she said, "If there is any epitaph to be placed on their monument it is this: 'LOVE SEEKS SACRIFICE.'" Mother Amadeus exhorted the sisters to "take courage and inspiration from the heroic example of our founding sisters." She concluded her remarks with the prophetic words of Father Dąbrowski to Mother Mary Magdalen Borowska, superior general:

> Vast fields of labor await the sisters in America. To them belongs the great apostolate of instilling the truth and beauty of our holy religion in young minds and hearts, teaching them to apply these in daily living.[222]

TO WEAVE A GARMENT

The Enfield Felicians cherished their cultural inheritance, perhaps no one more than Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski. In April of 1978, she received permission from Provincial Superior Mother Bernarda Mary Jarosz and the provincial council to research the life of Maria Kolbe, the mother of Blessed Maximilian Kolbe.[223] In the "Acknowledgements" section of her completed work titled, *To Weave a Garment: The Story of Maria Dąbrowska Kolbe, Mother of Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe,* she maintained, "Maria Kolbe's relationship with the Felician Sisters was my inspiration to undertake this writing."[224]

Sister Felicita explained that she set out to correct "false and incomplete statements perpetuated by various authors," that is, that Maria Kolbe had joined the Benedictine Sisters and that "She was going to Lvóv to join the Benedictines." In fact, Sister Felicita argued, Mother Kolbe lived with the Felician Sisters in Krakow.[225]

Her research took her to Poland, particularly to *Niepokalanów* (City of the Immaculate Mother of God), the Catholic religious community founded in

1927 by Friar Minor Conventual Maximilian Kolbe. Here she read and reread the letters of Mrs. Kolbe, and she learned about the person of Saint Maximilian Kolbe from Brother Innocenty Eugeniusz Maria Wójcik, OFM, Conventual. Brother Wójcik was one of the twenty residents of *Niepokalanów* who unsuccessfully offered his life to the Nazis for the return of Father Kolbe from the Pawiak prison in 1941. Immediately after Father Maximilian Kolbe's death, Brother Wojcik collected all Kolbe's writings and abundant documentation, and from 1946, he ran the documentation department and the *Niepokalanów* archive.[226]



SM Felicita Zdrojewski outside Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces, the Felician Generalate, in Rome, Italy.

Oral histories from sisters who knew Maria Kolbe during her residence with the Felician Sisters also helped Sister Felicita to enflesh Maria Kolbe. Sister Felicita said she came to know her "from the people who knew her, who walked the same streets, who read the same newspapers, who lived through the fears of war, who hoped for peace, and who prayed the same prayers she prayed."[227]

Although her book was not published until 1989, Sister Felicita wrote that her work "is the opportunity to rectify history and clear existing confusion surrounding Maria's life."[228] In fact, it does much more. It presents Maria Kolbe as the "uncommon woman" that she was, from her birth in 1870 through her early married life, to her acceptance by the Felician Sisters in 1913 as an "associate" where she had come "to serve and obey," until her death in 1946.

Always imbued with the importance of preserving the Felician heritage, Sister Mary Felicita volunteered to initiate plans for the Felician Heritage Room early in 1981, a space that would display the history of the Felician Sisters to engage visitors and accurately tell the Felician story in the northeastern United States.[229]

HISTORIANS

In April of 1871, Mother Mary Angela wrote to Mother Mary Anna Bielska, superior general, suggesting that the writing of the history of the Congregation "be undertaken without further delay." Concerned that the Congregation had been in existence for sixteen years, but that no record existed, she wrote: "We

have experienced so many miracles of Divine Providence, so many important events have transpired, and all this is going into oblivion. Whereas, if they were recorded and frequently read, it would stimulate in us not only gratitude toward God but also greater fidelity . . ."[230]

Mother Angela's admonition ultimately resulted in an "ocean" of general and provincial historical and archival holdings.[231] By the mid-1970s, each sister-historian in her respective province had already been hard at work, writing the history of her province when, at the recommendation of Mother Amadeus, the sister historians from the North American provinces met at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield, Connecticut, from August 15-20, 1977. The purpose of the meeting was to organize as a group and to share and exchange ideas concerning the writing of Felician history. With Sister Mary Amadeus as chair, the sisters worked out effective guidelines for their arduous task of researching, analyzing, interpreting, and writing about the past, capturing the significant events of their provinces.[232]

The group, that came to be known as the Felician Historians Commission (FHC),[233] planned strategies for mutual support and provided ongoing communication for developing and completing histories. The following sisters represented their respective provinces.[234]

Livonia, Michigan	Sister Mary Janice Ziołkowski
Buffalo, New York	Sister Ellen Marie Kuznicki
Chicago, Illinois	Sister Mary Charlene Endecavage
	Sister Mary Jacqueline Anderson
Lodi, New Jersey	Sister Mary Gaudentia Wiktor
	Sister Mary Amelia Domarecki
Coraopolis, Pennsylvania	Sister Mary Jane Kadyszewski
Enfield, Connecticut	Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda
Mississauga, Ont, Canada	Sister Mary Seraphine Zimmerman

When the Committee met July 6-8, 1979, at Immaculate Conception Provincial House in Lodi, New Jersey, the group reorganized as an Interprovincial Commission. Sister Amadeus continued in her role as chair and Sister Mary Simplicia Wytrwal of the Buffalo province assumed the role of coordinator of the Felician Historians Commission. In her role as secretary general, Sister Simplicia served as liaison between the Felician historians and the general administration. [235]

FUNDRAISING

Since their founding, donations have been the primary source of funding for most women's religious communities. This was certainly true of the earliest Felician Sisters who solicited alms as a means of sustenance both for the Institute and the sisters. In a letter to Father Honorat Kożminski in September 1867, Mother Mary Angela wrote, "Our treasury is empty," after admitting to him that she allowed Sister Mary Juniper "to solicit alms, both food and money"[236] Writing to "My dear Father" in June 1868, she declared, "Financially, we are in such straits that soon we will have nothing for our upkeep. The expenses are so enormous, and we do not know where to seek alms."[237]

Little more than a hundred years later, the Enfield community was forced by low-paying careers in parochial schools, hospitals, and catechetical centers to rely on gifts. The financial crunch was exacerbated by the failure of the Health Care Center in 1971, and fundraising became crucial to the community's survival.

The annual Lawn Party, dubbed "an annual recurring miracle" by Mother Bernarda, was generally a highly successful fundraising event as well as a highly anticipated social event of the summer. With the help of many volunteers, including the sisters' relatives, friends, supporters, and co-workers, who generously gave of their time and talent, the Lawn Party attracted thousands of people who were entertained by Polka bands, bingo games, raffles, and game booths. Patrons enjoyed Polish food including *kiełbasa, pierogi, kapusta* and *gołąbki.* Later, Maine lobsters were added to the menu. Each year, Sister Mary Apollonia Niksa baked thousands of *babki* for the event.[238]



SM Apollonia Niksa with loaves of her babki *at the Annual Lawn Festival.*

The event also featured booths with Christmas items and handmade goods as well as an extensive tag sale. Kiddie Land was always a big hit. Local superiors from throughout New England and eastern New York arranged chartered buses to transport people from their parishes to visit Enfield during the usually perfect summer weekend days for enjoyment, meeting friends, and supporting a good cause of the Felician Sisters. Supporters arrived from Amsterdam, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Floral Park, Florida, and New York City, New York; Boston, Fall River, and Lowell from Massachusetts; and from Providence, Rhode Island.[239]

What had begun as enjoyment in the mid-60s for Sister Apollonia quickly became a ministry to help support the provincial house. In the early 70s, when the Enfield Province was in dire financial straits, Sister Apollonia used her special talent to expand her *babka* enterprise, becoming a major source of income for the nearly bankrupt province. Word about the delicious bread spread rapidly and what began as a small seed grew to tens of thousands of loaves a year. Christmas, Easter, and especially at the September Annual

Lawn Festival, people hurried to the *babka* booth before the bread ran out. It is estimated that throughout the year, Sister Apollonia baked approximately 20,000 loaves![240]

Each day, Sister Apollonia rose at 2:30 a.m. to prepare the dough for approximately sixty small loaves. In addition to the other ingredients, each batch contained ninety eggs, six and a half pounds of raisins, and a magical amount of flour, until this master baker felt that the consistency was just right. The dough was allowed to grow and was then kneaded, weighed, and placed into individual pans. By the time Mass began, the smell of bread baking drifted into the chapel and rose in praise of the Lord of the Eucharist, the Bread of Life. Everyone knew that Sister Apollonia had begun another day of ministry and loving service. As a result, fresh *babka* was served at the Enfield convent for breakfast almost every day, and no Felician visitor left without a *babka*—usually several— to take on the way. The bread was a special gift, made possible by this dedicated and hardworking sister who "embodied Francis' and Clare's witness to creative fidelity." In his letter to the early Christian churches, St. James warned against sending away those in want of daily food. Sister Apollonia's bread not only fed the sisters, but also found its way to the tables of *Loaves and Fishes,* the soup kitchen in Enfield, where, once a month, the sisters served the poor and homeless.[241]

The sisters also sought other successful sources of funds for the convent, including the transformation of the small social room into a gift shop under the direction of Sister Mary Andriette Tomaszewski. The shop offered items such as religious articles, greeting cards for all occasions, handcrafted items, ceramics, and a special baby corner.[242]

To help ensure their own financial viability, the sisters took advantage of every opportunity. Annual tag sales and the home-cooked Polish Supper that included *kiełbasa, pierogi, gołąbki*, *kapusta*, rye bread and butter, a beverage, and dessert, drew people from miles away. Participation in craft fairs where the sisters were present to sell handmade articles as well as *babki* brought the Enfield community together for a good cause.

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FELICIAN CONGREGATION

The year 1980 marked the 125th birthday of the Felician Congregation, with a "Year of Prayer and Sacrifice" preceding the commemoration of this anniversary of the Founding of the Felician Sisters. In her letter of February 13, 1981, to the sisters, Superior General Mother Amadeus wrote, "I am convinced that this spiritual preparation was accepted lovingly by the Father because it was at that time that we received joyful news that the Beatification Cause of Mother Mary Angela was proceeding well."[243]

Her letter of November 21, 1980, written for the Jubilee Day itself, reminded the sisters that November 21, 1855, had "engraved itself in the heart of every sister as the BIRTHDAY of our Congregation." She continued, "Today we celebrate an event not begun by human hands, but rather one which is God's handiwork."[244]

Mother Amadeus implored "each Felician heart" to "take time today to remember . . . and give grateful praise to our loving Father" for

. . . an attic room on Mostowa Street in Warsaw . . . a faith-filled woman, Sophia Truszkowska, and her cousin Clothilde for consecrating themselves to God under the protection of Our Lady in the service of the poor . . . planting the Felician seed . . . for watering the tender vine with His continued grace . . . and blessing its growth for 125 years.[245]

Moved to share some of Father Honorat Kożminski's thoughts from a circular letter which he sent to the Felician Community on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of its founding, Mother Amadeus included the following excerpt.

Reminisce and remind yourselves of your humble beginnings and compare them with what you are presently enjoying and praise God for all that He has done for you. Then . . . there were only two of you . . . today, God has multiplied you a hundredfold. Then . . . you had only a little attic room which you shared with your poor . . . today, your homes have spread to embrace your growing Community as well as those who need your assistance. Then . . . you thought primarily of your own sanctification, but now, God has brought you many other souls whom you must lead to holiness. You were like a mustard seed . . . and now have grown into the evangelical tree in whose shade both the poor and an increasing number of Spouses of Christ find shelter.

During this time, how many graces have been poured out upon you! What mysterious proof of God's Providence was experienced when you lived in seraphic poverty and cared for the poor who lived with you. All this . . . ought to fill your hearts with joy and gratitude to God and His Mother, to whom you owe everything. She was your real Mother from the very beginning . . . she watched over you and interceded for you in times of need, protected you in times of danger, saved you from extinction when you consecrated yourselves solemnly to her Immaculate Heart.

I commend all of you – my daughters in the Heart of Jesus, to your Immaculate Mother and Lady. On the Feast of her Presentation, I unite with you in spirit, offering you anew through her hands, for the service of her Son, and asking her to keep you faithful to your vocation . . . to your seraphic spirit. May you celebrate your Jubilees as long as this world lasts . . . and may Mary keep you in her Immaculate Heart forever.[246]

At the provincial house in Enfield on Saturday, November 22, 1980, the sisters joined Felicians throughout the world in praising and thanking God for his goodness, mercy, and love with a Mass of Praise and Thanksgiving in the chapel. Sister Mary Alda Kosiba, provincial secretary, who compiled and edited *News Bits,* reported, "It was a splendid demonstration of community loyalty as almost the entire province was present in Enfield."[247]

Most Rev. Peter A. Rosazza, auxiliary bishop for the archdiocese of Hartford, was the principal celebrant with Most Rev. Joseph F. Maguire, bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, and Msgr. Louis B. Blecharczyk, representing Bishop Daniel P. Reilly of the Norwich, Connecticut, diocese, concelebrating. Also in attendance were Father Henry P. Fiedorczyk, Father Raymond F.

Gallagher, Father Francis T. Kerwan, Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, Father Michael T. Twardzik, Father George Walter, CSsR, and Father Clarence Mazur, OFM, community chaplain.[248]

Members of the Knights of Columbus added to the solemnity of the occasion. The choir, joined by all the sisters, rendered beautiful selections to the accompaniment of the organ and guitars. Following the Eucharistic liturgy, sisters and guests enjoyed dinner in the social room whose main attraction was the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa, a picture of Mother Angela, and a large wooden carved representation of the Felician emblem.[249]

Sister Carol Marie Zygo, principal of St. Joseph School in Webster, Massachusetts, planned the entertainment that followed dinner. Ten members of the seventeen-member group known as "Messengers," from central Massachusetts, rendered inspirational and religious songs specifically prepared for the anniversary.[250] Sisters throughout the province arranged special programs to observe this anniversary in their local houses. Masses of thanksgiving, Eucharistic adoration, banquets, talent shows, and assemblies observed the day in grateful thanks and joyful spirit for the countless blessings granted the Felician Congregation.[251]

During a Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Hedwig Parish in Floral Park, New York, celebrated by Father Francis E. Filmanski, pastor, the sisters formally renewed their vows in the presence of the parishioners and Sister Mary Magdalen Pytelewski, superior, read the names of the deceased Felicians who serviced the parish. In his remarks to the parishioners, Father Filmanski chronicled the achievements of the Felician Sisters for his audience.[252] He concluded his homily in this way:

> What the Felician Sisters celebrate is more than an individual history of an individual congregation. It is the principle of religious life itself, of a life lived at the heart of the Church, concentric with the life of the Church; a life united to the lives of Christians; a life sustained not by the strength of the individual or even the group, but by the vitality of the whole Church, that is, by the vitality of Christ.[253]

Friends of the Felician Community from far and wide rejoiced with the sisters and sent greetings and well wishes. On behalf of Pope John Paul II, Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, wrote:

> The Holy Father hopes that this joyful occasion will be an incentive for each Sister to deepen her trust in the love and mercy of our Savior and to renew her desire to build up the Church in charity and unity. He also prays that your entire Congregation will be blessed with an increase in religious vocations, and that God will grant abundant fruitfulness to all your endeavours on behalf of the Gospel of his Son.[254]

Closer to home, Father Stanley E. Milewski, chancellor of The Orchard Lake Schools in Michigan, reminded the sisters that they "share a common 'Father' here in the United States in the person of Father Joseph Dąbrowski," and "both have responded in the spirit of their forefathers to the opportunities presented by the Holy Spirit." He wrote,

> How happy you can truly be today.... Would not your beloved Foundress, Mother Mary Truszkowska, be indeed proud if she were able to see here on earth the rich fruits of your labors? Would not her heart beat with joy to gaze upon the blessed history of the accomplishments of the Felician Sisters in every dimension of endeavor—from teaching to missionary work, from care of the sick to service at the Orchard Lake Schools. Perhaps she too would break forth into holy song . . . [255]

1981 PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

As they have done since the Felician Congregation's earliest days, the sisters gathered at the provincial house to open the Provincial Chapter on August 11, 1981. The entire Chapter process is a time of discernment and decision making that emerges from community and personal prayer. The twenty-four delegates gathered, urged on by the love of Christ, confident that the Holy Spirit breathed with and within them.

Most Rev. John F. Whealon, archbishop of Hartford, offered the Eucharistic liturgy in the chapel. In his homily, he encouraged the sisters to think with the Church and reminded them that their witness to religious life is evident in their cooperation with the magisterium of the Church. He wished the sisters God's blessing and success in this undertaking.[256]

The goals of the Chapter were four-fold: to study aspects of the Franciscan charism and to search out how these might be lived in the present day; to discuss matters relating to the observance of the Felician Constitutions; to deliberate and decide upon proposals to refer to the General Chapter in 1982; and to legislate on proposals concerning matters within the competence of the Provincial Chapter.[257]

As provincial superior, Mother Bernarda was the presiding officer. The twenty-four delegates, elected from among the members of the province, along with seven *ex officio* members, conducted the business of the Chapter. Sister Constance Marie Tomyl served as parliamentarian as well as liturgist. Other assistants chosen to expedite the business of the Chapter included Sister Janice Marie Gaudette and Sister Mary Julitta Krzysztofik, secretaries; and Sister Mary Alfreda Charzewski and Sister Rosemary Zawada, typists.[258]

In her opening address, Mother Bernarda referenced Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, prefect for the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, who described a Chapter as "not a task of geniuses but of simple men and women with the capacity of being animated by the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth and the testimony of fortitude and martyrdom, of contemplative interior life and prophecy." She concluded her remarks reminding the sisters of their interior heritage and strength, inviting them to proceed to "'Repair our heavenly Father's House' and restore its spirit through the Heart of Mary in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament."[259]

Significant issues presented and discussed at this Chapter included housing the Felician Central Archives in Enfield; formation of the Felician Health Care Task Force; and continued study and evaluation of Our Lady of the Angels Academy. Other matters from the daily lives of the sisters that merited consideration included action on behalf of social justice; the day of relaxation; responsibility for professional advancement; the budget; the habit; the monthly retreat days and annual retreats.[260] Delegates elected to participate in the 1982

General Chapter in Rome who would accompany Mother Bernarda were Sister Mary Augustine Kloza and Sister Mary Edith St. Jean. Sister Mary Anastasia Holak and Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko were selected as alternates.[261]

Felician Central Archives

The chapter delegates learned that the Longview Library Learning Center building was being considered to house the Felician Central Archives. At the invitation of Sister Mary Alda Kosiba, Sister Mary Linus Bax, a Sister of the Precious Blood from Dayton, Ohio, spent several days at the provincial house in Enfield at the end of July 1980. A leader since starting her career in religious archives in 1975, Sister Mary Linus was not only involved in the archives of her own community, but also assisted beginning archivists in their search for archival proficiency. Sister Mary Linus had also made herself available for consultation at various religious archives in the United States, Canada, and Rome, Italy. The purpose of her trip to Enfield was to evaluate Longview Library Learning Center as a possible central archive for the Felician Congregation. After reviewing the situation, she said, "This is an archivist's dream come true." The provincial council realized that much more remained to be done, but a plan was readied for presentation and approval at this Provincial Chapter and then forwarded to the 1982 General Chapter.[262]

Felician Healthcare System

Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski updated the delegates on the plan for implementing the proposed Felician Healthcare System. During the Bi-Annual Assembly held at Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, from May 18 to June 1, 1980, the group discussed changes in the delivery of healthcare. Aware of the necessity to remain responsive to the needs of the Church and to the fulfillment of the Felician Healthcare Mission, Mother Mary Amadeus, superior general, along with the members, decided to form a Felician Task Force to study the position of the facilities and to determine whether corporate restructuring was necessary.[263]

Following the authorization of the Felician Healthcare Task Force at that meeting, the Task Force Executive Committee met with five members of the general administration at Immaculate Conception Provincial House in Lodi on January 5, 1981. Sister Mary Norberta served as chair of the group that also included Sister Mary Miranda Sanecki, from Chicago and Sister Mary Modesta Piwowar from Livonia. Sister Mary Paschalisa Cyborowski, a member of the Task Force from Chicago, was also present.[264]

In her letter to the provincial superiors and their councilors of January 8, 1981, Mother Amadeus recalled the community decision made at the General Chapter of 1976: the recommitment of the Felician Community to the healthcare apostolate as one of the means to build up the Kingdom of God and bring Christ's healing love to His people. The resolution to reassess the effectiveness of the Felician Sisters in sponsoring healthcare institutions at the 1980 Bi-Annual Assembly followed, to be accomplished through the Healthcare Task Force established in August 1980.[265]

The meeting in Lodi in early January 1981 served as a planning session for the future thrust of the Task Force, as well as for the organization of a Felician Healthcare System (FHS). The Ad Hoc Committee on Organization was established with Sister Mary Miranda as chair and Sister Mary Paschalisa a

member, with a third member pending. Mother Amadeus explained that this Ad Hoc Committee would operate until the appointment of a full-time Healthcare Coordinator, who would work with the general and provincial administrations, the Executive Committee of the Task Force, and the hospital administrators.[266]

The plan was that eventually the Felician Healthcare System would branch out into subcommittees for infirmaries and homes for the aged, with sisters from various provinces serving on these subcommittees. Mother Amadeus noted that a study of the bylaws of hospitals under Felician sponsorship would be a very important part of the groundwork. She added that other long-range plans for the FHS were being established and would be refined as the project developed.[267]

Acknowledging the urgency of the tasks that needed to be completed before presentation at the General Chapter of 1982, Mother Amadeus convoked a meeting of the provincial superiors and council members with responsibility for the healthcare apostolate along with the general council and executive committee of the Task Force in Lodi for March 27 and 28, 1981.[268] At this meeting, attended by Mother Amadeus, the general councilors, provincial superiors of the American provinces, and the vice-provincial of the Canadian vice-province, the name Felician Healthcare System was approved, and a resolution was passed to adopt and develop the Consortium Model.[269] The Felician Task Force received unanimous approval to prepare a formal presentation of a Felician Health Care System for the 1982 General Chapter.

1982 GENERAL CHAPTER

Shortly after completion of the 1981 Provincial Chapters, Mother Amadeus formally convoked the Eighteenth General Chapter of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice on June 11, 1982. Delegates to this Chapter met at the Christian Brothers Generalate located on Via Aurelia in Rome.[270]

The theme for the Eighteenth General Chapter was *Felician Witness in the 1980s: Evangelical, Ecclesial, Eucharistic and Marian.* In her circular dated September 8, 1981, Mother Amadeus called for preparations in all the Felician provinces. She noted that this General Chapter would be "not only entrusted with an evaluation of our past, but also with rediscovery of our Felician identity . . ." She posed the following as the principal questions that would challenge the delegates:

- What does God wish of the Felician Congregation at this moment of the Church?
- Are we faithful to our charism?
- What do the People of God expect of us today?
- To what extent does the Felician Community manifest and communicate Christ?[271]

In her letter to the sisters, Mother Amadeus reminded them of the words of Pope John Paul II: "that no movement in religious life has any value unless it be a movement inward to the 'still center' of their existence where Christ is." She implored each sister to commend the General Chapter to God's loving Providence through daily prayer, acts of penance and sacrifice. She asked that each province offer a monthly Mass for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, she referenced Cardinal Eduardo Pironio who wrote that "a Community Chapter is an ecclesial event concerning the whole Church and that the whole ecclesial community benefits from the fruits of the chapter." Finally, she encouraged the sisters to seek the prayerful support of their "parents, family, friends, pastors, parishioners, school children, employees, and patients in our hospitals, residents in our homes for the sick and aged."[272]

The 18th General Chapter of the Felician Congregation opened on June 11, 1982, in the Chapter Hall of the Generalate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on Via Aurelia in Rome, Italy. Archbishop Paul Augustin Mayer, OSB, secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and a friend of the Felician Sisters, offered the Mass to seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit on the chapter.[273]

In her opening address, Mother Mary Amadeus focused on the theme of the chapter, "Felician Witness in the 80's: Evangelical, Ecclesial, Eucharistic and Marian." She reminded the delegates that the General Chapter should be measured by its capacity for conversion and transformation of the heart of every participant.[274]

An integral part of the proceedings of the General Chapter was the consideration of nearly 233 proposals. Of the forty-eight delegates voting on the proposals and other issues, twenty participated by virtue of their office and twenty-eight by election.[275]

Significant events during the chapter included a pilgrimage to Assisi as well as an audience with Pope John Paul II. On July 4, the delegates participated in the Eucharistic liturgy celebrated by the Pope in his private chapel, followed by a visit with him in the library adjoining the chapel. Each sister received a rosary from the Pope as well as a blessing, with individual and group photographs following.[276]

Election of the superior general took place on July 7. Ladislaus Cardinal Rubin celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy and then presided at the election of the superior general. Mother Mary Amadeus was re-elected. The six councilors elected to the general administration were:[277]

Sister Mary Clarentine Dzienis, Livonia	Vicar general
Sister Mary Bonawenture Paszek, Przemysl	
Sister Mary Rosette Kubisty, Buffalo	
Sister Mary Alodia Stozek, Chicago	
Sister Mary David Krasowski, Coraopolis	Secretary general
Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, Enfield	Treasurer general

This Chapter reinforced the ecclesial, evangelical, Eucharistic, and Marian character of its Felician witness. Consistent with the Franciscan heritage of the international Congregation based in Rome, Italy, the Chapter urged its members to help alleviate the injustices suffered by the poor and to continue to embrace a simple lifestyle. Accordingly, the Chapter proposed a program of action to intensify the Congregation's witness to poverty. [278]

To preserve the Catholic philosophy of its healthcare institutions and to assist in their effective management, the General Chapter endorsed the establishment of an interprovincial Felician Healthcare System. In the spirit

of the foundress of the Congregation, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska, the Chapter resolved to continue to respond to the needs of the Church and of the times and its varied ministries. Resolutions encompassed every area of Felician life, i.e., The Vowed Life, Life of Prayer, Community Life, Apostolic Service, Formation, and Government. The delegates produced more than fifty changes or additions to the Constitutions. Eleven items clarified "Norms for Religious Garb." Directives were issued for the general administration, as well as for sisters at the provincial level and interprovincial level.[279]

The seven Affirmations, part of the "Acts of the 18th General Chapter," captured and summed up the spirit and work of this General Chapter: ". . . we, the delegates affirm our intention to become credible witnesses to the world." In the 80's,

WE REMAIN FAITHFUL
To the Felician charism in its Evangelical, Eucharistic, Ecclesial and Marian aspects.

WE CHERISH
Our Felician heritage.

WE EMBRACE
The Eucharist as the Center of our Felician life.

WE REVERE
Our Lady as Mother and Foundress and we express this love through Marian devotions.

WE CONCRETIZE
Our unity in the Lord accepting each other in community as sister, friend, and companion.

WE REDEDICATE
Ourselves to the mission of the Church and in our service give witness to the People of God.

WE SUPPORT
The work of the Interprovincial Formation Commission in charting the course for ongoing formation.[280]

Mother Amadeus assured the sisters that if they live out the inspirations of the Chapter, they will "truly recapture the original inspiration of our Foundress and become spiritually fruitful for the Church—for the spiritual renewal of the world."[281]

GOLDEN JUBILEE

In Chapter 4 of *A History of the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province,* the author Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda recalled Foundress Mother Mary Angela writing, "From the very beginning until now, the special care and blessings of God are in evidence."[282] It was this special care and blessings that the province, now fifty years old, planned to celebrate in 1982. In her "Golden Jubilee Jottings," prepared for the celebration, she acknowledged God's purpose and design at work in Our Lady of the Angels Province. Using words from the Book of Leviticus (25:8-10), Mother Bernarda proclaimed the opening of the Golden Jubilee Year. "You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of years shall be to you forty-nine. Then you shall send

abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you will return to his home, to your family."[283]

It seemed fitting that the Jubilee monthly special observances began on August 15, 1981, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the Living Rosary outdoors, in front of the chapel. The prayerful atmosphere and singing filled the hearts of those present with grateful thanks for the goodness of the Lord throughout the province's first fifty years. Vespers prepared specifically for the occasion and a joyous evening meal set the tone for a year of renewal and celebration.[284] The province glorified and praised God in and through the activities planned for the year, developing the theme "Glory and Praise."[285]





On August 15, 1981, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the sisters gathered for the Living Rosary outdoors, in front of the chapel, to thank God for the abundance of blessings received during the province's first fifty years.

The Calendar of Special Activities that allowed the Enfield sisters to reflect on their past, celebrate their lay partners, and honor all that they did to arrive at this point in their history included Children's Day and Sisters' Day. In November, the sisters paid tribute to departed sisters, chaplains, parents, and benefactors. The Enfield Community Day included an ecumenical service and coffee hour for the Enfield townspeople. In February, the sisters paid tribute to living and deceased provincial superiors. Personnel in various apostolates of the province and benefactors were honored in March,[286] and more than 700 people attended Family Day on August 22, 1982, the final jubilee activity that included an outdoor Mass and buffet luncheon.[287] The Coordinating Committee included Sister Mary Amandine Zdrok, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, and Sister Mary Florentine Myjak.[288]

The Golden Jubilee was a wonderful occasion for the sisters since it provided an opportunity for them to look back at their history and the ways in which they had grown and served. The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard noted long ago that we live our lives forward, but we understand them backward. This Jubilee gave the Felician community in Enfield the opportunity to understand life backward, reflecting on God's providence and the joys and challenges of the journey.

For the culminating event of the Golden Jubilee Year, more than 300 sisters gathered in the provincial house chapel to celebrate the Mass of Thanksgiving with Most Rev. John F. Whealon, archbishop of Hartford, as the principal celebrant on May 1, 1982. He was assisted by thirty-eight priests who came from far and wide to concelebrate. The bright, sunny day enhanced the simple elegance of the beautiful chapel and added joy to the happy occasion. The solemn Eucharistic liturgy, the hymns rendered by the choir, and the devoted congregation made an unforgettable impression on everyone present. In his inspiring homily, Msgr. Louis B. Blecharczyk recounted God's blessings on Our Lady of the Angels Province and expressed his happiness at being invited to speak on this occasion.[289]

According to the May 26 issue of *News Bits from OLA,* the sisters' hearts were "overflowing with joyful gratitude to God and to all who bravely and confidently envisioned what we enjoy today and who had shown love and concern" throughout the past five decades.[290] The writer reflected:

> During our 50 years of existence as the northeastern province, we, the Felician Sisters, have incurred a tremendous debt of gratitude which we can never adequately express in words. It would be impossible to acknowledge with full appreciation the significant contributions provided throughout the five decades by the provincial superiors, the provincial councils, our sister provinces, the innumerable relatives, pastors, clergy, friends, benefactors, lay persons who, as groups or individuals, have had a part in the foundation and development of Our Lady of the Angels Province.[291]

Singled out were Joseph Fiore for his thirty years of devoted service as facilities director; Alfred Kaflewski, for twenty years of service in facilities maintenance; and Władzia Duda for her ten years of outstanding culinary service.[292]

In "Golden Jubilee Jottings," historian Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda challenged the sisters to "evaluate the past and see if it is fulfilling its apostolic vocation in the same spirit of joyful dedicated service which characterized its pioneers in a more rugged but less complex age."[293] She added:

> The impact of Felician activities in New England was never so impressive as that of the large provinces in the Midwest. . . . But like their great pioneers, with them in deep faith, the Felicians will continue to be women witnessing in the Church today "as instruments of the Holy Spirit proclaiming Christ's love for all men [and] move toward the fulfillment of all things in Him in unity of purpose, in solidarity of ecclesial communion, and in fidelity to our Felician charism" (Preamble, *Response to Love,* Rome, 1976).[294]

Chapter 2
Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski, 1982 – 1988
'The love of Christ impels us' (2 Cor 5:14)

The affairs of the 18th General Chapter of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice concluded on July 8, 1982, with the re-election of Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka as superior general and the installation of her new council, and Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski happily returned to her home province of Our Lady of the Angels in Enfield, Connecticut.

As a member of the general council, Sister Mary Landeline served the Congregation well, with dedication and sacrifice. In her area of responsibility as the coordinator of formation, she worked tirelessly to prepare and finalize the *Fundamentals of Felician Formation* for presentation at the General Chapter of 1982. She began her work at the first Inter-Provincial Meeting of Coordinators of Formation that took place in Lodi, New Jersey, from August 30 through September 2, 1977, encouraging a systematic study of the document, both on the provincial and local levels, hoping to involve as many sisters as possible.[1] In November 1980, she headed the Ad Hoc Committee in Rome where the members studied the remarks and suggestions offered by the sisters to improve and update the document. Eventually, the title was changed from *Fundamentals of Formation* to *Fundamentals of Felician Formation* and, by December 1981, delegates to the 1982 General Chapter received copies in preparation for approval at that Chapter.[2]

When the Inter-Provincial Tertianship came into existence in 1977, Sister Landeline became its first director and served in this position until 1980. She conducted countless meetings on topics pertinent to vocation work including brainstorming innovative ideas in vocation recruitment, reviewing current methods for screening candidates, and developing a practical program for affiliates and vocation contact personnel. She was also instrumental in establishing the Inter-Provincial Vocation Directors Commission and in overseeing the publication of *Guidelines for Vocation Ministry*. Her visible concern prompted the members of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Evaluation of the Reports of the General Administration to express their appreciation as they noted the "important place spiritual formation has in the goals and objectives of this general administration."[3]

After the second session of the General Chapter, the sisters in Enfield turned their attention to electing their new provincial superior. Sister Landeline's leadership skills were well known to the community since she had served them as provincial superior from 1970-1976. Because they had experienced her concern for them as persons as well as her spirit of joyful service, the sisters once again elected her as their provincial superior for a six-year term from 1982 to 1988.[4] Sisters elected to the provincial council to share this responsibility were:

Sister Mary Alexander Mazur, vicar and first councilor

Sister Mary Augustine Kloza, second councilor

Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, third councilor

Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, fourth councilor & secretary

Sister Mary Florentine Myjak filled the office of provincial treasurer and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar that of director of novitiate, postulancy, and candidacy.



The provincial administration, 1982-1988.
From l: SM Augustine Kloza, SM Bernardine Mucha, MM Landeline Ptasienski, provincial superior; SM Lawrence Lojko, SM Alexander Mazur, and SM Florentine Myjak.

Father Xavier Hayes, CP, concelebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving for the installation of this new provincial administration with Father Joseph Smyczyk, S.Ch, chaplain, on Monday, October 11, in the Our Lady of the Angels Convent chapel. Father Hayes' inspiring homily focused on loving service in the leadership role. A delicious dinner followed the Eucharistic celebration.[5]

Assisted by her council, Mother Landeline rallied the sisters on an ambitious journey to achieve the objectives and goals established by the 18th General Chapter, especially deepening their spiritual and personal life through the lived experience of the Felician charism. To assist the sisters in reaching the goal of becoming "Authentic Felician witnesses in the 80's through a renewed faithful living of *Response to Love,*" the general administration offered the following program of action for implementation over the next six years:

	Objective
1983-1984	Deepening and refining our Felician identity in its evangelical, Eucharistic, ecclesial, and Marian aspects.
1984-1985	Intensifying our vowed commitment in imitation of Christ more perfectly in the spirit of Saint Francis.
1985-1986	Nurturing our personal relationship with the Lord in a life of prayer centered on the Eucharist, the Gospel, and the Cross.
	Accepting responsibility for personal growth by firm commitment to all levels of formation and by joining efforts with those actively involved in recruitment and formation ministries.
1986-1987	Concretizing our unity in the Lord through mutual love and support in community.
1987-1988	Aligning personal and community goals of apostolic service with the mission of the Church.

While the general administration offered suggested resources for study, such as the charism of Mother Angela, the life of Saint Felix of Cantalice, and concerns for justice and peace, it entrusted each province with the responsibility for designing its own program.[6]

Additionally, the sisters could also reference the position paper that Sister Mary Felicity Wardzinski of Buffalo delivered to the general chapter delegates on June 12, 1982. Driven by the Conciliar mandate to every religious Congregation to journey back through its history to recover its heritage, in her paper Sister Mary Felicity identified the formative forces that, in a distinctive way, shaped the "spiritual personality" that the Felician Congregation assumed over the course of time. Part I focused on the ecclesial, Eucharistic, Marian, and evangelical dimensions of Felician spirituality. Part II discussed the "Spirit-gift" that rooted the Felician Congregation firmly, from its very beginning, in the purest of Franciscan ideals.[7]

FELICIAN EUCHARISTIC YEAR

At the final session of the 1982 General Chapter, Mother Mary Amadeus, superior general, officially declared 1983 as the Felician Eucharistic Year to commemorate the first centenary of the special privilege of daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the provincial houses of the Congregation.[8] In her circular letter to the sisters announcing this, Mother Amadeus reminded the sisters of this appropriate affirmation from the 18th General Chapter:

We embrace the EUCHARIST as the CENTER of our Felician life.[9]

She enjoined Felicians throughout the world to "spend this centennial in a spirit of adoration, thanksgiving and praise to our Eucharistic Lord for His Presence on our altars for the past 100 years." Further on, she asked, "Does not our pledge to be FELICIAN WITNESS IN THE 80's commit us to an intense living our EUCHARISTIC charism in 1983?" She challenged the sisters to be "EUCHARISTIC women, interceding to God for his people," and prayed that "our revitalized Eucharistic devotion bring peace and reconciliation to our troubled world."[10]

Speaking to the general chapter delegates about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, Sister Mary Felicity Wardzinski, (Buffalo), a researcher and translator of Congregational documents, wrote in her position paper delivered to the 18th General Chapter, "This sacred presence with us uniquely conquers the distance that separates His risen state from our earthly lives. . . . In His Eucharistic presence, we learn the meaning of our own call—to share and ultimately give our lives away."[11]

The sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province began their observance of the Felician Eucharistic Year on January 13, 1983, with the first of a series of monthly reflections of praise and adoration created by Sister Mary Alodia Malinka. She designed the twelve Eucharistic reflections to enable moments of personal encounter with the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. The initial service focused on the numerous blessings bestowed on the Felician Congregation throughout the last 100 years of its existence, and gave thanks to Pope Leo XIII who, on April 20, 1883, granted the Congregation the privilege of perpetual adoration in the Felician chapel in Krakow.[12] The Breve for perpetual exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament was renewed in 1893.[13]

Daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

The privilege of daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in Felician motherhouses almost eluded the grasp of the Congregation because of its extreme poverty. The papal brief granting perpetual adoration issued by Pope Leo included a stipulation that a fund to defray the cost of candles required to adorn the altar of exposition be ensured. When apprised of the predicament of the Felician Sisters, Sister Jadwiga of St. John of the Cross, a Discalced Carmelite, offered a considerable portion of her inheritance—10,000 *zlotych Reńskich*– to establish such a fund in the name of her uncle Joseph from whom she had received the money.[14]

One month after the issuance of the Breve, on May 21, 1893, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska wrote a letter to Sister Jadwiga in which she acknowledged the Carmelite's generosity and made her a promise of eternal gratitude. With this promise, the Felician foundress forged a friendship between the two Congregations that endured over the hundred years since its inception:

> I know, Reverend Mother, that doing all for the glory of God, you need no thanks. Nevertheless, to satisfy my own heart, I am prompted to send you an expression of gratitude for the good rendered to our poor Congregation which shall always attribute to you the grace of perpetual adoration. Were it not for your generosity, we probably would not have obtained permission for perpetual adoration. We might have had to renounce this happiness because we would not have been able to give evidence of a permanent fund for candles. I realize that for such a favor it is impossible to give adequate thanks so I will not strain myself to express it in words. I can only assure you that our love for you will never die in our hearts. We will make them known in prayer at the feet of Jesus, asking him to compensate for us by pouring upon you an abundance of graces and blessings.[15]

The Felician-Carmelite kinship was more than a spiritual alliance: its expression was also incarnational. In 1958, the Carmelites, whose convent adjoined the Felician generalate on Via del Casaletto in Rome, opened their chapel to the Felician Sisters whose convent was under construction. At least through the mid-1980s, the relationship between the two Congregations remained vibrant and strong. The Felicians had always been generous to the Carmelites especially since the proximity of the nuns in the Regina Carmel Monastery provided many opportunities for them to help their next-door neighbors. Several times a year, the Felicians provided the Carmelites with gifts of food as well as financial support. When the Carmelites petitioned the Felicians to assist their nuns in Poland at Christmas time in 1983, the Congregation responded with assistance to twenty convents.[16]

Sisters throughout the Enfield province continued to use the "Felician Eucharistic Year" booklets for communal prayer services as well as for Holy Hours that focused their love of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, thus making him loved and glorified. During annual retreats at the provincial house, Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline took advantage of the presence of the sisters and met with them, centering on the Eucharistic aspects of the Felician charism found in *Fundamentals of Felician Formation*: "Love of the Eucharist," and "Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament."[17] Each month, the

brief Eucharistic reflection preceding the information in *News Bits from OLA* also helped to keep the sisters mindful of their Eucharistic charism and imbue their lives with the Eucharistic spirit.[18]

In the *State of the Province Report* for this period, Mother Landeline wrote that because of this yearlong observance, the sisters recognized the many blessings bestowed on the community. During her visitation with the sisters in the local houses, she observed a more conscientious performance of daily duties and an improvement in the quality of community living, all of which contributed to a joyous and harmonious family spirit.[19]

Since the Enfield province designated 1982-1983 as "Year of the Teacher," Mother Landeline met with every school's faculty during the annual visitation to express her thanks for their spirit of dedication to the mission of the Church and to encourage both the laity and the religious to persevere in responding to the command of Christ, to "Go, teach." She presented each principal and teacher with a medal showing the head of Jesus, blessed by His Holiness John Paul II.[20]

The Essential Elements *of Religious Life*

At the direction of Pope John Paul II, on May 31, 1983, the Congregation for Religious issued a summary of canonical norms for religious life called *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate.* This document followed a letter from Pope John Paul to the bishops of the United States in which he appointed Archbishop John Quinn to head a commission to study religious life in the United States. The pope requested this study because of concern over the rapidly diminishing number of vocations to the religious life in this country and the unprecedented departure of religious from Catholic institutions. The pope asked the Congregation for Religious to issue *Essential Elements* as a guideline for bishops in performing this study of religious life.

Essential Elements signaled an end to the period of experimentation mandated by *Ecclesiae Sanctae,* as the new *Code of Canon Law,* promulgated by the pope on January 25, 1983, became effective on November 27, 1983 (III, Introduction).[21] The document stressed the importance of the vows, describing them as "a response to the gift of God, . . . a triple expression of a single 'yes' to the one relationship of total consecration" (II.1.13). It further emphasized the importance of community living, including "sharing of prayer, work, meals, leisure, [and a] common spirit" (II.2.19); directing the works of all members to a common apostolate; and wearing "a religious garb that distinguishes them as consecrated persons" (II, 6, 34). Section II, Part 4 of the document highlighted the need for a deep prayer life to sustain religious life, taking care to place the Eucharist at the center of community life and to gather for "the prayer of the Church as offered especially in the Liturgy of the Hours" (II, 2, 20).

While many religious communities moved forward aggressively to implement what they perceived as essential changes, others—including the Felician Sisters—moved cautiously, introducing changes minimally. The Felician community continued to align itself with Consortium Perfectae Caritatis rather than with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious because the Felician leadership perceived the latter group as moving away from the definition of religious life approved by the Holy See. The document *Perfectae Caritatis* affirmed the importance of common life as expressed in

prayer, in the sharing of the same spirit, in living together and in bearing one another's burdens. Felician leadership saw community life disintegrate as sisters in other congregations selected their own jobs and living arrangements, moved away from the traditional apostolates of teaching and healthcare, and abandoned the religious habit as a symbol of consecration.

The Felician Congregation applied the guidelines in *Essential Elements* to their lifestyle and governance, while the sisters continued to live day-to-day with other members of their institute. In fact, when the sisters gathered for the October 1985 provincial assembly after an absence of several years, "Purpose and Objectives of Provincial Assembly" was the first item on the agenda.[22] Mother Mary Landeline, who coordinated the meeting, noted that the Church encouraged religious to meet, citing #52 of *Essential Elements* that advocated "appropriate involvement of the members in the government of the institute, for shared responsibility, and for subsidiarity." The document emphasized the importance of understanding as well as implementing these principles "to fulfill the purpose of religious government: the building of a united community in Christ in which God is sought and loved before all things, and the mission of Christ is generously accomplished." Moreover, at the closing of the canonical visitation on April 15, 1984, the general administration directed the provincial administration to hold provincial assemblies "To keep the sisters abreast of the developments in the province and to promote community spirit."[23]

EXTRAORDINARY HOLY YEAR OF THE REDEMPTION

The Extraordinary Holy Year of the Redemption overlapped with the Felician Eucharistic Year. Pope John Paul II called the extraordinary Jubilee Year to mark what the Church believed to be the 1,950th anniversary of Jesus on the cross in 33 A.D. The Pope opened the special Holy Year of Redemption on March 25, 1983, by praying for change in a world that "seems to be heading in a direction that is dangerous for everyone." This prayer was contained in the homily read by the Pope as he symbolically opened the sealed bronze door of St. Peter's Basilica.[24]

Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka referenced this significant event when she shared her thoughts with the Enfield sisters regarding their upcoming canonical visitation, calendared for March 7 to April 15, 1984. "It is our prayerful hope," she wrote, "that this visitation taking place at the close of the Church's Jubilee Year of Redemption, may be a profound experience of the redeeming love of Jesus for each individual Sister."[25] Further on, she wrote, "Dear Sisters, we come to you in the Spirit of Jesus, our Redeemer, whose healing love leads to reconciliation with the Father. In the spirit of our Blessed Lady, the handmaid of the Lord, we come to assist you in whatever way we can, as members of one religious family."[26]

The Enfield sisters warmly welcomed Mother Mary Amadeus and her councilors, Sister Mary Clarentine Dzienis, Sister Mary Rosette Kubisty, and Sister Mary Alodia Stozek, when they arrived on March 6, 1984, to begin the canonical visitation, and they offered their prayerful and sisterly support to the visitators.[27]

On March 25, the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, the sisters and visitators joined the bishops of the world in the *Consecration of all Individuals and Peoples of the World to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* that took place

alongside the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima brought from Fatima to Rome for this purpose. Mother Amadeus led the sisters of the provincial house in the Act of Consecration, reaffirming the Felician Community's dedication to Mary, Mother of our Redeemer. Mother Landeline encouraged the sisters in each local house to arrange a Marian service and pray the Act of Consecration.[28]

On that same day, Pope John Paul promulgated *Redemptionis Donum (The Gift of the Redemption),* the apostolic exhortation to men and women religious on their consecration in the light of the mystery of the Redemption. The document made clear that the witness of religious life in the Church consisted primarily in leading the world towards a fulfillment found only in God and that the value of religious consists always in who they are, not in what they do.[29]

Pope John Paul wrote: "This exhortation which I address to you . . . is meant to be an expression of that love which the Church has for men and women religious. You, dear brothers and sisters, are truly a special treasure of the Church. And this treasure becomes more understandable through meditation on the reality of the Redemption" (#104). He reminded his listeners that sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs and suffering of others are concrete witness to a deep bond linking religious to Christ.

The communal Lenten journey of the visitation closed with the solemn observance of the Palm Sunday liturgy on April 15, 1984. Sisters from most local houses traveled to the motherhouse in Enfield to participate in the Eucharistic liturgy and to enjoy the celebratory dinner that followed in the social room. The sisters also honored Mother Amadeus in anticipation of her feast day on April 18. The entertainment that followed showcased the sisters' hidden talents and provided a truly memorable event.[30]

Mother Amadeus and the visitators expressed gratitude to the sisters for their love and fidelity "to Christ, our Redeemer, to the Church, and to our Felician community"[31] and for the privilege of experiencing the Lenten journey with the sisters. She acknowledged Mother Landeline and the provincial administration for their untiring efforts in their concern for the spiritual growth and welfare of the province and urged the sisters to continue to support them.

The visitators commended the sisters for their "Commitment to live in a loving community where the spirit of healing and service is a part of daily living" and for their "total self-giving in the various supportive works of the Congregation, through which you bring the love and goodness of Christ to others." They intended the Directives they shared with the sisters in the areas of spiritual life, community life, formation, apostolate, and government to "bring a new spiritual springtime" to the province as well as to each individual sister.[32]

FELICIAN CENTRAL ARCHIVES

Another major directive from the 1982 General Chapter for implementation by the general administration was the organization of the Felician Central Archives at the Longview Library building in Enfield, Connecticut. Following the presentation of Sister Mary Linus Bax, C.PP.S. at the chapter, the delegates voted to move ahead with situating the archives in the United States. In 1982, more than 2,540 of the 3,500 Felician Sisters lived and served in the North American provinces. Early in January 1983, the general administration appointed former secretary general Sister Mary Simplicia Wytrwal, of the Buffalo province, as

director of the Felician Central Archives and former provincial secretary Sister Mary Alda Kosiba as assistant director.[33]

From its inception, the Congregation had established archives to house treasured and valued documents as well as the writings of community members. The founders collected, filed, and preserved all incoming and outgoing writings and sent them to the generalate in Krakow, Poland, for safekeeping. However, during World War II, when there was real danger that the Krakow generalate would be bombed or occupied by the enemy, the archival materials were hidden underground. Consequently, some irreplaceable historical documents were damaged or destroyed. When the generalate was transferred to Ponca City, Oklahoma, in 1950, and then to Rome in 1954, the archival house continued to be in Krakow. After attempts to bring the archival materials from Krakow to the general archives in Rome, most of the documents were successfully transported there in 1968.

In 1983, Felician archival materials spanned 115 years with a total of nearly 20,000 documents. The first document, dated 1852, is a photocopy of the birth certificate of Sophia Camille Truszkowska, born May 16, 1825. Geographically speaking, the materials represented almost all the continents. Duplicates of all documents recording the institution's legal establishment, operations, policies and procedures would be preserved in the central archives. In case of a disaster in any of the provinces, the central archives ensured the safety of these vital documents for posterity.

In response to the need for a central archival system to classify, hold, and keep secure Congregational records, the general chapter approved the establishment of a central archives located in the Longview Library in Enfield, Connecticut.[34]



The Felician Heritage Center housed the Felician Central Archives.

'Religious Archives: Necessity or Luxury'

Passionate about the business of managing, preserving, and organizing incredibly valuable pieces of the Felician Congregation's history, and driven by the directive of the 1982 General Chapter, Sister Mary Simplicia and Sister Mary Alda convened secretaries and archivists from the North American provinces to participate in an archives workshop.[35]

Brother Denis Sennett, SA, archivist for the Friars of the Atonement in Garrison, New York, conducted the three-day meeting, held at the central

archives building in Enfield from March 25-28, 1984. In his seven years of professional archives experience, Brother Denis organized and established an exceptional system for archives of religious congregations which he shared with the group. In his opening presentation, "Religious Archives: Necessity or Luxury," Brother Denis highlighted the critical need for the sisters to realize the importance of their individual commitment to the Lord in the Felician Congregation and the concurrent need to make this relationship known to others. Brother Denis made a bold case for preserving and making available the stories of these faith commitments and the resultant necessity of an archives. He told the group that not to do so would make an archives a luxury. An important outcome of the workshop was the acceptance by all the provinces represented of a Felician schema to use in identifying documents. Another benefit was the fact that all Felicians engaged in organizing archives heard the same orientation and returned home having learned practical ways of applying this information to their own situations.[36]

Three sisters from the Enfield province were among the twenty-one participants, including Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial secretary; Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda, historian; and Sister Barbara Jean Mary Gasparik, who was instrumental in the preliminary work for establishing the provincial archives and who was appointed as provincial archivist in May 1984.[37] The following year, the provincial archivists and secretaries met in Enfield from May 3-6. Under the direction of Sister Mary Simplicia, the group reviewed and finalized the Felician Policy Manual and Schema.[38]

On June 17, 1985, the Longview Library Learning Center was renamed the Felician Heritage Center. The building now housed the Felician Sisters Central Archives, Our Lady of the Angels Provincial Archives, a reference library, the provincial history department, a museum, and conference facilities.[39]

Dedication of the Felician Sisters Central Archives

The dedication of the Felician Sisters Central Archives took place on September 24, 1986. Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline welcomed the members of the general administration, provincial superiors, and representatives from each of the twelve provinces, along with Enfield town officials, clergy, sisters, and friends of the Felician Sisters.[40]

After Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka, superior general, presented a brief historical background of the evolution of the central archives, Sister Mary Linus Bax, director of the Archives of the Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton, Ohio, delivered the keynote address, "Religious Archives–The Memory of a Congregation." She told the sisters and dignitaries, "We have an obligation to preserve the history of the Order as a reminder of the dedicated service of those who preceded us and serve as a source of rich heritage for younger members." She added: "In order for memories of each sister, each mission, and each country to become the memories of all, there is a need for a place where these memories are not only preserved, but also made accessible for all. Only then is there a sharing in a common past, a living in the appreciated present, and a planning for a congregational future."

In the absence of Most Rev. John F. Whealon, archbishop of Hartford who was ill, Most Rev. Leo E. O'Neil, auxiliary bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, read the Papal Blessing received for the Dedication. Referring to the keynote

address, he remarked, "Since we are all archivists, let us all now dedicate this Central Archives." Approximately 150 voices joined in, declaring "this place to be set apart as a center for the preservation and research of documents of the Congregation under the name of the Felician Sisters Central Archives."

The singing of the traditional Felician *Magnificat,* under the direction of organist Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, resounded throughout the building and provided a suitable climax to the historic event. A tour of the central archives, as well as the Felician Healthcare System offices and the Enfield Provincial Archives which shared the building, preceded a reception in the provincial house. Due to the availability of space in the building, it was possible to add a "CSSF Gallery and Special Exhibit Area" to display Felician artifacts. Sister Landeline said, "The displays are beautiful and relate the story of 131 years of existence. What wealth we possess!"

This event was the culmination of two years of planning and organizing on the part of Director Sister Mary Simplicia, Assistant Director Sister Mary Alda, Archival Aide Sister Mary Elfreda Wierzbicka (Enfield); and Sister Mildred Marie Kutz (Buffalo), interior and structural design consultant and aide. Located on the second floor of the Felician Heritage Center, the archives served to centralize and preserve copies of documents and abstracts from the generalate in Rome, Italy, as well as from provincial houses located in the United States, and the vice-provinces in Canada and Brazil.

FELICIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Another significant Directive of the 18th General Chapter was the establishment of an integrated interprovincial Felician Healthcare System primarily to continue the healing ministry of Jesus through which others would be enabled to recognize their relationship with God in the redemptive mission of suffering. Further goals included preserving the Catholic identity, charism, and philosophy, as well as control of Felician healthcare institutions.[41]

As far back as 1954, Superior General Mother Mary Simplicita Nehring recognized the necessity of a closer relationship among Felician healthcare institutions for promoting unity, sharing personnel, and achieving effective management through cooperation. Consequently, she initiated the Hospital and Allied Health Institution Conference of Felician Sisters as a vehicle for realizing her dream. The ideas germinated at these conferences and nurtured over the years eventually helped her dream of an integrated interprovincial healthcare system to become a reality.[42]

It was in September 1981, that the members of the fledgling Felician Healthcare System met at the Sacred Heart Chalet in Belgium, Wisconsin, with Sister Mary Kieran Harney, a Sister of Mercy from Catholic Health Corporation in Omaha, Nebraska, to formulate goals.[43] The group selected and committed to the Consortium Model as the organizational model for the Felician Healthcare System because it allowed for several advantages while maintaining the autonomy of the provinces. Members of the system grouped their concerns in four major categories: human resources, the Felician mission, organizational issues, and survival of the Felician healthcare apostolate.[44]

After the final meeting of the Healthcare Task Force in Yorktown, Texas,[45] and at the first Board of Directors meeting held in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin, from May 19-21, 1983,[46] the Felician Healthcare System (FHS) was officially

organized. Mother Mary Amadeus appointed Sister Mary Miranda Sanecki of Chicago as president and named Sister Mary Paschalisa Cyborowska, also of Chicago, as assistant to the president.[47] Serving as a link between the healthcare facilities and the Board of Directors, the FHS envisioned the central office as a tool for meeting healthcare responsibilities and challenges, as well as coordinating board and management functions.

Sixteen sisters comprised the FHS Board of Directors. Representing the general administration were Mother Mary Amadeus, chairperson, and *ex officio* member; Sister Mary Clarentine Dzienis, vicar general; and Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, general treasurer (Enfield). Provincial superiors of those American provinces in which participating healthcare facilities were located included Sister Mary Alexander Klawinski (Coraopolis, Pennsylvania), Sister Mary Charitine Spitalniak (Lodi, New Jersey), Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski (Livonia, Michigan), Sister Mary Julia Witkowski (Buffalo, New York), Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski (Enfield, Connecticut), Sister Mary Laudiose Korbal (Chicago, Illinois), and Sister Mary Mercedia Lukaszewicz (Rio Rancho, New Mexico).[48]

The four sisters on the FHS Board who represented the institutions of the coalition were Sister Mary Benita DePace (Coraopolis), Sister Mary Claude Szyperski (Chicago), Sister Mary Augustine Kloza (Enfield), and Sister Mary Modesta Piwowar (Livonia). The president and assistant to the president of the FHS completed the Board of Directors. The group elected Sister Mary Cynthia as secretary and Sister Mary Claude as treasurer.

In 1983, the FHS included 2,600 beds, more than 5,000 employees, over 2,000 physicians on staff, and close to 400 sisters of the Congregation dedicated to the healthcare apostolate. The institution members of the FHS consisted of nine hospitals, four nursing homes, seven infirmaries, and one home for exceptional children.

Felician Healthcare System incorporated

On November 9, 1983, the healthcare institutions in the United States sponsored by the Felician Congregation as well as those facilities managed by the Felician Sisters were incorporated into the Felician Healthcare System, Inc., chartered under the State of Illinois statutes as a not-for-profit organization.[49] Nearly a year later, members of the board of directors met at the generalate, Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces, in Rome, Italy, from September 12-14, 1984. The new business included presenting reports, amending the bylaws of FHS, and discussing the medical-moral grounds of "Natural Death" Acts,[50] as well as deciding the site of the central office.[51]

Sister Mary Modesta reviewed the status of the system in a report entitled "Looking Back at Four Years of Existence: A Realistic Assessment." After reviewing strengths, including incorporation as a not-for-profit organization, and drafting of bylaws, she identified weaknesses, recommending that further evaluation of the roles of the central office personnel be made and suggesting ways in which the central office could assist the institutions of the coalition.[52]

Following Sister Mary Benita's report on the meeting of infirmary administrators, superiors, and directors of nursing held in Coraopolis from May 11-12, 1984, the FHS Board of Directors approved the recommendation that the infirmary group of the FHS be called the Health Ministry Council of

Felician Infirmaries, with the right to meet annually for the purpose of general sharing of ideas, common interests, and concerns to ensure quality of care and solidarity of purpose in the infirmaries.[53]

After a discussion on Living Wills, the group formed an Ad Hoc Committee to study the question of sisters deemed competent to direct the treatment at the end of their lives. Sisters who comprised the committee were Sister Mary Alexander, Sister Mary Mercedia, and Sister Mary Benita.

The board approved the rental of Our Lady of the Assumption Convent in Belleville, Illinois, for one year as a site for the FHS Central Office. Of the eight sites considered, the size, location, and economy of operation of the Assumption Convent best answered the needs of the FHS Central Office. The board also approved the financial report and set the fiscal year from July 1 to June 30 to eliminate extra work for the institutions.[54]

During the meeting of November 9-10, 1985, held in Coraopolis, Sister Mary Miranda, who had been suffering from major illnesses, submitted her resignation as president of the system. She agreed to serve until June and work with Sister Mary Augustine Kloza, who was appointed the new president for a three-year-term.[55] For eight years, Sister Augustine was administrator of St. Joseph Hospital in Port Charlotte, Florida, a sponsored ministry of the Felician Sisters of the Coraopolis Province, and before that she had worked for seventeen years as a supervisor and registered nurse anesthetist at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine. She held a master's degree in health administration from Columbia University. The group also decided that the site for the Felician Healthcare System would move to the Felician Heritage Center in Enfield. On June 15, 1986, the FHS Central Office relocated to Enfield and the central office personnel—Sister Mary Augustine, Sister Mary Benilde Nadzieja (Chicago) and Sister Mary Benita—took up residence in the Mother Angela Residence building in Enfield as St. Felix Convent.[56]

The FHS continued to press on with its work, addressing pressing issues including mission effectiveness in Felician facilities; the retention of governance and control of the institutions; liabilities and risk management; and lay board members as well as legal-canonical aspects of healthcare. Sister administrators of the infirmaries also struggled with addressing their distinct issues, including changing the name "infirmary" to something more positive, helping sisters to maintain their independence for as long as possible, coping with a growing number of sisters with Alzheimer's, providing sisters with healthcare education and information, and arranging for professional dietary staff.[57]

Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, CEO of St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, raised key questions in this regard, asking the members to consider the following issues: How do we assure ourselves that the mission will be followed when there are no Felician Sisters? What do we mean by religious/lay collaboration? Are we working together? How are we addressing training issues? What are our goals for this organization as a system? How do we choose leaders and what are our criteria? How do they fit into our Felician Healthcare System? Do they support our mission? How do we find the laity who want to work with us?[58]

Both groups sought leaders in their field to assist them with addressing their needs. In September 1986, Sister Mary Caritas Geary, SP, president of Mercy Hospital in Springfield, Massachusetts, spoke on the topic of "On Being Catholic and Effective as Ministry not Industry." Addressing the joint meeting

of the FHS Board of Directors and the Health Ministry Council, she told the members that the basic reason to seek reorganization was to preserve and continue the health ministry of the Church, to keep the charism and the spirit of the Foundress alive.[59] At this same meeting, Laurence J. O'Connell, PhD, STD, vice president, Theology and Ethics from the Catholic Health Association, spoke on the topic of "Catholic Identity and Healthcare in America Today." He told the healthcare leaders, "We must be sacramental symbols that invite the healing ministry of Christ. Our call is to healing and compassion and we must remain hope-filled, remembering our Lord's words, 'I shall be with you until the end of time.'"[60] Felician Sister Mary Ramona Dombrowski, vice president, St. Francis Hospital, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, presented an excellent session on mission effectiveness. She told the group, "How we live out what we say we are" is most important.[61]

Speaking at the meeting of the Health Ministry Council held at St. Joseph's Hospital in Philadelphia, on April 11, 1987, Dr. James R. Shaw, director of Education and Human Resource Development for the Catholic Health Association, told the group that "It is up to the Felician Community to determine exactly how their spirit and charism will be enfleshed in the 21st Century and be incarnated in the culture in which they still live." In developing his topic, "April 11, 2001 – The Felician Healthcare System," he noted that, the key ingredient to prepare for the year 2001, is "to recruit, orient and develop people to do mission effectiveness and be prepared in our own value traditions." He continued, "Human resource development is the essential key to preserving Mother Mary Angela's tradition. People need to be convinced that 'healing' is the ministry of Jesus."[62]

On June 11, 1987, during the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the FHS held in Buffalo, Mother Mary Amadeus shared thought-provoking ideas from the Catholic Health Association's 72nd Annual Health Assembly whose theme was "Catholic Identity in a Changing Culture." She noted that during the meeting held in Pittsburgh, from June 7-10, every speaker pointed out to their audience that they are stewards who hold in trust the healing mission of the Church and that they focus their Catholic identity most effectively when they shape their lives around a Eucharistic spirituality in the shadow of the Cross, becoming symbols of the Eucharist. She reminded the healthcare leaders assembled for the annual meeting that although the bottom line in many projects is the "mighty dollar," for religious and daughters of Mother Angela, the bottom line should be faith—living and strong faith.[63]

The following day, Daniel Krapf, associate vice president, Member Services and Director of Acute and Long-Term Care at the Catholic Health Association, delivered his presentation entitled, "Catholic Healthcare Future: A Vision of Promise? Or a Vision in Jeopardy?" His questions challenged the group: "Will we be a Catholic healthcare? Will it be a vision of promise? Or a vision in jeopardy?" He also spoke about technology changing the face of medicine, using computers for self-care, and greater lay participation.[64]

Felician Sisters also shared their areas of expertise at the meetings. Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, director of Social Service/Hospice at St. Joseph Hospital, Bangor, Maine, spoke on "Wholistic Care of the Elderly in Health Care Facilities," "Stress in the Infirmary," and "Stress Management."[65] As the keynote speaker of the meeting of CEOs from hospitals and homes staffed by Felician Sisters held at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, from September 24-25, 1987, Sister Mary Julie Weckwerth, coordinator of ministry development at

Saint Francis Hospital in Milwaukee, presented "Mission Services: Keeping the Spirit Alive."[66]

At the meeting in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, in April 1988, Sister Mary Julie Weckwerth presented basic assumptions about mission effectiveness.[67] Sister Mary Annelle Paszyna, occupational therapist at St. Mary's Home for the Aged in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, presented an engaging and enlightening review of the aging process.[68] Standing In front of a large picture of Mother Angela, Sister Mary Anilla Ryba, a member of the Interprovincial Commission on Mother Angela, presented one of the Felician foundress' letters as part of her presentation entitled, "Mother Mary Angela: Retired Felician Sister." She said it was the first official document and first directive issued to the fragmented and frightened community at a time when all seemed abandoned. She told the sisters that, amid many sorrowful trials, Mother Angela even now continues to encourage her sisters to be happy in the Lord and to be grateful when they experience suffering and persecution.[69]

Meetings of the members of the Health Ministry Council of Felician Infirmaries took place in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, in 1984, and in Buffalo, New York, in 1985.[70] Sister Mary Augustine, FHS president, and Sister Mary Benita, FHS mission effectiveness coordinator, both attended the 1986 meeting held in Jackson, Michigan. After welcoming the participants, Sister Augustine shared the concerns of the FHS office regarding the infirmaries and Sister Benita spoke about the importance of the infirmaries as an integral part of the Felician Healthcare System.[71]

A joint meeting of the Board of Directors of the Felician Healthcare System and the Health Ministry Council took place in the Felician Heritage Center in Enfield from September 26-28, 1986. Several members voiced their concerns regarding the decision of the General Chapter requiring 50% + 1 Felician representation on all healthcare facility governing boards and the difficulty they were experiencing in implementing this directive.[72] Another issue of concern was whether FHS should continue in its present structure. They noted that, as a consortium model, the FHS accomplished what other systems did not attain, such as unifying the healthcare ministry members from the infirmaries, nursing homes and hospitals, enabling them to meet and discuss, to share programs, and to exchange ideas and opinions. Additional advantages were that it provided joint session meetings with members of the general administration and all provincial superiors who are the provincial corporate board presidents and, most importantly, strongly initiated mission effectiveness in the facilities.[73]

Both issues continued to be major concerns for the group so that by the meeting of March 5, 1988, held at St. Mary's Home for the Aged in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, a motion to affirm "that the Felician Healthcare System be continued and strengthened" was raised and passed.[74] In response to a proposal to dissolve FHS, the group spent the afternoon compiling ideas for draft of a position paper. Sister Mary Miranda and Sister Noel Marie Gabriel wrote the actual paper, and the final draft was presented at the Board of Directors Meeting preceding the General Chapter held in Rome, Italy, on June 3, 1988.[75]

It is noteworthy that the FHS members reflected the prevailing sentiment among those in healthcare ministry that their facilities be imbued with the Catholic presence. During his visit at a special CHA assembly in Phoenix, Arizona, on September 14, 1987, Pope John Paul clearly articulated the mission and identity of Catholic healthcare. Sister Mary Eileen Wilhelm, RSM,

who presented the official welcome, told her audience: "Ours is a ministry of bringing life, of healing brokenness, of confronting death—one in which people care for one another, comfort and touch one another, and often journey with one another into the very mystery of God's love-the hope of resurrection. This ministry is a concrete manifestation of the power of the risen Christ, here and now.[76]

In his address, Pope John Paul II focused on four challenges that articulated and emphasized Catholic identity, particularly in the commitments to the poor and needy that "witness to moral truth in the formation of society's moral vision" and how that identity "is essential for your ecclesial mission."[77] He commended those in the healthcare ministry for "their zeal and efficiency when, despite formidable costs, you still succeed in preventing the economic factor from being the determinate factor in human and Christian service." The Pope lauded the presence of women and men religious who ensured the religious mission of the past and present.[78]

Christopher J. Kauffman concludes his book entitled *Ministry & Meaning: A Religious History of Catholic Health Care in the United States* with the following reflection of St. Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity: "When you leave your prayers for the bedside of a patient, you are leaving God for God. Looking after the sick is praying."[79]

FORMATION

With Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha serving as the province's coordinator of formation, the Formation Committee offered a study day focused on the *Fundamentals of Felician Formation* on October 8, 1983. Panelists included Mother Mary Landeline, Mother Mary Julia Witkowski of Buffalo, Mother Mary Camille Bet of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; and Sister Mary Euphemia Mikolajczyk of Livonia, Michigan.[80] As a follow-up, Mother Landeline conducted discussions of "Guidelines for Ongoing Formation" with the sisters during provincial visitation, challenging them to accept full responsibility for their personal growth and to join their efforts with those actively involved in the recruitment and formation ministries. And in a time when relatively few young Catholic women displayed any interest at all in living religious life, the sisters were grateful for the candidates who responded to the call to "Come and See."[81]

Accompanied by her parents from Wilmington, Massachusetts, Roberta Carter joined the Felician Community as a live-in affiliate on January 8, 1983. Roberta had participated in several "Come and See" Weekends and had been an affiliate for one year. While living in the provincial house, Roberta pursued liberal arts courses at Asnuntuck Community College in Enfield while participating in the community life, prayer, and work of the sisters at the convent.[82] Affiliate weekends—weekends designed for women considering membership in a religious community—were offered regularly at the Enfield provincial house and, on July 13, 1984, three young women were accepted as affiliates: Jeannine Michaud from Saint Agatha, Maine; Mary Lesniak from Bangor, Maine, and Laura Jean Minas from Exeter, New Hampshire. Jeanine eventually became a live-in affiliate and, while participating in the life of the Felician Community in Enfield, ministered to the sisters in Holy Family Infirmary. Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, director of the novitiate, vocation ministry, affiliates, and postulants, served as her director. Mary, too, became a live-in affiliate, and she joined the community at Saint Joseph's Convent in

Bangor, participating in their prayer life while working full-time at Saint Joseph Hospital. Sister Mary John Fryc, vocation director, served as her director.[83] Laura, accompanied by her parents, arrived at the provincial house on September 21, 1985, to initiate her pre-postulancy period as a live-in affiliate, hoping to grow in self-awareness and knowledge of the Felician Congregation, as well as to develop into a well-rounded, happy, productive servant of the Lord.[84] Barbara Intemann was the last young woman received as an affiliate during this period. Mother Mary Landeline welcomed Barbara on August 13, 1988, and presented her with a pin symbolizing her affiliation with the Felician Community. Barbara was employed at St. Stanislaus School on East 7th Street in New York City.[85]

The sisters prayed and fasted for vocations, and they rejoiced as these young women moved through the initial stages of formation: postulancy, novitiate, annual vows, and final profession. On August 14, 1983, after completing her two-year novitiate program, Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek made her first profession of vows in the Felician Congregation and renewed her vows annually until her final profession in 1990. On August 13, 1984, Sister Mary Luke (Patricia) Blaney made her first profession of vows and renewed her vows annually until deciding to leave the Congregation in July 1989.[86]

During the Rite of Initiation on August 15, 1984, Roberta Carter received the name Sister Roberta Marie and Diane Valliere became known as Sister Mary Peter, and both received the Felician habit. On August 10, 1986, Sister Roberta Marie and Sister Mary Peter pronounced their first vows during Mass celebrated by Father Andrew Apostoli, OFM, Cap. Sister Roberta left the Felician community in July 1992. Sister Peter continued her formation and made her final profession in 1994.[87]

On February 2, 1985, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Jeannine Michaud and Jeannine Levesque were accepted as postulants. Both were invested with the Felician habit later that year, on August 10, and both received new names, Sister Mary Jeannine, and Sister Annette Marie, respectively. At the end of August, accompanied by novice director Sister Frances Marion and second-year novices Sister Mary Roberta and Sister Mary Peter, they traveled to Lodi, New Jersey, to continue their novitiate program as part of the Interprovincial Formation Program.[88] Sister Annette Marie decided to leave the community in February 1986. The following year, during the second year of her novitiate on September 2, 1986, Sister Mary Jeannine traveled to Buffalo, New York, with Sister Mary Bernardine where she joined six other novices to continue her novitiate in the Interprovincial Formation Program with Sister Mary Angelette Helak as the director.[89] Sister Jeanine left the community in May 1987.

Mary Lesniak was received as a postulant on August 2, 1986, the feast of Our Lady of the Angels.[90] On August 14, 1987, she was invested as a novice in the Felician Community, and received her new name in religious life, Sister Mary Thomas.[91] Postulants Laura Minas and Kathy Houle became novices on August 15, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Laura received the name Sister Mary Laura and Kathy became known as Sister Mary Katherine. Sister Mary Laura made her first profession of vows on August 14, 1988, and renewed her profession annually until leaving the Felician community just before the renewal date in August 1992. Sister Mary Katherine left the community on October 23, 1987.[92]

Interprovincial formation programs

For 1987-1988, the general administration established three interprovincial novitiates for the North American provinces, one of which was in Enfield, Connecticut. Novices from the East receiving their formation at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House were Sister Mary Laura Minas, second-year novice, Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak, first-year novice, and Sister Mary Patricia Kennedy, from Lodi, New Jersey, who joined them. In her role as novice director, Sister Frances Marion, guided them.[93] After participating in the Interprovincial Second Novitiate Program held at Saint Clare Convent in Polonia, Wisconsin, in 1984, under the direction of general councilor Sister Mary Rosette Kubisty, Sister Mary Ann Papiez made her perpetual profession of public vows on August 18.[94]

In 1983, Sister Mary Janine Musnicki participated in the Interprovincial Tertianship Program directed by General Councilor Sister Mary Alodia Stozek and held at the Felician Retreat Center in Mount Arlington, New Jersey.[95] In her invitation to the participants, Sister Mary Alodia described the Felician Retreat Center as "the place where grace is to be found, where a particular sense of the nearness of God and his special protection can be felt, where Christ is to be encountered, and where you can be profoundly transformed."[96]

Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis and Sister Barbara Jean Mary Gasparik spent June 24 to August 4, 1984, in the Interprovincial Tertianship Program with twenty-five sisters from across North America, actualizing the theme of "Conversion Along the Formative Journey." Sister Mary Alodia also directed this program that took place in the "spiritual desert"[97] of Saint Joseph Home and Day Care Center in Jackson, Michigan. Both sisters expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate in this tertianship conversion experience.[98]

Along with seventeen sisters from five other provinces, Sister Mary Teresa Carolyn Muraski participated in the tertianship program from June 29 to August 3, 1986, with General Councilor Sister Mary Rosette Kubisty, also held in Jackson, Michigan.[99] Sister Mary Rosette invited the participants to "come away, all by yourself and rest for a while" (Mark 6:30).

During this period, well-planned formation programs focused on the wholistic development of sisters. Sister Mary Bernardine designed summer programs for them focused on community living and spirituality that also included apostolic experience. Additionally, the group met on several weekends during the year. Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, director of pre-tertians, met with the sisters for monthly renewal weekends as well as for sessions conducted during the summer months at the provincial house. Due to the small number of annually professed sisters, they joined with the pre-tertians.[100]

Ongoing formation

Sisters in the post-tertian group joined the silver jubilee groups for social gatherings and prayer. In 1984, Mother Landeline planned an Ongoing Formation Program for senior sisters at the provincial house with eleven interested sisters participating from July 22-28. Topics presented included "Woman of Faith—Prayer—Commitment," "Woman in Community," and "Necessity of Ongoing Formation."[101] The 1985 Ongoing Formation Program for Golden Jubilarians also took place at the provincial house from July 21-26. The program, presented in two parts, focused on the spiritual and physical

phases of aging and the retirement years. Mother Mary Camille Bet, provincial superior for Holy Name of Mary Province in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, presented "The Will of God and the Felician as a Woman of Commitment." Sister Mary Frances Polowniak, RN, presented the physical-medical aspects and challenges of the afternoon of life. Twenty-three sisters benefited from these sessions.[102]

From July 27 to August 1, 1986, Mother Landeline and Mother Camille conducted a program for the senior sisters based on *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and Commentary.* They continued this study from July 27-31 in 1987, presenting prayerful and stimulating reflections based on the Rule with forty-five sisters in attendance.[103] This was most timely since Pope John Paul II had approved the newly revised Rule on December 8, 1982, after which it was disseminated among Franciscans, including the Felician Sisters, on March 11, 1984. Additionally, Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk shared insights on "Coping with Transitions in Later Years."

Interprovincial meetings on distinct phases of formation were ongoing and frequent for directors of formation, junior sisters, novices, postulants, affiliates, and vocations. For the first time in the history of the Felician Congregation, formation personnel from the North American provinces gathered at the Felician Retreat Center in Mount Arlington, New Jersey, for an Interprovincial Convocation of Formation Directors. General Councilor Sister Mary Rosette Kubisty coordinated the meeting that evolved from an idea conceived by the vocation and affiliate directors at their interprovincial commission meeting. Held from September 19-25 in 1987, the thirty-seven participants came together to share ideas, hopes, and a vision that would enable them to better understand the needs of the sisters they served. Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline, Sister Mary Bernardine, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar represented the Enfield province.[104]

The experience included inspiring prayer services, small and large group discussions, and meetings of all levels of formation, as well as informal sharing. Outstanding speakers, including Felician Sisters, presented on pertinent topics. Sister Mary Lauren Lapinski and Sister Mary Jacqueline Dombrowski, from Chicago, presented the session entitled "Human Development and Candidate Assessment." Following an explanation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) by Sister Mary Monica Drogon of Lodi, New Jersey, Sister Suzanne Marie Kush of Buffalo, New York, explored possibilities for its use in initial formation programs. A three-member panel that included Sister Mary Landeline, as well as provincial councilors Sister Mary Dennis Glonek of Livonia, Michigan, and Sister Mary Alisette Skotnicki of Buffalo engaged their audience in a discussion of ongoing formation. Sister Barbara Fried, SMIC, spoke on "Cultural Diversity and Formation," and Father Luis M. Dolan, CP, expanded the horizons of the sisters with his talk on global community.[105]

Since interest in an interprovincial house of formation was growing in the Congregation, Sister Jane Patrice, CSFN, director, the interprovincial formation program of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, presented "The Interprovincial House of Formation." The concluding commissioning service highlighted the theme of the meeting, "Come, Walk on Water."[106]

Vocation contact sisters in the province received packets of vocation materials including a vocation newsletter, as well as guidelines for coordinating a day of vocation awareness particularly to celebrate Vocation Awareness Week in October, Vocation Awareness Month in March, and the World Day of Prayer for Vocations in April. Volunteers for a subcommittee on vocation ministry to assist the vocation director included Sister Marianne Los, Sister Mary Ann Papiez, and Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett.[107]

As the Director of Vocations, Sister Frances Marion worked tirelessly, corresponding with, and interviewing candidates, coordinating "Come and See" Days and Weekends, visiting the elementary schools as well as high school and adult groups to speak about vocations for the Church, and being present at vocation exhibits and rally days.[108] She also encouraged the sisters to engage, as much as possible, in the process of formation, thereby living out the directive in *Response to Love:* "By our concern for the welfare of new members and especially by prayer and example of our lives, we not only strengthen their vocation but also become an appealing invitation for others to embrace the religious life" (*RTL*, 60).

'A CATHOLIC ORDER STRUGGLES TO ENDURE'

In their study of the growth and decline of the population of Catholic sisters cross-nationally, 1960-1990, that was published in 1996, Helen Rose Ebaugh, professor of sociology at the University of Houston, Texas, and her colleagues reported that the number of Catholic sisters had been declining in the United States and other Western countries for twenty-five years.[109] In fact, drawing on statistics in Sister Patricia Wittberg's *Creating a Future for Religious Life: A Sociological Perspective* (1991), they wrote, "The decline in number of nuns is so substantial that some researchers are predicting that the institution may be facing extinction."[110]

In a three-part series of articles that the *Journal-Inquirer* (Manchester, Connecticut) ran from April 3-5, 1985, the newspaper focused on the local angle of this trend. Mike Adaskaveg, writer and photographer, spent many hours visiting the provincial house at Enfield, snapping hundreds of photos, and conducting interviews with the sisters, capturing all aspects of Felician life from admission to community life through death and burial.[111] In the first part of the series, entitled, "The Felician Sisters: A Catholic order struggles to endure," he acknowledged that, "The problem of recruitment is not the Felicians' alone. It is common among most orders within [the] Catholic Church and of organized religion as a whole."

Part I of the sobering article noted, "The sisters who wear the plain steel ring are fewer today because in recent years the number of women entering the order [has] not kept up with the number who have died," and "Death has come often to the infirmary over the last two years. Last year 13 sisters died. In the first three months of this year, six sisters have passed away." Photos of aged sisters moving through the halls with their walkers, a bed-ridden patient, and sisters gathered at St. Adalbert Cemetery to pay their final respects to their sister who had died, accompanied the article.[112]

The mood in Part II, entitled "A day in their life," shifted and became more upbeat as the reporter admitted that "while the life within the structured community is demanding, there is still time to unwind and to laugh."

Attempting to dispel "A medieval concept of religious life," Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, director of the novitiate, said, "The church is alive and vibrant. It [religious life] is a viable lifestyle that offers education, recreation, and career choices." Sister Mary Lucy Maciorakowska, who entered the community in 1918, told Adaskaveg, "I've worked for God all my life. There has never been a day when I didn't smile." The article closed with a quote from Sister Barbara Jean Mary Gasparik reflecting on the benefits of life shared together. She said, "In community, I don't travel the journey alone. I rely on my sisters for their prayerful support and example."[113]

The final article in the series focused on initial formation and particularly on two young women who had recently entered the community, both named Jeannine, following the death of thirty-four-year-old Sister Mary Janine Musnicki from cancer a year earlier. As she lay dying in St. Francis Hospital, Mother Landeline whispered, "When you go to heaven, your job is to send us vocations." She remarked, "It is with hurtful regret that we can't extend ourselves more," and added, "The future is with vocations 'sent from above.'"[114]

The article pointed out that the first Felician Sisters were dedicated to serving the poor. Mother Landeline acknowledged that while most sisters in the Enfield province were engaged in some aspect of education or healthcare, she further stated that today "the poor include more than just those without material wealth." The poor are "Children of divorced parents . . . People who have turned to drugs . . . " The sisters were trying "to meet the needs of the church and the world," she said.[115]

'Why did it all collapse so quickly?'

"Why did it all collapse so quickly?" asked Sister Patricia Wittberg in her sociological study entitled *The Rise and Decline of Catholic Religious Orders: A Social Movement Perspective.* According to Wittberg, "external events, both in Catholicism and in the surrounding American culture, destroyed their [religious orders] recruitment sources."[116] She observed that "however unchanging the lifestyle of 'the good sisters' may have seemed during the 1940s and 1950s, it was precisely this period of seeming stability that contained the seeds of the subsequent revolutionary changes."[117] Further on, Wittberg writes about the members of religious orders who, "while cognizant of—and somewhat worried about—the large number of departures from their communities and the paucity of new applicants, strongly resisted the idea that their communities would disappear as a result."[118] She found that, especially among women's communities—including the Felician Sisters—"there is almost no documentary evidence that the possibility of organizational demise was a seriously considered reality that affected either the policies of the congregations or the daily lives of the sisters."[119] Sister Wittberg's theory is that the growth and decline of religious orders occurs in 250-year cycles. She noted that the decline, as she saw it, was "more precipitous than any since the French Revolution." Moreover, during the 1970s and 1980s, many orders failed to recruit new members, which she found odd because the basic survival instinct of most organizations is to perpetuate themselves.[120]

The work of Belgian Jesuit theologian Raymond Hostie, *The Life and Death of Religious Orders: A Psycho-Sociological Approach* (1983),[121] preceded Wittberg. While he probed the history of only European male religious orders,

he clearly established cycles of foundation, vitality and growth, a notable decline after two or three centuries, death, or revival. Once the threat of dying became "painfully evident," the orders attempted various reforms. As a result of his study, Hostie believed that the only communities that were able to turn the situation around were those that engaged in realistic communication between superiors and members, "and for that matter between the members themselves," and arrived at "not only a mutually agreed-upon solution, but to a general commitment." While he did not investigate women's religious orders, he maintained they have similar cycles.[122] Hostie recommended a plan of adaptation that was "solid, flexible, and realistic," and warned against an "extremely literal resumption of the original rule." He dissuaded religious orders against accepting "past structures and practices simply because they existed and worked in the time of their founder" because, he said, it is "courting an illusion, if not disaster." Structures, he said, "have to be recast in light of what are the real present needs and what truly works in the here and now."[123]

Wittberg may also have been familiar with the work of Robert D. Putnam, a political scientist and the author of the seminal study of the decline of American social organizations. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," found that forty-five distinct groups, ranging from the League of Women Voters to the Red Cross and the Boy Scouts all began steep membership declines starting in the 1960s. Putnam saw the decline echoed in many other measures in union and professional association membership, for instance, involvement in community projects, card games, and picnics. "It's not just that older people are pulling out," he explained in an interview. "It's that younger people aren't joining. Finally, some of these organizations just age themselves out of existence."[124]

'Sisters in need'

Sister Patricia Wittberg referred to several events that forced the religious communities to consider these issues. On May 19, 1986, the *Wall Street Journal* published a front-page article entitled, "Sisters in Need: U.S. Nuns Face Crisis as More Grow Older With Meager Benefits – Many Go on Public Welfare; Are the Bishops Evading a Responsibility to Help? –Meatless Meals in Milwaukee."[125] The article cited an estimated two-billion-dollar gap between the money available for the sisters' retirement and the amount needed and recounted numerous stories of nuns going on public welfare, selling their "schools, their land and even their headquarters, or motherhouses" and having meatless meals to pay the mounting expenses of caring for older members. The writer noted, correctly, that "Most nuns don't have any retirement benefits." Sister Kathleen Steinkemp, a member of the Sisters of Mercy who headed the National Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutes based in Washington, D.C., and who was interviewed for the article said that, in the 1950s, there was no such thing as retirement benefits for any nuns, and she was paid only $50 a month. "With fewer working nuns providing for retirement care for an ever-growing population of older ones, the retirement problem 'just got worse, and our needs got bigger and bigger,'" said Sister Steinkemp. According to the article, the nuns advised the bishops to "scrap the old stipend system . . . and pay salaries that are equivalent to those of public-school teachers." The bishops resisted that idea but set aside $60,000 for an emergency fund and earmarked $250,000 for an office to conduct further studies on the retirement problem.[126]

In the wake of the *Wall Street Journal* article, a group of Catholics in Washington, D.C.—the first lay group to form without official Church sanction—established SOAR! (Support Our Aging Religious!). They began preparations for a nationwide fund-raising drive to help create a pension fund.[127] Shortly after, the bishops and religious orders established the Tri-Conference Retirement Office (the name refers to the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops) to address this need. In 1987, the group authorized the first of a series of annual collections to create a retirement fund. Wittberg claims that the Tri-Conference's publications and activities had the effect of raising the consciousness of the men and women in religious orders regarding the financial implications of their communities' decline.[128]

Sister Helen Amos, the head of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union, explained the need in this way: "In my convent of twenty-five sisters, probably five were retired and the other twenty took care of them." However, by the 80s, the ratio turned around so that "what had been an exchange of love and care between generations was becoming an impossible burden. Older sisters had already given. Younger sisters were no longer there. Now it was somebody else's turn to give."[129]

In her 1983-1984 Annual Report to the provincial superior and her council, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, director of Holy Family Infirmary in Enfield, painted a picture of the sister patients, "debilitating rapidly with each ensuing year." She said that the "increasing physical helplessness [of the sisters] with total and complete senility" made caring for them "extremely difficult." She identified the root of the problem as a lack of proper personnel to minister to their needs: "Two sister-nurse aides cannot bridge the wide gap to provide proper care even with the assistance of lay people."[130] Further on in the report, Sister Nancy wrote, "Our infirmary is not just a 'nursing home.' It has become a demanding, active medical unit where intensive nursing care is required if we wish to give our sisters good care."

The following year, in her report on the "Spiritual and Material Progress of the Provincial House," Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, superior of the provincial house, wrote that most of the sisters are "physically drained," and "unable to help with cleaning and keeping the house in order but it is unfair to even expect them to do anything in this line." She acknowledged that hiring lay help would be an easy solution but recognized the fact that "our income is being lowered each year with the removal of more and more sisters from the teaching field" and she did not wish to "drain our resources to the utmost."[131]

In his study of American sisters and nuns, George C. Stewart contended that the wide publicity given needy aging women religious created something of a "dying institution" image that tended to repel vocations, adding that the situation triggered a vast number of articles, books, dissertations, and seminars that sought to analyze, provide solutions, and otherwise address the central issues of religious life.[132]

The Enfield sisters were still struggling with the long-term financial impact of the nursing home planned for the south end of the provincial property in the early 1970s.[133] While the province had been preserved from bankruptcy when ownership rights for the Longview Health Care Center were transferred to the Little Sisters of the Poor, the province's financial resources were stretched thin,

with little to cushion spending for needed expenses. Fortunately, in March 1971, Mother Mary Landeline and her council had established a Retirement Fund from the Social Security checks that some senior sisters had been receiving since July 1966, together with money received from the local houses for that purpose. After consulting with the province's bankers and auditors, the council entered into a Discretionary Investment Management Agreement with the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company of Hartford, Connecticut, on January 4, 1978.[134] As economic sustainability continued to become an ever-greater crucial issue, the province's leaders examined every single line of the budget. In 1985, they subsidized a feasibility study and, after analyzing the results, decided to elect Social Security for all the members the following year.[135]

While the sisters sent the stipends that they received from their educational or health apostolates or outside employers to the provincial house, little remained after the bills were paid. The sisters never lived in the destitution that many people in the United States face every single day, that is, without sufficient resources. Their basic needs, their medications, and the continued care of the elderly were addressed, but Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, the provincial treasurer, often earnestly prayed that the province would make it to the next pay period.

Communally and personally, the sisters rose to the challenge of living out the vow of poverty described in Article 14 of *Response to Love:* "to be really poor in fact as well as in spirit by living in detachment from worldly goods and by accepting willingly and joyfully the consequences of poverty." Two Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, Father Glenn Sudano and Father Pio Mandato helped the sisters to clarify their understanding of a "Simple Franciscan Life Style" with their presentation during a session of the provincial assembly on October 10, 1987.[136]

THE PROVINCE'S EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

One month after the new provincial administration assumed its leadership role in Our Lady of the Angels Province, Mother Mary Landeline invited pastors of elementary schools and Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) Centers to a dinner meeting on November 30, 1982, at the provincial house in Enfield. The critical personnel situation within the province was the catalyst for the invitation, and Mother Landeline hoped that the meeting would facilitate the sharing of information as well as provide an ambiance for the free flow of suggestions and plans that would be mutually beneficial to both the sisters and the pastors. [137]

The critical personnel situation was obvious in the graph the pastors received, indicating the ages of sisters actively engaged in the teaching ministry. Of the 264 sisters in the province—including two annually professed sisters and two novices—109 were actively engaged in teaching in:

11 dioceses in 5 states

23 elementary schools (70 sisters, 23 principals, six aides and part-time teachers)

1 high school (6 sisters and 5 aides)

1 Montessori school (4 sisters)

4 catechetical centers (11 sisters)

1 kindergarten (3 sisters)

With the median age for the sisters of the province at sixty-nine, the provincial administration shared concerns about how withdrawing sisters from teaching would affect decisions about whether to keep schools open that were already coping with declining enrollments and the concurrent financial problems. Across New England and eastern New York, schools were facing shifting immigration patterns and demographic changes that were impacting parochial education on all levels.[138] In addition to the declining numbers of women religious, the shape of the parochial school system was being altered by the expense of staffing and administering schools and by the ways in which decisions were made and implemented by diocesan and religious communities.

During the meeting, the pastors paid tribute to the Felician Community for the outstanding work done by the sisters and their dedication, but especially for their witness value to the youth who needed their ministry "more than ever before." Several pastors offered suggestions regarding finances and options for diversified ministries. Mother Landeline took advantage of the opportunity to engage the support of the pastors in vocation promotion. She also spoke about the affiliate program as "a sign of hope for the future." She tried to keep the pastors abreast of changes rather than have them surprised. She understood that financial pressures caused by diminished enrollment of students and rising costs were forcing pastors to evaluate the present status and future viability of the parish school.

The aging process continued to sap the health and energy of the province's members, so in a memo to the pastors and principals of parish schools dated February 4, 1985, Mother Landeline wrote that in 1984, the province lost fifteen sisters: thirteen to death with two departures from the community. Four were full-time teachers. The provincial council could already see that it would be compelled to retire at least five sisters from full-time teaching and move five others to part-time apostolates. In her memo, Mother Landeline asked the pastors and principals to pray that the Enfield Felicians would be able to retain a sister principal and at least two sisters teaching full-time in every school staffed by the sisters for the 1985-1986 school year.[139]

Our Lady of the Angels Academy

The fall semester of 1982 at Our Lady of the Angels Academy (OLA) began with a new principal. Confident that she would build upon the strengths of the school, Mother Bernarda Mary and her council appointed Sister Constance Marie Tomyl to lead the school. A 1964 alumna of OLA, Sister Constance Marie was well known to the school community since she had taught English and religion classes since 1970. Familiar with the traditions of the school, Sister Constance was eager to assume her new role.

Even before classes began, she began working with the Academy's Advisory Board. The Board focused its energies on developing a Five-Year Plan for the school with members serving on various committees, including enrollment, staffing, curriculum, plant and facilities, finances, and marketing and development. The plan gave direction to the school in responding to the question: *How will OLA continue to fulfill its mission in the future?* Grateful for the quality of people on the board and their service to the school, Sister Constance said, "Their diversity of expertise and background and style, their commitment to excellence and their willingness to work on OLA's behalf have made my life infinitely more satisfying and OLA infinitely stronger." [140]

Margaret Bell, who succeeded Mary Dumoulin as director of development, worked diligently to strengthen the educational ministry of the Church at OLA. Since both of her daughters were graduates of OLA, Bell valued the achievements of the school and promoted those values in building support for OLA. She spearheaded attempts to bring alumnae back to the school to see the campus, to mix with current and former teachers and students, and to understand first-hand how the school was operating. Career Day and Alumnae Homecoming were efforts in this area. Alumnae-sponsored events included a "Think-Pink Brunch" and a Holiday Happiness Bazaar, both of which became annual affairs. Alumnae also served as public relations representatives of the school, identifying prospective students, and in so doing, helping to grow enrollment. Each year, the Alumnae Association provided a scholarship for a freshman as well as a graduating senior, and members also had the opportunity to renew their own personal investment in the school. [141]

The diligent faculty did everything possible to ensure high academic standards and to enable the students to develop their potential, but additionally, the Academy also implemented the pastoral letter entitled *To Teach as Jesus Did.* Promulgated by the National Council of Bishops in 1972, the document outlined the "threefold mission" of Catholic schools as comprised of message, community, and service. Faculty and staff consistently attempted to make a lifelong difference in the students' sensitivities to injustice and in their commitment to improvement of the welfare of others. Each year, students prepared for and participated in Oxfam's "Fast for World Harvest" and Hunger Banquet, and joined pro-life supporters in Washington, D.C., on January 22 in the March for Life. Proceeds from the Student Council-sponsored Halloween Party for area children benefited UNICEF. Students raised funds for Operation Fuel, brought Christmas gifts to inmates at the Connecticut State Prison, and collected clothing and non-perishable food items for the poor or victims of disaster. Students in the senior religion course "Lifestyles" performed fifteen hours of service to fulfill course requirements. [142]

The beautiful campus lent itself to special prayer services, such as the celebration of the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4, when, in 1983, students and faculty released "peacegrams" tied to helium-filled balloons.[143] Eucharistic liturgies were frequently celebrated outside, and the statue of Mary, shaded by two large magnolia trees behind the school building, was the site of the traditional May crowning each year. Students were amazed by the beautiful simplicity of Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel, where they gathered for the opening Mass of the Holy Spirit and for more auspicious occasions such as Ring Day and the Graduation Mass.

The team forming the Visiting Committee from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges visited OLA from November 6-9, 1983. The Committee's main purpose was to evaluate the school in terms of its own stated purposes and objectives, as well as in terms of the Association's standards of membership. The Committee was also charged with validating the school's written Evaluation Report and preparing a written report for the Commission on Independent Schools. Sister Constance Marie said the Visiting Committee "demonstrated a truly caring attitude and a deep concern for the mission of Our Lady of the Angels Academy. In addition, they looked at the Academy with an eye to seeing it as a school designed to provide education in

a Christian atmosphere." She added, "We felt examination of this aspect to be of prime importance." During its February 1984 meeting, the Association voted to continue OLA's membership in and accreditation by the Association. [144]

OLA's new library

Late in December 1983, the school initiated the first phase of renovation of the 150-year-old Orrin Thompson Mansion, preparing it to become the school's new library. The painting contractors sanded and repainted the four large rooms on the first floor, cleaned the original chandeliers in the mansion's former ballroom. They painted the four classic Greek columns in the former ballroom and edged in gold leaf around the ceiling base. Intricate designs on the upper part of each plaster door frame were carefully sanded and glazed to highlight the original design. In late spring, the addition of carpeting provided a quiet ambience for the library. Installed during the summer were the special library shelving and furniture that had been purchased in 1958, when the Academy relocated from the building diagonally across Enfield Street that housed the Enfield Montessori School. In mid-August, a large cadre of volunteer students, parents, and friends helped move books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials from the former Longview Library Learning Center—now the Felician Heritage Center—to their "new home."[145]

The dedication and blessing of Our Lady of the Angels Academy Library took place on October 19, 1984, with a ribbon cutting ceremony at which Marcel St. Sauveur, president of the North Central Chamber of Commerce, officiated. Father George M. Couturier, religion instructor at South Catholic High School in Hartford, blessed the exterior of the building and then led guests, faculty, and students inside for the blessing of the rooms and hanging of the crucifix. Principal Sister Constance Marie delivered the welcome address and Student Council President Mary Daigle read a brief history of the Orrin Thompson Mansion. Father Raymond F. Gallagher, pastor of St. Bernard Parish in Enfield and a member of the advisory board, spoke about the significance of the library as a resource for learning. In her closing remarks, Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski, Academy president, offered a prayer that all who used the library would "grow in wisdom and become scholars of that which is true, good, and beautiful." [146]

The OLA Academy Alumnae Association marked the school's 40th anniversary the weekend of November 3-4, 1984. On Saturday evening, alumnae, with their husbands and invited guests, enjoyed a buffet dinner at Willow Glen Restaurant in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, while the sister alumnae group enjoyed supper and a relaxing evening at Mother Angela Residence on the campus. Following a special Eucharistic liturgy on Sunday morning, alumnae renewed old friendships over coffee and donuts, toured the new library, and visited the convent's pre-Christmas Sale.[147]

During the summer of 1984, the Connecticut State Board of Education notified the school of its approval for a five-year term from July of 1984 through July 1989 in accordance with the criteria and procedures for Public and Nonpublic School Approval and Agency Recognition. This five-year approval was based on data and professional observations offered by the NEASC on-site visitation team, and the review and recommendations of the Advisory Council for School Approval. [148]

Despite the best efforts and strong planning on the part of the administration, faculty, staff, students, parents, and alumnae, the school continued to struggle with declining enrollment. With the permission of the provincial administration, OLA's Advisory Board suggested approaching the Hartford Archdiocesan School Office to review the Academy's situation, bringing its numerous resources to bear on the Academy. The School Office personnel seemed eager to search for ways to help the Academy and the provincial administration supported these efforts and approved further study. However, during the canonical visitation of the province from March 6 to April 16, 1984, the general administration strongly recommended keeping the Academy a Felician institution.[149] In fact, a Directive to all the sisters enjoined them to "give priority to the needs of the three institutions which they own. Therefore, when requested the sisters should be willing to serve in Our Lady of the Angels Academy, Montessori School, and St. Joseph Hospital before any other apostolate."[150] Mother Mary Landeline notified the Archdiocesan School Office of this decision and the Academy ramped up its recruitment efforts. The projected enrollment for the 1984-1985 academic year was 120 students, but the actual enrollment was 105. [151]

Writing to Mother Mary Landeline in early 1985, Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka expressed great sorrow about the situation at the Academy. She said, "We are truly concerned about OLA," and while she and her councilors recommended keeping the school open for the 1985-1986 term, she added, "As we see it, the saving factor for OLA is to go coed, not according to the diocesan plan, but as a private, Felician-owned school." Mother Amadeus also offered to personally approach the other provinces and request an exchange of personnel to assist in staffing OLA in this crisis. [152] After intense deliberation, Mother Mary Landeline, acting on the advice and with the support of the advisory board, announced the Academy's intention to move from a single-sex school to coeducation in September 1986.[153]

Longview Catholic High School

With the change of direction came a change of name, from Our Lady of the Angels Academy to Longview Catholic High School. Before the Felician Sisters bought the Enfield Street site from George H. Mifflin in 1932, the property was known as the Longview Estate.[154] A brand-new sign standing on the beautiful campus proudly announced the change and preparations for the move to coeducation occupied the school's administration, faculty, advisory board, parents, students, and alumnae for the next year. The new name, course offerings, physical facilities, the athletic program, and dress code all came under scrutiny. In addition, the faculty studied the differences in the psychological makeup and learning styles of boys and girls. Furthermore, they embraced the challenge of making known to people in the Enfield area that OLA was changing in exciting ways. The school designed events to heighten awareness and perception of Longview Catholic High School as a desirable, modern, college preparatory school—coed, but with a depth of tradition unique to Our Lady of the Angels Academy. [155]

While much was changing, Sister Constance said, "much will remain the same." Longview's brochure describing the school as a place "where everybody knows your name," and where "Small is beautiful" had become an integral part

of OLA's philosophy as it helped to preserve the informality and close student and teacher contact that gave the school its distinctive character. Small classes were the foundation of the curriculum, and, Sister Constance noted, "our student/faculty ratio of 8:1 means that each student receives the individual attention he or she needs." Sister Constance added, "Another thing that will remain the same is the tradition of offering academic excellence, of teaching students to think critically and of providing the courses necessary to qualify them for admission to Boston College, Smith College, and Trinity College. . .. We begin our journey hopeful and excited about the things to come."

But in the fall of 1986, the school opened to only eighty-five students, including eight male freshmen. The Open House held on November 15, 1987, was poorly attended, and when only eighteen students sat for the entrance exam for the 1988-1989 academic year, the future of Longview Catholic became clear and set in motion the series of events leading to the school's closing in June 1988.

On the evening of Tuesday, January 12, 1988, Mother Mary Landeline and Sister Constance Marie delivered the grim statistics to approximately 150 people crowded into the OLA provincial house auditorium: a record low enrollment of only thirteen students for next year's freshman class for a projected total of seventy-five students, six fewer than the current year; an operating deficit of $40,000 for the current year, and a projected shortfall of another $40,000 next year. Mother Landeline told the parents that a tentative decision to close the school—subject to their feedback—had been made two weeks earlier after looking at the 1988-1989 enrollment figures.[156]

Thomas McGovern, chair of OLA's advisory board, told the parents that the $40,000 deficit, including salaries, utility bills, maintenance, and supplies, exceeded the amount brought in by tuition. He explained that two teachers would be retiring the next year and, given the declining number of Felician Sisters available to teach, the school would be forced to turn to more expensive lay teachers. He also noted that the school's tuition of $1,700 was low in comparison to other Catholic schools. Finally, he reminded the parents that the deficit would increase if enrollment fell more than projected. He asked parents to contact him individually about their willingness to pay higher tuition and to help in fund-raising activities and told them they had until March 31 to find the students and the money.[157]

When that request met with a poor response, the Advisory Board, during its meeting of February 8, recommended to the provincial administration that the school be closed in June 1988.[158] On February 9, Mother Mary Landeline met with the religious faculty to announce this decision to them. On Wednesday, February 10, Mother Landeline sent letters to parents of the school's eighty-two students announcing that Longview did not have enough money or students to stay open. "Our hearts are heavy," she wrote, "as we conclude 44 years of Catholic secondary education in Enfield." On February 11, Mother Landeline met with the lay faculty and staff to inform them of the decision to close the school. [159]

Students were in shock and parents were angry, saying school officials had not lived up to their end of the bargain by deciding to close before the March 31 deadline they had set. In an article entitled, "Lack of Commitment Is Closing Longview," *Hartford Courant* Town Editor Delma J. Francis asked, "But how

long does it take to pick up a pen and say, 'Yes, my child will attend Longview next year?' Certainly not three weeks—the time that elapsed between the initial meeting with parents and the decision to close." She added, "And who can blame Longview officials for making the decision early. After all, they had their faculty and students to think of."[160] So, after receiving fewer than forty enrollment commitments for the fall, the Felician Sisters and the advisory board decided to close Longview Catholic High School.

Along with the faculty, Sister Constance made every effort to maintain regularity at the school until June. Pamela Gallerani '88, vice president of the student council, said, "We've got to make the next few months really count. We're going to go out in style." [161]

Class Night and Graduation

Students, faculty, alumnae, and guests celebrated an ending and a beginning with the Class of 1988 as they gathered on the front lawn of Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House the evening of Friday, June 3, to participate in the last Class Night activities at Longview Catholic High School. Salutatorian Angela Egan immediately set the tone for the emotional ceremony as she told her fellow graduates that despite the closing, the unity among them and link with the alumnae who preceded them would live on. "The school has become a part of us. No matter what becomes of the building, the school and its spirit will live among us."[162]

Class Night speaker Suzanne McLaughlin Williams '73, praised the Felician Sisters for their commitment to education[163] and urged the graduates to help maintain and protect the Catholic educational system. She called the school's closing "a harsh reminder of what *can* happen and not what *will* happen."[164] Principal Sister Constance Marie told the graduates that because their entire lifetimes had been moving through a time of transition, their chosen theme for the evening, "When You Wish Upon a Star," was particularly appropriate. She called upon the graduates to be stars, to relieve some of the darkness in the world and make it beautiful.[165] She also extended a blessing of hope: "May you always rest in the assurance that God will lead you, will be with you, will not fail or desert you" (Dt. 31:8).[166]

Steel gray skies gave way to a heavy downpour, and the crowd scrambled inside the auditorium, taking their folding chairs with them.[167] Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, class advisor, said the rain was somehow fitting to the spirit of the class, who though tight knit, often had a hard time making up their minds. "The class couldn't decide whether to have [Class Night] indoors or outdoors, and for the first time, they have had it their way—both ways."[168] Valedictorian Lisa Tran, who finished her speech with tears streaming down her face, said each student shines in her own special way, but the school, known formerly as Our Lady of the Angels Academy, "will outshine them all."[169]

The night ended with the passing of the school's traditional Daisy Chain for the last time. In past years, the seniors passed the chain of white daisies to the junior class asking them to preserve it and cherish it as a symbol of the school's unity. But with the school closing, the nineteen seniors passed the chain to nineteen of the school's alumnae. "We have kept our promise of preserving the symbol of unity. Tonight, it is with great pride, that we, the senior class of 1988, will hand back our symbol of unity to those who came before us. The chain has come full circle," senior Kimberly Mike said.[170]



Members of the Class of 1988 passed the chain of white daisies bound with ribbons to alumnae, breaking with tradition. The chain had always been given to the junior class, asking them to preserve it and cherish it as a symbol of the school's unity. With the handing back of the chain to those who had come before them, "The chain had come full circle."



Members of the Class of 1988 gathered around the circle in front of the chapel where they joined hands along with alumnae, sang the school song, and offered a final prayer.

Commencement activities culminated with the celebration of the Eucharist, which anticipated the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), and presentation of diplomas to nineteen graduates in Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel on the evening of June 4. Father Gerard Knapp, CSsR, professor of theology at St. Alphonsus College in Suffield, who had served the OLA/LCHS community for four years as chaplain, was celebrant and homilist for the Graduation Mass. He spoke of covenant, which the feast of Corpus Christi celebrates, Christ's giving of himself to humanity. He equated the covenant Jesus had with his people to a similar pact between Longview students and the school when they first began as freshmen four years ago.

"When you were accepted, you were accepted into a covenant. In other words, the school said it would do everything it could to help you learn, to help you grow as an individual, to become stronger in your faith. . .. As seniors, you said as the leaders of the school, you pledged yourself to academic development . . . and now your diploma is another sign of the covenant, a sign that you have been successful."[171]

'Farewell to a School That Cared'

The last day of classes for undergraduates was Monday, June 13, and a Mass of Thanksgiving on Saturday, June 18, in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel celebrated forty-four years of service by the Felician Sisters and dedicated lay women and men at OLA/LCHS. Two hundred people packed the chapel to participate in the candlelit Mass that closed the doors of OLA forever.

Father Knapp was once again the main celebrant and homilist. In his homily, he reflected on the images offered in the scriptures of the day. The Gospel reading recounted Luke's narration of Jesus calming the storm. Father Knapp noted that this miracle was very much appreciated by the early Church which referred to itself as a ship, or an ark, which would safely carry them through this world to salvation. He then compared OLA/LCHS to a ferry which has carried eighth grade graduates through four years to their freshman year of college.[172]

"Today we celebrate life," Father said, "the life OLA/LCHS has provided . . . Tonight, the ferry will be docked, but we must all work to somehow replace this institution that is fading into the sunset." He concluded his thoughts with a plea to those present who might pass this way on Route 5 or Interstate 91. "Offer a prayer for the teachers who served, your classmates, and the people who will never have a chance to benefit in the way you did."[173]

The editorial writer for the June 16 edition of *The Enfield Press* reflected, "With the last graduation, the school is now officially closed. The last chapter has been completed. It's the end of an era and it's sad that Longview lost the battle of declining enrollments. But school officials can hold their heads high for a job very well done." The editorial was entitled, "Farewell to a School That Cared."[174]

ST. JOSEPH HEALTHCARE

With Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski as the chief executive officer, the Felician Sisters at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, continued their faith-based legacy of high quality, compassionate care in partnership with their co-ministers, the heart and hands of the ministry.

Once the new provincial administration was in place in 1982, Sister Mary Norberta met with the members to update them on recent developments at the hospital. Always interested in expansion, she presented a plan for acquiring additional adjoining neighborhood property. She also reported that while there had been a noticeable decrease in census in several hospitals in Maine, the patient census at St. Joseph's had increased. Sister Norberta apprised the administration of the special meeting with representatives of Arthur Andersen & Company, one of the largest public accounting firms in the country, scheduled for November 15, 1982, to continue discussion of and planning for corporate reorganization of the hospital.[175]

The new corporate structure, finalized on Friday, September 16, 1983, included a parent or umbrella organization, St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and four subsidiaries—the hospital, a profit-making corporation, a landlord for properties off campus, and a non-profit organization to manage three off-campus programs.[176] The profit-making corporation was called the Strauss Corp, named for Carol Strauss, the owner of the Paine Hospital, which the Felician Sisters bought when they founded St. Joseph Hospital in 1947. This corporation was charged to undertake "creative" financing to benefit the hospital or other subsidiaries of the parent foundation. The landlord for off-campus properties such as the sisters' residence, called the Mary and Joseph Company, would protect the buildings not a part of the hospital. Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz was president of the M & J Company. St. Joseph Ambulatory Care Inc. would manage the two satellite clinics that the hospital set up in East Corinth and Old Town along with a wellness program offered to business and industry. The parent foundation comprised the former trustees plus the corporate board of the Felician Sisters. Members of the former hospital board also served on one of the newly created subsidiary boards. New members named to two of the subsidiary boards were George Gonyor, vice president and general manager of Community Broadcasting Service and Father Richard E. Harvey, pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Brewer, to the Strauss Corporation, and Daniel E. Lambert, state adjutant for the Maine American legion, to St. Joseph Ambulatory Care Inc.

The reorganization followed a trend among hospitals nationwide to reorganize the hospital and its affiliated operations into a new corporate structure. The hospital's board of trustees labored for nearly two years with consultants, physicians, lawyers, and religious representatives to develop the new structure. Sister Norberta said it was "truly a cooperative effort," adding that "keeping everybody informed" was key. Dr. Terence O'Callaghan confirmed that the medical staff had considerable input into this reorganization.

Speaking about the new structure, Roland MacLeod, vice president of St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation, the new parent corporation, said, "This approach has been used for years in business." Sister Mary Norberta, who became president of the St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation, agreed that it made good business sense, explaining that the change was a "matter of keeping pace with what is happening to the healthcare industry."

According to Sister Norberta, the reorganization also enhanced the hospital's ability to deliver quality health care at the lowest cost, to increase its connection to the community, and to maintain its mission as a Catholic facility. Dr. O'Callaghan, member of the foundation board, president of one of the subsidiaries, and member of the medical staff, said he felt the reorganization would keep the quality of care that St. Joseph's was known for. Sister Norberta said she expected that with an increased number of boards with diverse responsibilities, there would be more people to serve on advisory committees.

Serving their neighbor

Sister Norberta's vision also included providing direct services to neighboring rural communities and linking them to the community resources they needed, so the SJH administrative team worked with the Old Town Redevelopment Group to construct a medical building, a health center project

at a cost of $93,000.[177] Groundbreaking was held on July 2, 1982, with the dedication and ribbon cutting of the health center taking place shortly after, on Sunday, October 10.[178]

Officials at St. Joseph's began planning the health center after Old Town lost several of its primary care physicians, simultaneous with increased development of housing for the elderly, who require more medical services than younger citizens. They maintained it was an example of health care adapting to the future, while keeping costs restrained and services readily available. According to Sister Norberta, St. Joseph's was the only hospital in the area operating this kind of outreach program, "a growing trend in the country," and cited thirty-seven ambulatory care centers established in the Greater Boston area, an area traditionally dominated by large medical facilities.

Located on North Main Street, the center provided "ambulatory care," the treatment of injuries and illnesses not serious enough to warrant the expense of a visit to the emergency room or a stay in the hospital. Two physicians and a three-member support staff at the center provided ambulatory care to about 500 patients each month. The center's laboratory was equipped to manage routine work, including sight and hearing tests to industrial employees in the area, as part of what Sister Norberta called "a health conservation plan" designed to prevent the need for costly medical treatment.[179]

At about the same time, Bangor area residents welcomed the opening of the area's only sports medicine clinic on September 13, 1982. Designed to provide the eastern Maine region with quick medical service for those injured while participating in athletics as well as to prevent unnecessary injuries through educational programs, the clinic operated out of St. Joseph's Hospital each Monday from 4-6 p.m. Dr. Richard J. Mazzei, clinic coordinator, worked with his multidisciplinary team consisting of an orthopedist, podiatrist, and an athletic trainer as well as the hospital's service department, which included physical therapists, cast technicians, and x-ray technicians.[180]

Dr. Mazzei justified the need for the clinic explaining that in the past, patients had to wait in emergency rooms for referral to a specialist. The clinic, he said, provided "a way for people to be seen without referral service." According to Sister Norberta, the increasing number of recreational, high school, and college sports participants had resulted in an increase in the number of orthopedic problems. She said the orthopedics department asked to have the clinic set up to deal with the increasing demand. Additionally, she said, the clinic would help solve the problem of inaccessibility of orthopedic surgeons, who often had long waitlists resulting in three- to four–week delays prior to examination. In 1984, the clinic was transferred to the Sports and Orthopedic Rehabilitative Therapy.

Continuing its dedication to patient needs, St. Joseph Hospital expanded its mammography facilities, first with the hiring of Suzanne Raftery, RN, on September 12, 1983, and then with the opening of the William H. Rosen Breast Diagnostic Center, a section of the Radiology Department, on March 16, 1984. The first-floor center, part of the diagnostic-imaging facility featuring state of the art sonography, x-ray, and nuclear medicine, offered three tiers of service in the diagnosis of breast disease. The unique center offered state-of-the-art imaging technology combined with patient education, counseling, and follow-up.[181] On hand for the 2 p.m. ceremony were Edward Rosen and his brother William Rosen, whose significant gifts made possible this facility. Rosen,

one of the most generous contributors for health facilities in the area, had already donated money in memory of his parents for the critical care center at St. Joseph Hospital.

Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka, superior general, who was conducting the canonical visitation of Our Lady of the Angels Province at the time, was present for the ribbon cutting.[182] Sister Mary Norberta officiated at the ceremony that was also attended by Dr. Robert Andrews, chief radiologist at the hospital; Dr. Terence O'Callaghan, president of the medical staff, and Dennis Dodge, chief radiologic technologist. In his remarks for the occasion, Dr. Andrews noted that despite all the diagnostic improvements, deaths resulting from breast cancer had not declined, but he predicted that, with increasing numbers of women undergoing mammography in the 80s, especially with an increased awareness of the need for early detection of breast disease, women could begin to see an improved survival.

Two events highlighted the 20th anniversary of the dedication of the "new" St. Joseph Hospital on October 14, 1984. A ribbon cutting in the newly remodeled Ambulatory Surgery Unit and Margaret E. Willette E. Conference Center followed a brief rededication ceremony in the chapel. An Open House held throughout the afternoon included tours, exhibits, and refreshments.[183] Sister Norberta told the *Bangor Daily News* that the new operating room in the ambulatory surgery unit, which served more than 3,000 patients a year, responded to a community need while providing medical services at a low cost. The $185,000 renovation rearranged the rooms in the unit, creating a much more efficient flow. The new layout allowed for three operating rooms located in a restricted area, a recovery room for patients who had been anesthetized, two other recovery rooms, two rooms for endoscopy procedures and a recovery room for these patients, a changing area, interview cubicles, a waiting room, administrative offices, a lounge for doctors, and another for nurses. It also offered patients a closeness with family, a goal that St. Joseph's made every effort to foster in all its care.[184]

On April 25, 1985, Most Rev. Edward O'Leary, bishop of Portland, Maine, presided at the dedication Mass and blessing of the Mother Mary Angela Office Building at St. Joseph Hospital.[185] The name of the newly constructed facility honored the memory of Felician Foundress Mother Mary Angela during the year commemorating the 85th anniversary of her death. Mother Mary Landeline, provincial superior, and Sister Mary Augustine Kloza, provincial councilor, joined the Felician Sisters in Bangor to celebrate this significant event. The new addition made available space in the main hospital for the relocation and centralization of outpatient services on the first floor. At the same time, the new facility provided a conference room, several administrative offices, and a special fiscal services office. The use of acoustical, modular partitions in the area kept noise level to a minimum while allowing maximum flexibility.[186]

In the early 1980s, early adopters of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) took a collective leap of faith that its life-like images would reveal pathologies. It was a good but expensive gamble. The first machines cost millions of dollars each and it took years of experience to demonstrate their clinical value. Recognizing the numerous advantages of medical imaging, St. Joseph's requested a mobile computerized axial tomography (CAT) scanner—only the

second in the state of Maine. After the request was denied in 1983, St. Joseph's joined forces with Maine Coast Memorial Hospital in Ellsworth, Penobscot Valley Hospital in Lincoln, and Mayo Regional Hospital in Dover-Foxcroft to present the issue to the media which took the request to the public. The certificate of need was issued before Christmas 1985, and the CAT scanner was available outside St. Joseph Hospital in its camper-type van to patients of all four hospitals.[187]

An integrated approach to healing had been and continued to be the goal of the Felician Sisters in Bangor, regardless of patients' religious beliefs, and it was the driving force furthering the innovative health care delivery at St. Joseph's.

By mid-1986, an Industrial Health Program was serving some of the state's largest and most prestigious industrial firms. The program offered regular health assessments with physician referral, first aid and CPR training, regular blood pressure clinics, audiometric testing, and a wide range of other services for employees of more than fifty area businesses. The program also assisted disabled and injured workers participating in the Maine Occupational Health Program to return to work. Ambulatory Care sponsored diet and nutrition workshops, wellness clinics, and courses throughout the year and managed Alternative Care Nursing Services, Inc., an established home health agency that provided top quality, reasonably priced nursing services, aide services, and physical therapy to patients at home.[188]

Through its subsidiary the Strauss Corporation, St. Joseph Healthcare combined the resources of the St. Joseph Healthcare Network with other established healthcare companies. Advanced Technology Home Care, a cooperative venture between Strauss Corporation, Adco Supply Company, and Penobscot Respiratory, P.A., helped pulmonary patients to receive respiratory therapy in the comfort of their own homes. The Strauss Corporation also paved the way for the addition of the Center Pharmacy to the St. Joseph family of companies. The move permitted the long-established business to acquire the backup of a large hospital, while retaining its longstanding neighborhood and family orientation.

As further evidence of the hospital's continuing commitment of service to the community, a groundbreaking ceremony on September 2, 1988, marked the start of construction for the Center for Advanced Medicine at St. Joseph Hospital. Participating in the ceremony were Sen. George J. Mitchell, chair of the Senate Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Health, and Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski, chair of St. Joseph's Board of Trustees. Attendees also included Robert Baldacci of Baldacci Associates, developer and owner of the project; Marshall Franke. Bangor City Council Chair; and John Sevigny of Maine Savings Bank. Cost of the center was expected to be $3.5 million.[189]

The building, envisioned to be three stories high and 38,000 square feet in area, would contain a lithotripsy suite and a docking bay to support a mobile lithotripter unit. St. Joseph's use of the building allowed it to consolidate all hospital outpatient services except emergency service and ambulatory service on the first floor of the main hospital building. The central lobby of the new building served the new office complex and the hospital, and plans were in place for ample parking space. "It fits into the whole picture of care that



On September 2, 1988, groundbreaking ceremonies were held for the Center for Advanced Medicine. Attendees included Robert Baldacci, Senator George Mitchell, and Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski, provincial superior.

St. Joseph Hospital wants to offer to its patients," Sister Norberta said. "The key thing is, none of this really counts if you lose sight of the most important persons—the patient." The late Bishop Joseph E. McCarthy, who supported the founding of St. Joseph Hospital, once said, "A Sister, alleviating the suffering of the sick, cheering the despondent, and perhaps putting a spark of faith into the heart of an unbeliever is fulfilling the mission of God."[190]

CELEBRATING MOTHER ANGELA YEAR

When Mother Mary Amadeus proclaimed the observance of the Mother Angela Year from October 10, 1984, to October 10, 1985, she saw it as a new opportunity "to unite as daughters of Mother Angela in order to observe the 85th Anniversary of her entrance into eternal life—October 10, 1989." Because it epitomized the whole life and mission of Felician Foundress, the Servant of God, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska, the Mother Angela Interprovincial Commission, coordinated by Sister Mary Antonelle Dziechciarz (Buffalo), chose the theme: *Thy Will Be Done! Thy Kingdom Come!*[191]

Every religious Congregation is the work of the Holy Spirit, who, in a moment of time, inspires whom he wills, to create a new religious family in the Church. Under the powerful influence of this divine light, Sophia Truszkowska responded to God with a ready heart, and the Felician Congregation was born for a specific service in the Church. Mother Amadeus noted that the Congregation awaited the beatification of Mother Mary Angela and reminded the sisters that "daily prayer for Mother Angela's beatification needs to be strengthened and supported 'by greater fidelity to the spirit of our Congregation and to the mission in the Church'" (*Response to Love,* C.S. 3.14). [192]



Sophia Truszkowska

On October 10, 1984, many sisters from the local convents within the province joined the sisters at the provincial house in Enfield to officially open the Mother Angela Year. Most Rev. John F. Whealon, archbishop of Hartford, celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy assisted by Father Anthony Boryczka, S.Ch., chaplain. Before the

final blessing, Archbishop Whealon blessed candles designed for the occasion, bearing the picture of Mother Mary Angela. Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski distributed the candles to the superiors who carried these symbols of light and life to their respective convents. On the tenth of each month, the sisters lit the candles as part of the Mother Angela Day observance. The day closed with the sisters praying Vespers that included a reflective slide presentation.[193]

Following the Mass, Archbishop Whealon, Father Boryczka, and several Little Sisters of the Poor from neighboring St. Joseph Residence, joined the sisters for a celebratory meal in the convent dining room. As a token of love, the provincial administration arranged to have Mass offered at the altar near the gravesite of Mother Angela in Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Krakow, Poland.

Reflecting on this auspicious occasion, Mother Landeline wrote to the sisters: "Mother Angela Year has been initiated with much prayer, great enthusiasm, and genuine faith that our Foundress is with us as we ask her to intercede before God's throne for us and those we love and serve. It is comforting to know that many sisters have resolved to read seriously and delve deeply into her writings which are so rich and full of sisterly concern and motherly advice . . .. May Jesus and Mary support, enlighten, and bless us so that we may respond courageously and lovingly as true daughters of Mother Angela."[194]

Throughout the year, the Felician Congregation celebrated this anniversary with a multitude of programs, publications, liturgies, and activities in their convents and institutions. The sisters expended extraordinary energy to help Mother Angela to become better known and more loved, distributing pictures of the Felician Foundress, relic medals, memorial cards, folders, and buttons. They prepared bulletin board displays in schools and hospitals depicting Mother Angela's life and presented skits and playlets on her life. The sisters offered excellent talks and presentations on the life of Mother Angela to parish and community groups, including home-school associations, Communion breakfasts, women's retreats, and all levels of religious education programs. Finally, imitating Mother Angela's boundless love of God, they reached out to the sick, the homebound, and those in nursing homes.[195]

At the bi-monthly Home-School Association meeting of St. Adalbert School in the Bronx, New York, Principal Sister Adele Marie Kosinski presented the life and beatification process of Mother Mary Angela. Following the presentation, Sister Adele Marie invited both parents and students to pledge their prayerful support for the beatification of Mother Angela. At the conclusion of the Mother Angela Year, she sent a copy of the pledge with more than 1,400 signatures to Pope John Paul II as well as to Mother Mary Amadeus and Mother Mary Landeline.[196]

Each sister in the province received a unique feast day letter from the provincial administration informing her that a Mass was offered near the grave of Mother Angela in Krakow and flowers placed there in the intention of the sister celebrant. Additionally, a framed picture of Mother Angela was hung on the wall of every bedroom in the provincial house, and each sister selected a day each month to pray and sacrifice in the intention of the beatification of Mother Angela. The prayer calendar was in use until the day when Mother Angela was declared Blessed.[197]

Beginning the first week in January 1984, sixty-two sisters at the provincial house in Enfield responded to the invitation to offer a weekly Holy Hour for the intentions of the beatification process of Mother Mary Angela.[198] For the second time, Sister Mary Felicity Wardzinski (Buffalo) conducted the annual retreat at the provincial house from June 23-30.[199] Each participant received a copy of *Selected Writings, Volume 3,* and pondered what they heard during conferences focused on poverty, love of neighbor, and Mary, the Mother of God. The retreat culminated in the celebration of "Mother Angela Day," which captured the spirit of the year.[200] The province closed its year-long commemoration with a Holy Hour that included Solemn Vespers. Banners created for the occasion, illustrating aspects of the Felician charism, adorned the sanctuary during the hour of prayer.[201]



SM Doloria Jaracz

Sister Mary Doloria Jaracz shared her reflection, written for the Mother Angela Year, entitled "The Felician Challenge." She portrayed Mother Angela as one in whom "beat a great Mother's heart"

> Emanating her kindness, concern, compassion
> That touched the poor, the suffering, the brokenhearted.
> Her singular purpose—
> That God's Will be accomplished
> Through her extension of His Goodness and Mercy.
> . . .
> On October 10, 1899,
> She left the meaning of that life to others –
> To her spiritual daughters
> The Felician Sisters,
> For them to begin daily anew
> And thus pass on the Peace and Love of Christ . . .
> Now, in fullness, her own reward.

Each sister in the North American provinces, as well as in the vice provinces of Brazil and Canada, received a copy of the reflection.[202]

BEATIFICATION CAUSE OF MOTHER MARY ANGELA

On April 2, 1982, the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome issued a decree of the Heroicity of Virtues of the Servant of God Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska, Foundress of the Felician Sisters.[203] Encouraged by this recognition of Mother Angela as a Servant of God, the Felician Sisters desired that the process for her beatification go forward. From February 12-14, 1984, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, Enfield's provincial promoter for the Cause of the Beatification of Mother Mary Angela, participated in the first meeting of the Mother Angela Interprovincial Commission to promote the Cause of Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Provincial House in Buffalo, New York.[204]

As the beatification process of Mother Mary Angela gained momentum, the general administration approved the production of a motion picture depicting the life of the Felician Foundress and the charism, spirit, and ministries of the Felician Congregation. They commissioned Zbigniew Szaniawski, a well-known Polish producer of documentaries of recent saints and renowned persons, and his camera operator, Leon Kotowski. Commissions in Poland, America, and Brazil were formed to organize and coordinate materials for the producer. Provincial representatives responsible for preparing to shoot on location in North America included Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial secretary, for Enfield.[205]

At the first meeting of the North American Mother Angela Film Commission held in Lodi, New Jersey, from September 6-7, 1985, the group unanimously elected Sister Mary Felicity Wardzinski and Sister Mary Antonelle Chunka (Lodi) co-chairpersons, and Sister Mary Therese Szczepczynski (Chicago) as secretary. The members achieved consensus on the goals of the motion picture, as well as selected themes to be expressed and scenarios to be filmed. They also organized a filming timeline and agreed on the responsibilities of the members.[206]

The Commission's primary goal was to make the life and spirit of Mother Angela more widely known so that more people would be inspired by her virtue and glorify God. They hoped the film would also encourage people to pray for graces through the intercession of Mother Angela so that her beatification and canonization would soon be realized. Additional goals included presenting the lifestyle and diverse apostolates of the Felician Sisters in the 1980's as a means of encouraging women to join the community, as well as preserving an audio-visual history of the Congregation for documentary purposes.[207]

From October 10 through November 14, 1985, Szaniawski and Kotowski made the rounds of the United States and Canadian provinces, filming the scenarios prepared in advance by the respective Commission representatives. Sister Mary Raphael Monczewska (Lodi) and Sister Mary Felicity accompanied the producer and camera operator in their travels. The plan for the documentary on Mother Angela and the Felician Congregation consisted of three segments. The first segment utilized original documents, photos, and footage taken on actual locations in Poland to portray the foundress' life and to explain the charism of the Congregation. The life and work of the sisters in the Polish provinces was the subject of the second segment. The third segment was to depict the Felician charism as it is lived through community, spiritual

life, formation, government, and apostolic services by American Felicians. Scenes from Rome, Brazil, and Africa were also planned to be incorporated into the film. Soundtracks of all three segments were recorded by professional narrators in English and Polish.[208]

The anticipated date for completion of the movie was May 1986. Szaniawski arranged to make available the scenarios filmed on location for those provinces interested in obtaining them. His previous work included films on the lives of St. Maximilian Kolbe; St. Ursula Ledochowska, foundress of the Ursuline Sisters in Poland; Blessed Raphael Kalinowski, who restored the Discalced Carmelites in Poland, and the first and second pilgrimage of the Holy Father to Poland.[209]

Unfortunately, the film was never completed. Sister Mary Antonelle Chunka (Lodi), said she recalled that the film needed to have the sound added to it but for some reason, that was going to be a complicated process and she thought it was never done. She said that when she found the film reel years later, the celluloid on the film was warping.[210] A search of the correspondence of former Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus by Congregational Archivist Sister Mary Anita Ryguła found nothing regarding the project's status and why it was never disseminated.[211]

Beatification Process

Coincidentally, at the end of October 1985, Sister Mary Paschalisa Lenart (Krakow, but in residence in Rome since February 1978), the promoter of Mother Angela's cause in Rome, who served as liaison between the Capuchin Order and the Felician Congregation, communicated with Sister Mary Antonelle Dziechciarz (Buffalo), vice-postulator for the Cause. While working with Father Bernardino Romagnoli, OFM, Cap., postulator of Mother Angela's Cause of Beatification, and his confrere Father Paolino Rossi, she learned that he had received a positive response from the medical doctor to all the material submitted regarding the cure of Mrs. Lillian Halasinski of Dunkirk, New York, through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska. Sister Mary Paschalisa translated the reports on the Process of the Miracles forwarded from Buffalo from English into Italian.[212]

Early in 1986, Mother Mary Amadeus notified the sisters of the Congregation of the opening process of the Judicial Inquiry taking place in the Buffalo (NY) Diocese on February 10, regarding the possible cure of a woman in Dunkirk, New York, who suffered from diabetic neuropathy. The incident occurred in January 1984.[213] Since new procedures for investigating causes of beatification and, eventually canonization, called for investigation to be done in the area where the purported miracle occurred, the Most Rev. Edward D. Head, ordinary of the Diocese of Buffalo, was charged with studying the case of Lillian Halasinski's cure as well as other graces granted through Mother Angela's intercession.[214] Bishop Head delegated Msgr. Angelo M. Caligiuri to chair the investigative process. Padre Bernardino flew from Rome to be present at the Judicial Inquiry.[215] He named Provincial Superior Mother Mary Antonelle Dziechciarz (Buffalo) as vice-postulator of the Cause and Sister Mary Simplicia Wytrwal (Buffalo) as cursor (one who transcribes the testimony from tapes, types the minutes, notifies witnesses and Tribunal members of the next meeting, and handles correspondence, but is not present at the meetings.)[216]

Mother Amadeus requested prayers from the entire Felician Community for God's blessings upon the opening process.[217]

Bishop Head presided over the canonical investigative process, conducted over eleven meetings, from February 10 to August 15, 1986. Lillian Halasinski, along with her husband and daughter, were the first witnesses examined. Twelve other witnesses, including five doctors, gave their testimony under oath.[218] At the conclusion of the process, Bishop Head celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving in Villa Maria Convent Chapel on August 17, 1986. In his homily, he announced the conclusion of the formal process of the cause of Mother Mary Angela, expressed his gratitude for the services of the Tribunal, and pointed out that the basic miracle of the life of the Foundress was not confined to the official document, but is found in the living members of the Congregation which she had established. [219] Some witnesses were present at this Mass along with their family members, and many Felician Sisters were also in attendance.[220]

In her circular letter for Advent 1986, Mother Amadeus wrote of the "anticipation for our entire Felician family: the joyful hope of the Church's proclamation of the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, Mary Angela Truszkowska, our beloved Foundress."[221]

THE HERITAGE ROOM

The day commemorating the second anniversary of the issuance of the Decree on the Heroicity of Virtues of the Servant of God, Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska—April 2, 1984—also marked the blessing of the new Heritage Room in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield.[222] Located in the reception area of the Enfield convent, the museum-like room contained historical items gathered from the original provincial house and Felician convents throughout New England and eastern New York. The arrangement of the room highlighted the fourfold charisms of the Congregation—evangelical, ecclesial, Eucharistic, and Marian.[223]

Evangelical items included copies of the early Franciscan Rule and Testament Books, Felician Constitutions and Decrees, and accessories worn with the traditional habit. The ecclesial collection honored St. Francis of Assisi and Pope John Paul II. A set of "angels in adoration" from the altar of the first provincial chapel, erected in 1938, and implements used by the sisters to bake and cut Eucharistic wafers highlighted the Eucharistic display. Mary, Mother and Lady of the entire Congregation, was honored by her many titles, especially Our Lady of Częstochowa in the Marian collection. [224]

Planning for the special room began with the encouragement of Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka, while Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski initiated the collection and Sister Barbara Jean Mary Gasparik organized the display. The first visitors included Mother Mary Amadeus, and general councilors Sister Mary Clarentine Dzienis, Sister Mary Rosette Kubisty, and Sister Mary Alodia Stozek, who were still in Enfield following the canonical general visitation.

FATHER HONORAT KOŹMIŃSKI, OFM, CAP.

In the spirit of the theme of the 18th General Chapter, the delegates affirmed their intention to become credible witnesses to the world in the 80's. In addition to encouraging personal and communal studies of the charism of

Mother Mary Angela, the sisters once again[226] recognized the importance of the role of Father Honorat Koźmiński, OFM, Cap., in the development of the Felician Congregation and supported its further exploration.[227]

It is likely that Zofia (Sophia) Truszkowska, while actively engaged in works of mercy, sought ways of serving God more fully, and met Honorat Koźmiński around 1850 in the church on Miodowa Street where, as a deacon, he preached occasionally. He was ordained in 1852 and, in 1854, he became her spiritual director and confessor and, with his own spiritual vision firmly set on God, led his penitent along the simple, straight path of Franciscan humility and poverty.[228]

As a religious and a priest, Father Honorat fulfilled the duties of confessor, catechist, preacher and missionary to the country folk, director of the Third Order of St. Francis, promoter of the Living Rosary, provincial secretary, lecturer at a religious seminary, definitor, and superior of a monastery. In 1855, he began his special mission, that of founding religious orders. Twenty-eight years of this kind of pastoral ministry brought about the birth of various religious communities and yielded more than sixty thousand handwritten pages of letters, sermons, and printed works. His efforts bore fruit in the form of twenty-six religious congregations of men and congregations of women, three wearing a habit—including one contemplative order—but, primarily in congregations having no habit.[229] Mother Mary Angela corresponded with Father Honorat for well over forty-four years. She wrote him 314 letters and recognized him as a man of unique destiny for the Congregation.[230]

From the first days of the Felician Congregation's existence, Father Honorat exerted a tremendous influence on it, shaping not only its exterior structure, but forming the spirit of the first Felicians. As early as August 17, 1856, Mother Angela wrote to Father Honorat: "We very well realize what a blessing it was for our community to have your concern and your paternal care.[231] It is just now, that having been deprived of it temporarily, we can really appreciate your solicitude for us. All are eagerly awaiting your return."[232]

Mother Angela's words to the sisters attending the Third General Chapter in Krakow in 1868 bear witness to what Father Honorat meant to the Congregation and in what esteem the first Felician Sisters held him. These words were recorded by the secretary of that Chapter, Sister Mary Elizabeth Stummer: "Perhaps, dearest sisters, you are surprised that, mentioning all who contributed to the growth and development of our Congregation, so far I have not remembered Father Honorat; yet, you ought to have surmised that, the more my heart is filled with gratitude for all we owe to him, the more difficult it is for me to speak about it. For how can I express, how can I recount all that I would like to attribute to him?"[233]

And in her letter of August 10, 1869, to Father Honorat, Mother Angela wrote: "I recognize how much you do for us and what a debt of gratitude we owe you . . . I consider you as our father who alone has been designated by God to guide our Congregation."[234] Writing from Krakow in 1882, she once again expressed her gratitude to him: "May the Sacred Heart of Jesus reward you with his love for your wanting to continue your work for our Congregation . . . (Remember this always, Father,) that the Mother of God chose you for us, that no one can take your place. "[235]

In a letter written from Zakroczym, a small town near Plock, where Father Honorat was relocated together with the other friars of his community after the elimination of the monastery in Warsaw (November 27-28, 1864), he wrote to the Felician Sisters, "No father could love his child as much as God enables me to love all of you, because it is far more than if you belonged to my own family. I dare say with St. Paul: 'God is my witness that I hold all of you in my heart.' I have never celebrated a Mass without praying for you in a special memento. Nor is there a single day when at morning prayer I fail to offer all my works for your intention."[236] And to Mother Angela he wrote, "Remember this for once and for all, that your soul is one of those with whom our Lord brought me into a true, interior spiritual relationship. . .. This gives you the right to every assistance from my side, or rather, to everything that love in Him and from Him is able to give."[237]

Despite the good intentions of the Chapter of 1976 and 1982, nothing concrete regarding Father Honorat's relationship with the Felician Congregation was produced, so Mother Mary Amadeus summoned Sister Mary Felicity Wardzinski (Buffalo) to Rome to assume responsibility for researching the archives of the Capuchin Fathers for whatever was pertinent to the life of Father Honorat insofar as he was associated with the Felician Sisters.[238] During the 1986 Biennial Assembly held at Maryville Center in Holly, Michigan, from September 7-21, Sister Mary Clarentine Dzienis presented research she undertook to authenticate the involvement of Father Honorat within the Felician Congregation. In the end, she recommended including the Cause of Father Honorat along with that of Mother Angela in prayer, as well as reading and studying his circular letters to the community. She assured the sisters that more information would be forthcoming because of Sister Felicity's research.[239] Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline encouraged the Enfield sisters to read and study the life of Father Honorat and to pray for his beatification.[240]

Mother Mary Amadeus reported on the progress made on the collection of Father Honorat's letters, entitled, *Selected Circular Letters to the Felician Sisters 1863-1907.* Sister Mary Mark Janik (Buffalo) was working on the final editing of the translation of Father Honorat's letters by Sister Mary Dulcina Wierzbowski (Canada/Buffalo) and Sister Mary Lucentia Stasko (Buffalo). The book would include twenty-two letters; to date, seventeen were completed.[241]

The Congregation for the Causes of Saints validated the informative process for Father Honorat on February 1, 1985 and approved the cause on February 3, 1987.[242] One month later, on March 16, Father Honorat was declared as Venerable after Pope John Paul II confirmed his heroic virtue.[243] The March 23, 1987, issue of *L'Osservatore Romano* included the following brief statement: "Professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchin, founder of various congregations of women religious; born in Biała Podlaska, Poland, October 16, 1829, and died at Nowe Miasto December 16, 1916."[244]

The miracle leading to his beatification was investigated in Poland in an examination that moved to Rome. The Congregation validated this process twice, on February 1, 1985, and, on April 30, 1987, before a medical board and approved the miraculous nature of the healing on October 14, 1987.[245] Theologians also confirmed this miracle on March 4, 1988, as did the Congregation two months later, on May 17. Pope John Paul II confirmed this miracle on September 1 and, on October 16, 1988, in Saint Peter's Square, Pope

John Paul II added him to the group of the blessed. This is what he said about him at that time:

> Honorat Koźmiński - a priest and an apostle, a steadfast dispenser of the sacrament of reconciliation and forgiveness. His downright heroic ministry in the confessional was true spiritual direction. He possessed a profound gift for discovering and revealing the paths of God's calling.
>
> He was a man persistent in prayer, especially in the adoration of the Eucharist. Immersed in God, he was open at the same time to the reality of life on this earth.
>
> He pointed the way to perfection which grew out of the reading of the Gospels and contemplation. He encouraged others to remain among their own communities, to imitate Jesus and Mary of Nazareth, to practice the evangelical counsels in secret, without any outward manifestations. Through his spiritual sons and daughters, he attempted to rekindle in society the spirit of the first Christians' zeal, and through them he was able to reach all levels of society. In the Church today, he enjoys the honors of the altar. He shows us how to interpret the 'signs of the times,' how to act and how to persevere in a godly fashion in our challenging times. He teaches us how to solve difficult issues and supply human needs at the threshold of the third millennium in the same manner as the Son of Man who 'came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'[246]

Both Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial secretary, and Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, provincial treasurer, traveled to Rome to represent the Enfield province at the beatification ceremonies. Sister Bernardine, who had never been to the Eternal City before, said, "We were the lucky recipients. The trip was a golden jubilee gift for Sister Florentine." Sister Bernardine's own words best describe the occasion. "It was truly an experience of the Church universal, seeing and meeting people from all over the world, joining together and celebrating as one people of God. For the Felician Congregation, it was a rare opportunity to celebrate the beatification of Father Honorat at Saint Peter's Square in Rome." Sister Bernardine added, "Meeting and sharing with our international Felician Family members made for an uplifting gathering. Visiting our generalate gave me a more profound sense of my connection with the Congregation and the greater Church community. And visiting the highlights of Rome moved me to a deeper sense of appreciation of history. We both returned to Enfield renewed, with many stories to share."[247]

ENFIELD'S FIRST CENTENARIAN

> "In old age they still produce fruit;
> they are always green and full of sap."
>
> *Psalm 92:14*

Throughout the 20th century, average life expectancy at birth in the United States increased thirty years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, this represented a greater gain than during all previous human history. Average life expectancy in 1985 was seventy-one years for men and seventy-eight years for women. Reflecting this increase in average life expectancy, as well as greater

numbers of immigrants and births in the late 1800's, the United States was experiencing a steady growth in the number of people aged 100 or more years by 1980. That year, the number of centenarians was approximately 15,000. By 1985, the number of centenarians grew to about 25,000, with the government projecting the number to grow to more than 100,000 by the year 2000.[248] In 1982, the United Nations organized the First World Assembly on Ageing, organized in Vienna.[249] At that time, the elderly—those sixty-five and older—made up eight per cent of the world population. Centenarians were expected to increase in the next decade, with more women in this age group than men.[250]

The Census Bureau report also noted that, since 1950, the population sixty-five and over had more than doubled, the number of people eighty-five and over had increased almost five times, and the number of centenarians had grown more than ten times. While these growth rates were impressive, centenarians were still a very small percentage of the population in 1986, constituting only about one in 10,000 persons in the total population.[251] So, the 100th birthday of Sister Mary Zenobia Wisniewska, the first sister to reach this milestone, marked a significant event in the annals of Our Lady of the Angels Province.[252]



SM Zenobia Wisniewski

The Felician Community in Enfield joined Sister Zenobia's relatives from Rhode Island and New Jersey in a special Mass of Thanksgiving, celebrated by Father Anthony Boryczka, S.Ch., chaplain, on September 21, 1984. Guests at the festive dinner included Little Sisters of the Poor from neighboring St. Joseph's Residence. Student representatives from SS. Cyril and Methodius School in Hartford, accompanied by Sister Marianne Los, principal, along with several parents, delivered greetings and gifts to the centenarian.

Sister Mary Zenobia also received a special blessing and telegram from Pope John Paul II as well as a congratulatory message from President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy. Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka sent several dozen beautiful roses which adorned the main altar in the chapel. Mother Mary Camille Bet, provincial superior of Holy Name of Mary Vice Province in Canada, also sent roses and wishes from the Canadian sisters.

Sister Mary Augustine Kloza, her local superior, who was attending a meeting of the Felician Healthcare System at the Generalate in Rome, Italy, sent a congratulatory message. Finally, a local radio station extended warm wishes with a special rendition of "Happy Birthday."[253]

Born in Poland in 1884, Camille Wisniewska came to the United States in 1903 and entered the Felician Congregation in 1908 in Buffalo, New York. When Immaculate Heart of Mary Province was divided, Sister Mary Zenobia was transferred to Immaculate Conception Province in Lodi, New Jersey. In 1934, when Our Lady of the Angels Province was established, she joined the newly formed province in Enfield. For seventy-six years, Sister Mary Zenobia ministered to the community in supportive roles, engaged primarily in domestic duties.[254]

In their classic work, *Christian Life Patterns* (1979), wife and husband Evelyn and James Whitehead noted, "It is not easy to be old. It is an affront to one's self-image, a deterrent to one's plans, and a general inconvenience to society."[255] For many people, turning 100 often comes with a cost: loss of health, loss of mobility, and sometimes loss of family and friends, all of which can take much joy out of the alleged achievement. Although having some hearing loss and unable to walk, Sister Zenobia was alert and active, maintaining a sense of humor, content with her call to the ministry of presence. She considered her prayer apostolate very seriously and spent many hours in chapel praying for those in need of prayerful support.[256] Immersed in the Mystery of life, and unable to give herself any longer to the physical needs of her sisters, she stretched beyond herself and offered the gift of faithful prayer.

When asked to what she attributed her long life, Sister Zenobia answered with a wry smile, "I didn't ask for 100 years, but since God gave them to me, I'm still using them with His grace,"[257] thus living out the biblical truth that we are "blessed to be a blessing," and showing that the spirit of compassion and kindness need never dwindle with the waning years.

On September 21, 1987, on Sister Zenobia's 103rd birthday, President Ronald Reagan and his wife once again sent wishes "to share this memorable occasion with you." WTIC announcer Bob Steele congratulated her during his morning broadcast and sent a gift certificate for a birthday cake.[258] *Hartford Courant* reporter Dan Haar, who covered Sister Zenobia's 100th birthday, returned to do a follow-up story. Sister Mary Zenobia died on June 20, 1988, at the age of 103, just three months short of her 104th birthday.

Sister Mary Patricia Ruszczyk

Two years later, on May 22, 1986, the Enfield Felicians celebrated with the province's second centenarian, Sister Mary Patricia Ruszczyk.[259] She, too, was born in Poland, and emigrated to the United States in 1912. As a member of St. Stanislaus Parish in Amsterdam, New York, she entered the Felician Congregation in Lodi, New Jersey, in 1916, at the age of twenty. Ten years later, she was transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut. For fifty-seven years, her prayer life underpinned her faithful performance of her culinary and domestic duties in many Felician convents in the Middle Atlantic and New England states. She modeled her life on the meek and humble Jesus, and her gentle manner and quiet approach to

apostolic duties were a source of edification to those with whom she lived. She experienced great satisfaction in serving meals that not only pleased the sisters but also sustained their health and strength so they could better serve the Lord and "cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world."[260]



SM Patricia Ruszczyk

Relatives and friends from New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts joined the sisters at the provincial house in offering a special Mass of Thanksgiving. Chaplain Father Herbert Schmidt celebrated the late morning Eucharistic liturgy followed by a festive dinner. Mother Mary Landeline, provincial superior, read the Papal Blessing, and felicitations also arrived from Mother Mary Amadeus, superior general, and Sister Patricia's Felician family and friends. Connecticut Governor William O'Neill and Mary Ellen Klinck, Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Aging, also sent congratulatory messages.[261] Sister Mary Patricia was called home to her eternal reward on August 22, 1987, at the age of 101.

SISTER MARY JANINE MUSNICKI

But there were sad moments, too.

Sister Mary Janine Musnicki was just thirty-four years old when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Born and brought up in the Bronx, Carol Ann Musnicki attended St. Adalbert School there. At the early age of thirteen, she felt a call to serve God, inspired by the joy evident in her teachers, the Felician Sisters, as well as her aunt Sister Mary Bernard Skrocka. She wanted to be like them and, after her graduation from eighth grade, set out to find her joy in God's service.[262] Following her graduation from Our Lady of the Angels Academy in 1966, she entered the postulancy of the Felician Community, was invested in the Felician habit in 1967, and received the religious name, Sister Mary Janine. She made her first profession of vows in 1968. In August of 1974, she sealed her commitment by professing her religious vows for the rest of her life. In preparation for her future ministry, Sister Janine pursued higher education

and earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education from Felician College in Lodi, New Jersey, in 1982.

A gifted and compassionate educator, Sister Janine was teaching first-grade, "something she truly loved," according to her classmate Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis,[263] at St. Bernard School in the Hazardville section of Enfield when she became ill. After a lump was detected on her breast during a routine physical, an attempt to remove it at Johnson Memorial Hospital in Stafford, Connecticut, failed and she was transferred to St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. Cycles of chemotherapy sessions followed. Sister Janine was convinced that she would beat this because she really wanted to return to the classroom.

Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, who was the local superior and school principal, recalled that when Sister Janine realized her diagnosis, she cried. She said she accompanied Sister Janine to the home of her mother Jane, in the Bronx, to share the news. Sister Bernardine described her as an excellent first grade teacher who "taught life lessons," especially kindness.[264] Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, who lived with her briefly at St. Bernard Convent, said Sister Janine was kind and compassionate toward everyone. "But chemotherapy took away her will to live." She added, "I will never forget this simple, trustworthy person."[265]

This was an upsetting and stressful time for her local community as well as for the Felician Community of Enfield as they watched her struggling with her pain. They joined their hearts with one another and with God, begging for a cure for Sister Janine. Though determined to fight the disease, on December 11, 1983, after celebrating her birthday and feast day with the local community at St. Bernard's, she left to reside at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House while undergoing treatment.[266] As the disease progressed, and her condition continued to decline—the cancer had metastasized to her brain—she became a patient in St. Francis Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut. During the February retreat, her condition became critical—changing drastically on the evening of February 19—and the retreatants joined the sisters in the provincial house to maintain an all-night prayer vigil from February 19-21 while begging God, through the intercession of Mother Mary Angela, for a miraculous cure.[267]



SM Janine Musnicki

By the beginning of March, the sisters from the provincial house, St. Bernard Convent, and Mother Angela Residence were taking turns to spend the night at Sister Janine's bedside. But the next part of her life began on March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, patron of a happy death, when God called her to her eternal home, where there is "no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev 21:4). The chapel was crowded for her funeral, filled with her family, sisters, fellow educators, students, their parents, and friends. Sister Bernardine said, "It broke my heart to see her first graders at her funeral."[268]

When notified of Sister Janine's death, Mother Landeline's brother, Trappist Brother Boniface Ptasienski, also from the Bronx, wrote: "With lack of vocations, an older community, our good Lord plucks this flower. One can ask 'WHY'? Let Mother Angela answer: 'Love Jesus, our Lord, but love him on the cross because it is there He should be the main consolation for our hearts and it is there that his broken heart holds the most love, silence and pain.'"[269] In a note to the sisters, Mother Landeline chided the sisters about feeling sorry for themselves for yet another loss, and instead, directed them to follow the advice of Mother Angela, to "gaze with deep faith at the Risen Savior and place all our hopes and the future into his loving hands."[270]

ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF ST. FELIX OF CANTALICE

The Felician Congregation entered upon a year commemorating the Quadricentennial of the death of the patron saint of the Congregation, St. Felix of Cantalice, on May 18, 1987.[271] As the only sisterhood in the Church enjoying his patronage, the general administration invited the sisters to become intensely involved in the anniversary so that the observance of the 400th anniversary would result in a rediscovered and deepened awareness of their Felician identity.[272] In her circular letter to the sisters proclaiming this "extraordinary Jubilee" within the great Franciscan family, Mother Mary Amadeus wrote that, for Felicians everywhere, this is

> —A time to celebrate the wonders which God has wrought through His humble servant, Felix;
>
> —A time to rejoice as a Felician family in the Father's loving Providence, giving us Saint Felix as our holy patron;
>
> —A time to reflect on how we ourselves are responding in our times, in the decade of the 80's, to the privilege of bearing the unique title of SISTERS OF SAINT FELIX OF CANTALICE.[273]

Mother Amadeus reminded the sisters that the name Felix signifies "blessedness" and "joy" and that he calls his Felician family "to live that joy and blessedness in a deeper dimension this year." She noted that the sisters could find encouragement for their personal living of the Beatitudes in imitation of Saint Felix in the *Memoirs:* "They [the sisters] shall always find HAPPINESS in their simplicity of life and experience the spiritual JOY which nothing can sadden or disturb. This happiness shall be their particular trait by which they will demonstrate that as Felicians they have found their greatest treasure in complete poverty" (Chapter XV, 82-83).[274]

To achieve these effects, the sisters were encouraged not only to respond to the counsel of Father Honoratus Koźmiński in which he urged the sisters "to reflect on the virtues and attributes of St. Felix" in order "to embody

them in their own lives," but also to share the fruits of these reflections with the community in essay form. Writing these essays was one of the activities planned for participation by the Congregation as a whole.[275]

In addition to this spiritual focus of the Quadricentennial, the general administration suggested that the sisters reach out to the Church of St. Felix of Cantalice in Italy, to provide prayerful support and material and financial assistance. Monies collected were designated for the pastor of the parish, Father Gottardo Patacchiola, for specific projects and for the purchase of needed sacred vessels and linen cloth. The linen fabric was sent to Poland where the sisters sewed and decorated albs, altar cloths, and the like for the Church of St. Felix.[276]

The sisters of the generalate community anticipated the inauguration of the Quadricentennial with the traditional novena pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Felix. For nine days preceding the solemnity, they journeyed to Immaculate Conception Church on Via Veneto in Rome. There, at the tomb of the Saint, they participated in a Eucharistic liturgy celebrated by Father Francis Sariego, OFM, Cap.[277]

The Enfield Felicians formally opened the Year of Saint Felix of Cantalice on May 16, the feast day of Mother Mary Angela, in conjunction with the celebration of the annual Community Day, prepared by the Community Life Committee.[278] The day began with an outdoor ceremony by the statue of Saint Felix, to the left of the chapel entrance. Father Stanley Smolenski, parochial vicar at St. Martha Parish in Enfield, blessed the statue of Saint Felix, and the sisters before Mother Mary Landeline officially proclaimed the opening of the Year of Saint Felix. The sisters then processed into the chapel for the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. Following the liturgy, the sisters enjoyed a festive dinner and recreation in the auditorium. A sing-along and prayer service concluded a day lived in simple joy.



St. Felix of Cantalice

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PEACE

The decade of the 80s was marked by major civil discontent and violence, including the Iran–Iraq War, the Soviet–Afghan War, and the 1982 Lebanon War, and it also saw Islamic fundamentalism become a powerful political force.[279] Considering that the promotion of peace is the basic objective of the United Nations, on October 24, 1985, the General Assembly solemnly proclaimed 1986 to be the International Year of Peace.[280] It called upon Member States "to promote the ideals of peace and give evidence of their commitment to peace in all viable ways."[281] In tones strongly supportive of the international organization, Pope John Paul II, in his message for the celebration of the 19th World Day of Peace, recalled that the goal that the UN set at its establishment in 1945, was ''to promote the supreme goods of peace, justice and solidarity."[282]

Noting that the relations between individuals and states were characterized by "permanent conflict," Pope John Paul suggested that "the only path possible to a world community in which justice and peace will reign is the path of solidarity, dialogue and universal brotherhood." He asked people "to recognize the unity of the human family" and "to refuse, in consequence, that mode of thinking that leads to division and exploitation."[283] The Pope went on to praise those engaged in international volunteer work and other forms of activity "aimed at creating links of sharing and fraternity at a level higher than the various blocs." He appealed to the suffering, those with disabilities, and those physically limited, "to offer your prayers and your lives in order to break down the barriers that divide the world." The Pope's final appeal to people worldwide was to "Embrace peace as the great unifying factor of your lives."[284] While the pope made no mention of the terrorist raids during the last week of December 1985 on Israel's El Al airline at airports in Rome and Vienna, where eighteen people died, including four Americans, and 112 were injured, he strongly condemned the spiral of violence and urged world leaders to unite against the spread of terrorism.[285]

In connection with Pope John Paul's message for the World Day of Prayer for Peace, Mother Mary Landeline asked the Enfield sisters to reflect on his message and to resolve, both as individuals and as a community, to "pray and work for peace," and she proclaimed every Tuesday—a day traditionally dedicated to St. Francis—as PEACE DAY in Our Lady of the Angels Province. She suggested practical ways to keep this intention before the sisters, encouraging them to incorporate a petition or song of peace into the Eucharistic liturgy or Christian Prayer. "We have no choice but to be PEACEMAKERS in 1986," she wrote.[286]

On the final day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity—January 25, 1986—Pope John Paul II took advantage of the opportunity to renew his appeal to "unite during this International Year of Peace in insistent and fervent prayer, imploring God for the great gift of peace." In a note to the sisters, Mother Landeline shared that, in his search for world peace, the Pope invited world religious leaders to join him in Assisi for a day of prayer for world peace.[287]

In her letter of February 12, 1986, Mother Landeline held up St. Francis as "the world's greatest peacemaker," who "exhorts every one of us 'to announce PEACE not so much with our lips but to have it in our hearts,'" for we are called "to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring," by recalling that we have given ourselves up completely and handed ourselves over totally to our Lord, Jesus Christ" (TOR Rule, #30). She reminded the sisters that, "Like the early friars who formed local penitential communities and translated this call to be peacemakers by serving others through spiritual and corporal works of mercy, we, too, are invited to do the same."[288]

She closed her letter, extending the ancient biblical blessing used frequently by Saint Francis:

> The Lord bless thee and keep thee.
> The Lord show His face to thee and
> have mercy on thee.
> The Lord turn His countenance to thee
> and GIVE THEE PEACE.[289]

In the interreligious movement, the date October 27, 1986, stands out as a landmark moment when Pope John Paul II convened representatives of the world's religions to gather at the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi in Italy to pray together for the first time in history.[290] At the closing of the Assisi World Day of Prayer, Pope John Paul II remarked: "For the first time in history, we have come together from everywhere, Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities, and World Religions, in this sacred place dedicated to Saint Francis, to witness before the world, each according to his own conviction, about the transcendent quality of peace. The form and content of our prayers are very different, as we have seen, and there can be no question of reducing them to a kind of common denominator. Yet, in this very difference we have perhaps discovered anew that, regarding the problem of peace and its relation to religious commitment, there is something which binds us together."[291] The World Day of Prayer for Peace was one more way Pope John Paul was living out the conviction he preached at his papal installation: "Be not afraid!"

Before the official closing of the International Year of Peace on October 4, 1986, Mother Landeline invited the sisters to search their hearts to "find what you have done to deepen the peace in your heart . . . in your local community . . . in the apostolate." She asked: "Can people see the PEACE of Christ in your eyes? speech? behavior?" She continued, "If YES, then celebrate and thank God that you as an individual, have lighted one more candle of HOPE and PEACE for the world to recognize and enjoy."[292]

PEACE SITE: 'LORD, MAKE US INSTRUMENTS OF YOUR PEACE'

The Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province officially became a member of Peace Site International in 1987 when they dedicated the convent and campus as a peace site on October 4, the feast of St. Francis. The Felician site was the first to be officially designated in the state of Connecticut.[293]

Louis Kousin, a member of NJ SANE, a movement that was renamed Peace Action, first proposed the idea for the Peace Site network in 1981.[294] In June 1981, this group urged the creation of peace sites, an antonym for military sites. And Enfield was one of 300 such sites.[295] The actual peace site was located alongside of the chapel facing Enfield Street. A new flagpole was erected on the site that flew the American flag as well as the emblem of Peace Site International, a green laurel enclosed in white against a bright yellow gold background. A plaque identifying the grounds as a peace site was affixed to the statue of St. Francis outside the chapel. [296]

Due to inclement weather, the major portion of the program took place in the auditorium. Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline welcomed the many guests, priests, sisters, parents, and students from the Enfield schools which the Felicians staff—Longview Catholic High School, St. Adalbert, St. Bernard, St. Martha, and the Enfield Montessori Schools. Students from each of the schools formed a joint choir for the event. The St. Martha school band performed two patriotic pieces.[297] State representative William Kiner presented Mother Landeline with a citation from the State of Connecticut commending the initiative. In his brief address, Kiner highlighted the urgent need to halt the escalating buildup of nuclear weapons.[298] The event concluded with the blessing of the Peace Site. The memorial plaque read:

LORD, MAKE US INSTRUMENTS OF YOUR PEACE
We, the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province,
to symbolize our commitment to the prevention of nuclear war
and to seeking world peace, do hereby proclaim our grounds
to be a PEACE SITE.

Feast of St. Francis
October 4, 1987[299]



On October 4, 1987, the feast of St. Francis, a Peace Site was dedicated on the provincial house grounds before the statue of St. Francis outside the chapel. From l: S Marie JoAnn Lewko, Provincial Superior MM Landeline Ptasienski, SM Alexander Mazur and State Representative William Kiner.

Members of the Justice and Peace Committee who helped make this project a reality included Sister Mary Alexander Mazur, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz, Sister Eleanor Marie Statkiewicz, Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski, and Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso.[300]

INTERNATIONAL MARIAN YEAR

On New Year's Day 1987, Pope John Paul II celebrated the Church's World Day of Peace and initiated an International Marian Year, from June 7, 1987 (Pentecost) to August 15, 1988 (the Feast of the Assumption) in preparation of the forthcoming millennium. Vatican officials said the special Marian Year was intended to inaugurate a Marian Advent leading up to the commemoration in the year 2000 of Christ's birth.[301]

It was only the second time that the Church had designated a year for the special veneration of the Virgin Mary. The first took place from December 1953 to December 1954 to mark the centenary of the proclamation of the Dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception by Pope Pius IX. Both Marian Years had an international character, that is, they were intended for the Catholic Church worldwide.[302]

From the outset of his pontificate, Pope John Paul displayed special devotion to Mary, calling her the "heavenly mother of the Church," and invoking her intercession in public prayers. In her work entitled "The Marian Dimension of Blessed John Paul II," Mother Adela Galindo, SCTJM makes pertinent observations in this regard. She maintains that the election of John

Paul II brought a profound and universal resurgence in Marian spirituality. She considers his pilgrimages to Marian shrines, his papal coat of arms, his episcopal motto—*Totus Tuus*—and even his gestures.[303]

She explains that his episcopal motto comes from St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort and that it is the abbreviation of the more complete form of the consecration to the Mother of God. She notes that in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, he told us about his motto, *Totus Tuus*.

> This phrase is not only an expression of piety, or simply an expression of devotion. It is more. During the Second World War, while I was employed as a factory worker, I came to be attracted to Marian devotion. At first, it seemed to me that I should distance myself a bit from the Marian devotion of my childhood, in order to focus more on Christ. Thanks to St. Louis of Montfort, I came to understand that true devotion to the Mother of God is actually Christocentric. Indeed, it is very profoundly rooted in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption (110)."

John Paul II placed his whole life in the hands of Our Lady, to whom he was totally consecrated with his motto, *Totus tuus*: "These two words express total belonging to Jesus through Mary: "*Totus tuus ego sum, et Omnia mea, tua sunt,*" writes St. Louis Marie; and is translated: "I am all yours and all I have is yours."[304]

Preceding the Marian year was a papal letter, *Redemptoris Mater,* the longest Marian encyclical ever written by a Pope. Delivered on March 25, 1987, in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, it was subtitled "On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church." The first part considers Mary's life, her existence and role in the Church. The second part follows the historical line and treats of Mary's constant presence on the journey of faith and focuses on the people of God as the Church present in all the nations of the earth. The third part emphasizes the maternal role of Mary in the life of the Church and of every Christian.[305]

In her formal announcement to the entire Felician Congregation convoking the Nineteenth General Chapter of the Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice, Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka observed that since it would take place during the special Marian Year of the Church, it would be dedicated to "Mary, Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of our Felician Congregation." She wrote, "Into her Immaculate Heart I place the urgent needs of the spiritual rebirth of our religious family—a renewal which is primarily an authentic following of Christ through a total submission to His Father's Divine Will."[306]

In her circular letter of November 21, 1987, the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the 132nd birthday of the Felician Congregation, Mother Amadeus asked the sisters to "take time today . . . to give praise to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—For granting us a new opportunity for a spiritual rebirth during this Marian Year, through the providential event of the Nineteenth General Chapter."[307]

Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski seized the opportunity to communicate with the lay teachers in the province, writing to them about the Marian Year,

a year which promises to be grace-filled and uplifting as well as instrumental in deepening our devotion to Mary, the teacher of the Son of God. Hers was the awesome responsibility to teach Jesus reading and writing, to acquaint Him with Scripture and prepare Him to be the Redeemer of mankind. It was a painful process, one that put seven swords through her motherly heart; yet, she was successful– the instructor par excellence—because it was her son who brought salvation to the world.

Today Mary stands before us as a model of the zealous and courageous teacher. She is the one to whom we turn for inspiration and encouragement. Let us do so especially during this MARIAN YEAR.[308]

Mother Landeline also took advantage of every opportunity to keep this special Marian Year in the minds and hearts of the sisters. In her note to the sisters before Mother's Day, included in the April 1988 issue of *News Bits from OLA,* she wrote:

The month of May in this Marian Year ought to be very special to every Felician heart. The Mother of the Redeemer is also our Mother and Queen. Let our daily supplication be the prayer of Mother Angela:

> O Mary, my Mother, salvation came through you; let me be saved through you. I am yours; let me be yours forever. Obtain for me the grace to unite my will to the Will of God (*Selected Writings,* Vol III, 106).

Further on, she wrote, "Our Holy Father, John Paul II, challenges us repeatedly: 'Never take your gaze off Mary; listen to her when she says: Do what Jesus tells you. Pray to her with daily solicitude that the Lord may continue to raise up generous souls who can say YES to his vocational call'" (January 31, 1988).[309]

Pope John Paul II called for increased devotion to Mary in this year dedicated to her, especially visits to beloved Marian shrines as well as pilgrimages and religious processions. From March 12-13, 1988, at the invitation of Archbishop John F. Whealon, six Enfield Felicians joined 6,000 Catholics from 223 Connecticut parishes in pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The Archbishop led the pilgrims in loving devotion to "Mary – The Woman of Faith." The pilgrim sisters who responded to Mary's request to "Do whatever he tells you," were Sister Mary Anselma Smolenski, Sister Mary Beatrice Gesek, Sister Clara Mary Golembowski, Sister Mary Evelyn Rybicki, Sister Marianne Los, and Sister Mary Paula Rutkowski. For a long time, the sisters treasured beautiful memories of this truly spiritual and uplifting experience.[310]

When the weather did not cooperate so that a group of sisters could visit the Shrine of Lourdes in Litchfield, Connecticut, thirty-seven sisters—traveling in a van, two station wagons, and four cars—made a pilgrimage to Saint Mary's Church in Middletown, Connecticut, on August 5, 1988. Father Clement R. Jarnot, OFM, Conv., pastor, welcomed the group and led a prayer service comprised of decades of the rosary interspersed with appropriate psalms. After a short, inspiring homily, Father celebrated Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Sister Mary Amandine Zdrok and Sister Mary Luke

Blaney provided refreshments—cookies and cold beverages—in the parish hall. Before arriving back in Enfield, each car stopped at Dairy Cream in Suffield for an ice cream treat, courtesy of Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko who coordinated the day.[311]

Following the close of the Congregation's 19th General Chapter, Mother Mary Landeline concluded her final circular to the sisters with a blessing: "At the close of the Marian Year, may the Blessed Mother embrace and keep every sister close to her Immaculate Heart. May our Lady intercede for you and ask Jesus to reward you richly for the many prayers and sacrifices offered in the intention of the General Chapter."[312]

FORWARD IN HOPE WITH MOTHER ANGELA

After Mother Mary Landeline officially convoked the 1987 Provincial Chapter, she wholeheartedly recommended that every sister, whether a delegate or not, offer her gifts of prayer, adoration, and expiation for the good of the provincial chapter. She also asked that, beginning with the month of October, and continuing on the tenth of every month, the sisters pray for the success of the provincial chapter with a novena to Mother Mary Angela, imploring God's blessings upon the province, "so that we could concentrate, prepare, study and examine every aspect of religious life, then seek ways and means to grow steadily in holiness."[313]

But even before that, from April 9-11, 1985, fifty-three Felician leaders—from the general administration, the seven American provinces, and the Canadian and Brazilian vice provinces—gathered for a "Workshop on Chapter Issues" at St. Ignatius Renewal Center in Clarence, New York. Passionist Father Raphael Domzall, who was affiliated with the Center for Management and Professional Development at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, conducted the workshop. Through lectures as well as small group working sessions, the sisters dealt with self-discovery in religious communities with a vision toward the year 2000. The sisters received guidelines for chapter preparation and for responding to issues of community life, justice, and spirituality. Mother Mary Landeline and the entire provincial administration participated.[314]

To become familiar with the process of issue-raising for upcoming community chapters, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial secretary, and Sister Barbara Jean Mary Gasparik, Government Committee chair, joined the sisters in the Lodi, New Jersey, province to participate in a Chapter Issues Workshop on September 20, 1986. Sister Donna Fread, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, facilitated the workshop. [315]

Sister Barbara Jean also designed the chapter logo to illustrate the chapter theme, "FORWARD in HOPE with Mother Angela." It depicted Mother Angela superimposed on an anchor of hope with the cross of Christ and the crescent moon symbolizing Mary. She explained, "As the moon reflects the sun, so Mary images her son, Jesus Christ, the Son of Righteousness. Mother Angela, our Foundress, shows us the way to Jesus through Mary in hope."[316]

The Commissioning of Chapter Delegates and Alternates took place during the Eucharistic liturgy celebrated by Father Joseph Jones, CP, on December 6, 1986, in the provincial house chapel. Following the Mass, Mother Landeline opened the first meeting of delegates and alternates, challenging them to face the issues before them positively, prayerfully, and courageously, to effect the

transformation of every sister's heart and the continuing renewal of the province and Congregation.[317] After that, Sister Mary Alexander Mazur, coordinator of Pre-Chapter Activities, reviewed the work of the regional meetings and explained the process for categorizing issues. Committee meetings followed with a joint session held at the end of the day.[318]

At the provincial assembly held on March 21, 1987, attendees had unanimously approved the directional papers prepared for the provincial chapter in the areas of Community Life, Formation, Government, Ministry, and Spiritual Life.[319] Sister Mary Alexander explained the method for writing proposals and encouraged the sisters to prayerfully deliberate on the issues to prepare proposals for the chapter. Delegates and alternates met on May 9 to review and collate the proposals before distributing them to the sisters of the province.[320]

Father Jones prefaced the opening of Provincial Chapter 1987 with an inspirational conference and prayerful reflection on "The Need of Our Times" and the boundless love of Felician Foundress Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska.[321] When the thirty-two delegates, including the members of the provincial administration, assembled in the chapter hall for the formal opening of the chapter on June 21, Mother Landeline referred to it as "another phase in our lived Felician history." She followed that with a brief review of the evolution of chapters in the history of religious life. From the fourth to the sixteenth century, chapters were democratic gatherings. Everyone spoke, and everyone had a vote. It was not until the Council of Trent (1545-1563) mandated that only "delegates" attend chapters that all chapter sessions were closed. However, according to the mind of Vatican II, participation, and consultation on the part of all members were crucial factors in chapter preparations and open sessions were recommended.[322]

Mother Landeline noted that "The chapter is to be a sign of the congregation's unity and love" and encouraged the delegates to see it as "a time of celebration," "an ecclesial event," when "we experience a new and deeper manifestation of God in us." Further on, she spoke about it as "a community event, a family meeting with Jesus as the Center." But she also urged the delegates to consider the concrete reality of the Church and to ask, "What does God want of us at this moment of the Church?" and, "How will we respond to the challenge of facing the future?"[323]

From June 21-28, the delegates participated in the discussions and analyses of the progress reports presented by the provincial administration in the vital areas of religious life and the status of the province during the six-year period 1981-1987. The delegates agreed that the reports indicated a sincere desire and effort to maintain the simple and joyful lifestyle that is characteristic of St. Francis, St. Felix, and the Felician Sisters. They carefully studied and analyzed the proposals submitted by the community-at-large for clarity and sound rationale. As a result, they developed resolutions and affirmations in the areas of lifestyle, community life, the wholistic development of each sister, local house meetings, strengthening leadership, relationship between authority and obedience, a lay associate program, and concentrated effort in vocation work.[324]

When the chapter proceedings moved to the area of "Future Planning," the sisters evidenced a growing concern for several issues, including an organized

vocation program, expansion of the lay associate program, formation of a lay adoration society at the provincial house, retirement and pre-retirement programs, and finances.[325]

Sister Mary Dulcine Bartosiak, a delegate to the provincial chapter, shared her impressions of the chapter in the December 1987 issue of **felician network:**

> After nine months of prayerful and diligent preparation by the delegates, alternates, and sisters-at-large, Our Lady of the Angels Province began its provincial chapter. It was the second time that I was serving as a chapter delegate, therefore, I knew the procedure and the intensity of the work involved. However, this chapter, as every chapter, had unique aspects.
>
> To begin with, I sense that the delegates were very serious about re-commitment to living out our true Felician ideals in the spirit of the Gospel. Much thoughtful deliberation on proposals evidenced this desire.
>
> The delegates also displayed a keen awareness of the changing needs of the Church. This fact led to a resolution to completely reassess our present service commitments and make appropriate adjustments and changes in keeping with the spirit of Mother Angela.
>
> Along with an awareness of the changing needs of God's people, an increased sensitivity to the serious needs of our sisters in community was apparent. Our membership consisting of a majority of elderly sisters with failing health creates a kind of community unknown to Felicians before. The Chapter highlighted the fact that the province must take a realistic and charitable look at the situation and plan for healthy and wholesome community living for all of its members.
>
> Related to the concept of wholesome community living, the delegates concerned themselves with the topics of "wholeness" and "wellness" and their relationship to holiness. Focus here was on the individual sister's physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health and development.
>
> In summary, the Provincial Chapter was a unique experience of Our Lady of the Angels Province, a "pilgrim Church" on its way to the promised land. We are a people of hope because of our faith in a faithful God. Alone we are lost. With God, however, we will accomplish the Divine Plan and build up the Kingdom of God.[326]

On Saturday, June 27, the chapter body voted for delegates to the Felician Congregation's 19th General Chapter in 1988. These were Sister Mary Dulcine Bartosiak and Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz. Alternates chosen were Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko and Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk. The three sisters left for Rome on June 2, 1988, along with Sister Bernarda Mary Jarosz and Sister Jeanne Marie Akalski, who provided support services during the general chapter.[327]

Second Session, Provincial Chapter

The Second Session of the Provincial Chapter took place on August 27, 1988. Mother Mary Landeline, Sister Mary Dulcine, and Sister Mary Laureann

each reported on aspects of the work accomplished at the General Chapter. Mother Landeline spoke on Charism/Felician Heritage, Evangelical Counsels, and Life of Prayer.[328]

Sister Mary Laureann reported that concerning community life, the general chapter resolved that the sisters examine their lifestyle in terms of the needs of their current membership and ministries. She explained that the aim of this resolution was to make necessary adjustments whenever and however possible so that the sisters would continue to live their religious life and minister to the People of God without placing unrealistic demands on sisters who were aging and declining in physical strength and health. She also noted that the general chapter reaffirmed the community's apostolic commitments to the People of God, especially to the poor and the disadvantaged. In accepting new ministries, the community would give priority to those apostolates recognized as most urgent and in agreement with the norms of the Constitutions. Finally, the general chapter delegates voted to raise the status of Brazil and Canada from vice provinces to provinces.[329]

Sister Mary Dulcine presented chapter highlights regarding Government, including methods of electing delegates to the provincial chapter and the provincial administration. Other major concerns in this area involved the practical implementation of Congregational statutes, revitalization of leadership on all levels, and subsidiarity and decision making.[330]

POPE JOHN PAUL II MAKES A PASTORAL VISIT TO NORTH AMERICA

When Shepherd I landed at Miami International Airport on September 10, 1987, to begin the second major pastoral visit of Pope John Paul II to the United States, he seemed as indefatigable as ever. Both Catholics and non-Catholics received him as he visited Miami, Florida; Columbia, South Carolina; New Orleans, Louisiana; San Antonio, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; Los Angeles, Monterey, and San Francisco, California; and Detroit, Michigan, before making his way to the Canadian Northwest.[331]

The 1987 visit was his longest, from September 10-20, and—in addition to Eucharistic celebrations— included meetings with groups representing diverse areas of U.S. Catholic life, the U.S. institutional church (ordained, religious, and lay), and the ecumenical and interfaith community.

In his greetings at the Miami Airport, the Pope told the American people, "I come as a pilgrim, . . . a pastor, . . . a friend. . . ."[332] After acknowledging the celebration of the Bicentennial of the Constitution of the United States, he said, "I join you in asking God inspire you—as Americans who have received so much in freedom and prosperity and human enrichment—to continue to share all this with so many brothers and sisters throughout the other countries of the world who are still waiting and hoping to live according to standards worthy of the children of God."[333]

Among the millions of people who made the visit of Pope John Paul II a memorable event were Felicians from all eight North American provinces. Sisters from as far south as St. Joseph Hospital in Port Charlotte, Florida, to Canada and as far west as San Francisco, California, were actively engaged in the Pope's visit, serving as Eucharistic guides, or as members of hospitality committees or the papal choir.[334] Approximately twenty sisters from healthcare institutions from several provinces flew to Phoenix, Arizona, to hear the papal address on ministry to the sick entitled "Extending Jesus' Healing Mission," at

the Catholic Healthcare Association (CHA) Convocation on September 14. Sister Mary Rajner, diabetic nursing educator and enterostomal therapist, and Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, director of housekeeping and volunteers, traveled from St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, to represent the Enfield province. They heard the Holy Father "honor and give thanks to God for one of the most extensive and fundamental works of the Catholic Church in the United States—all that is embraced in the term 'Catholic health care.'"[335] Following his remarks on the special character of health care, respect for life, and compassion and service, the Holy Father told his audience, "I have come here today to *encourage you in your splendid work* and to confirm you in your vital apostolate."[336]

Sister Mary Alexander Mazur, the Enfield province's director of education, joined several sisters from Lodi, New Jersey, in the New Orleans Superdome where the Pontiff addressed 1800 Catholic elementary and secondary educators and leaders in religious education on September 12.[337] The Pope praised the educators for providing quality Catholic education for the poor of all races and national backgrounds, recognizing the great sacrifice it entailed, and the financial sacrifices of American Catholics as well as their substantial contributions to Catholic education in the United States.[338] In developing the concept of community being at the heart of all Catholic education, the Pope asked the educators to help students to understand the implications of justice and mercy. He told them, "Foster in your students a social consciousness which will help move them to meet the needs of their neighbors, and to discern and seek to remove the sources of injustice in society."[339]

KENYA, AFRICA

In 1980, because of the tremendous apostolic needs existing in Kenya, Africa, and due to the shortage of religious personnel there, Most Rev. Silas S. Njiru, bishop of the Meru Diocese, met with Pope John Paul II and received his blessing to seek missionaries in Poland for his diocese. In fact, the Pope suggested he visit Warsaw.[340]

According to Sister Anna Maria Zabieglik (Warsaw), a member of the original pioneer group, Bishop Njiru asked one of the Polish bishops to take him to a Franciscan Congregation. He approached Mother Mary Angelika Spychalska, the provincial superior of Our Lady Queen of Poland Province in Warsaw, Poland, at that time, and petitioned for Felician Sisters to work among his people. Mother Angelika took this visit as a sign of the times,[341] and, together with Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka, superior general, left for a one-week visit to Kenya. There they gathered information, assessed the apostolic needs, and studied the living conditions to determine whether to undertake initiating a Felician mission there.[342] Their visit was an intense apostolic experience, and they soon realized that the harvest in Kenya was great, but the laborers were few. The two sisters considered many factors, including climate, housing, language, and religion, and they had much to say about their trip.[343]

They found Kenya "a fascinating country. The landscape, flowers, plants, and mild climate make it a veritable paradise. Beautiful snow-capped Mt. Kenya dominates the area. However, poverty also abounds. Most people still live in mud huts with thatched roofs. Water is scarce in most areas and people walk fifteen or more kilometers daily for their water."

It is quite a common sight at the end of the day to see large numbers of women carrying bundles of wood home to cook their daily meal. Their stove is nothing more than several larger stones in the center of the hut over which a pot is placed. A mixture of corn and beans is their daily fare; bananas are plentiful.

Our hearts were moved to compassion at the sight of so much material and spiritual poverty.

Wherever Catholicism has taken a firm hold, it is due to the tireless missionary labors of priests and sisters. However, we have witnessed many neglected mission posts which were abandoned in the past ten years or so by the sisters because of the vocation shortage. People, especially children, in these areas pleaded with us to come to them – to speak the Word of God to them.

Dispensaries and clinics are pitifully neglected.

Mother Angelika and Mother Amadeus were especially moved by the plight of the children, as they noted a visit to a hospital for children and saw [the children] unable to walk because of malnutrition, a widespread problem among the young of Kenya. Because of improper diet, blindness, too, was common. "It was a pathetic sight to see the children up to two years of age in a children's home for the blind.[344]

In the April 1981 issue of *Saluti da Roma,* Mother Amadeus reported that if the Warsaw province accepted the challenge to evangelize in Kenya, the pioneer sisters would first have to study English in England for one year, then learn Swahili, and of course, the dialect of the locality where they would be stationed. She asked the sisters for prayer, so that the Holy Spirit would guide the provincial superior and her council in their decision making. She wrote, "As the invitation to Kenya stands before us, may we be open to the Will of the Father."[345] Shortly after, on May 1, 1981, the general administration granted permission to Mother Mary Angelika and her council to accept Bishop Njeri's invitation and make the necessary preparations.[346]

The initial plan was to send five sisters to the Kenya mission. Once again, Mother Amadeus pleaded with the sisters throughout the Congregation to support this first Felician missionary venture to Africa with fervent prayer and sacrifice. Entreating a blessing on the pioneer missionaries, she prayed: "May the Holy Spirit prepare their hearts for this special ministry of evangelization and strengthen them for the challenge awaiting them in Kenya."[347]

Sister Anna Maria said that, after some preparation and a language course, the pioneer sisters landed in Kenya on May 1, 1983.[348] Sister Mary Angelika, their former provincial superior who accompanied them, remained there for three months to assist the sisters in the beginnings of this new undertaking.[349] At first, they stayed in a mission in Kyeni in the Meru Diocese, working in a hospital and schools. About four years later, the Meru Diocese was divided, and the new Embu Diocese was created. Having lost the sisters in the creation of the new diocese, when Bishop Njiru visited them, he said, "I wanted you in Meru diocese!"[350]

Just two years after the first sisters arrived, a portion of the sisters' house became the first formation house for the budding African Felician community, as it was blessed to receive the first three candidates. In her Advent letter of



Bishop Silas Njiru with the five missionary sisters from Warsaw in the Kyeni mission.

1986, Mother Mary Amadeus wrote about "the anticipation of a new growth of our Felician tree" with the opening of the candidate program in Kenya. Mother Amadeus, Sister Angelika and the pioneer sisters hoped that the program would begin with four or five new candidates.[351] The continued growth of the Kenyan mission led to its transformation into a vice province, an action taken by the delegates to the Congregation's 24th General Chapter in 2018. On November 21, 2019, the Mary Mother of Africa Kenyan Vice Province had seventy-eight members, including forty-two perpetually professed sisters, twenty temporary professed sisters, nine novices and seven postulants.[352]

The Enfield Felicians assisted the Kenya mission in a variety of ways. At the 1984 Biennial Assembly, Mother Amadeus invited attendees to support the schoolchildren in Kenya. They learned that a mere $20 could provide one child with a uniform and books. During the meeting of local ministers in Enfield on October 6, 1984, Mother Mary Landeline shared this information with the local ministers and encouraged them to help as they could.[353] By 1985, the Justice and Peace Committee Report for the province included "supporting the mission in Kenya" among the activities that the young children in the parish elementary schools participated in. This support continued in subsequent years.[354] But the most magnanimous response came from St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, whose mission project throughout the fall of 2007 provided a quarter ton of relief to Kenya that included medical supplies, baby formula, and baby clothes (See Chapter 6).

By the end of 1988, so much was in bud in the Enfield province. The commemorations of the Felician Eucharistic Year, the Holy Year of Redemption, the Mother Angela Year, the Year of Peace, and the celebration of the anniversary of the death of Felician patron St. Felix of Cantalice along with the visit of Pope John Paul II, strengthened the sisters' spirits and nurtured new life in them despite the continued diminishment of members and ministries. The new initiatives—the founding of the Kenyan mission, the establishment of the central archives in Enfield, the growth and development of St. Joseph Hospital, and the forward movement of the cause of beatification of Felician foundress Mother Mary Angela—called the sisters to live with hope, to stay open to possibilities, and unleashed creative energy that fueled new ways of being and enhancing the life of the world.

Chapter 3

Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, 1989 – 1995

Loving means giving. Giving everything that love asks for. Giving immediately, without regrets, with joy, and wanting even more to be asked of us.

The arduous work of the Nineteenth General Chapter concluded on August 2, 1988, with the election of the Congregation's ninth superior general and the members of the general council. Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, of the Livonia, Michigan, province, presided at the election of the general administration:

Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, Buffalo, vicar general

Sister Mary Angelika Spychalska, Warsaw, second general councilor

Sister Mary Viterbia Kozlowski, Lodi, third general councilor

Sister Mary Jovilla Yurek, Rio Rancho, fourth general councilor

Sister Mary Seraphinia Gacek, Chicago, fifth general councilor, secretary general

Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, Enfield, sixth general councilor, treasurer general[1]

Once Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski and the chapter delegates—Sister Mary Dulcine Bartosiak and Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz—returned home, they planned and prepared for the second session of the provincial chapter, held on August 27.[2]

Immediately after, the Enfield sisters began the procedure for provincial elections specified in *Response to Love*.[3] On Sunday, November 13, Mother Landeline announced that the general administration had appointed Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko as the new provincial superior. Sister Lawrence wept because she was aware of the huge responsibility she was about to undertake.[4]

Perhaps she had read the words of Mother Angela, written to one of the early Felicians in Warsaw in 1862:

My dearest sister in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

. . . do not be disturbed. Do not worry about your appointment as a superior. After all, you have accepted this assignment through obedience.

What is it that bothers you in this duty of superior? Is it that you must suffer more? If anything, you have more responsibility. My beloved daughter, bear this for love of your Spouse and be at peace, because it was not your will but the Will of God that placed you there.

I sincerely believe that on this earth one should not worry about anything which was not one's choice. If one sees only the Higher Will, then every step is directed and all will be dispensed with love and infinite wisdom.

Wait patiently then, my dearest, and peacefully fulfill all that Jesus presently asks of you.

Sister and servant,

Mary Angela[5]

As of October 1, 1988, the Our Lady of the Angels Province directory listed 206 perpetually professed members, twenty-eight of whom were residents of the infirmary, with fifty retired sisters in residence at the provincial house, while the median age had risen to seventy-two.[6] The province was not attracting enough new candidates to sustain it in future years.

In an article entitled "The Twilight of a Life," *Hartford Courant* journalist and photographer Albert Dickson featured the sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Convent, "in the twilight of a life spent in the service of God." Before writing his article, Dickson interviewed several sisters and walked through the infirmary. He even joined the sisters at the wake and funeral of Sister Mary Carmeline Figura and her burial in St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Enfield, "In the still of a winter afternoon," and supported his story with stark black and white photos.[7]

After presenting the demographics, he wrote, "the Felician Sisters are slowly losing a battle with time," and then reflected, "In the face of such a problem however, there is no despair within the silent hallways of the convent." Dickson cited the Retirement Fund for Religious conducted nationally that also benefited the Felicians, musing that the "The Felicians are not certain why they have gone from an order originally dedicated to helping the poor to an order that survives on the generosity of others."

"Maybe, they say, it is the values of modern America, . . . Or maybe, they say, it's that becoming a nun can take longer than becoming a doctor, . . . Or maybe, they say, it's that most parents want their daughters to get married and have children," leaving his readers with something to ponder. As for the Felician Sisters, he concluded, they "go back to their humble lives in God's service, only to face the inevitable return to the cemetery on another day."

SISTER MARY LAWRENCE LOJKO

Having served as a provincial councilor for two terms, including director of education, when she assisted community members in their educational endeavors, and as formator for the annually professed and pre-tertian sisters, Sister Mary Lawrence knew well the risks her role would demand as well as the profound prayer needed to navigate the next six years. But she trusted she could find comfort in the words of Jesus in Isaiah, that he would always be with her (41:10), and she had the certitude that God's grace would be sufficient for the task. She drew deeply from the springs of God's great kindness as she sat in the chapel each day at dawn, spending quality time with the One who gave her strength for her daily service.

She also knew she could count on the support of her sisters, who recognized her gifts of the heart. They had come to appreciate her understanding and support when they experienced challenges personally or in their ministry. She was personable and easy to talk with, whether speaking with a board member at St. Joseph Hospital or a member of the maintenance facility crew at the provincial house. They recognized her as their sister, with a heart always open to others and that found joy in doing for others. When she was not on the road visiting the sisters in their ministries or attending meetings, she would make her way to the infirmary and help to feed the frailest sisters. If a sister had a family emergency, she was the first to volunteer to drive her to visit her loved one, even if it meant traveling in the middle of the night.

Sister Lawrence zealously contributed her time, talent, and untiring effort toward the Cause of the Beatification of Felician Foundress Mother Mary Angela while she served as the Enfield province promoter of the Cause for Canonization. She and Mother Angela shared the same birthday and she passionately developed and promoted devotion to the Felician foundress while encouraging sisters and friends to do the same. Her great devotion prompted her to place each major decision in Mother Angela's hands.

Sister Lawrence lived her life in an attitude of simplicity that meant she relied on God's providence and was satisfied with having enough to be generous and caring. She lived without pretense, and her wonderful sense of humor lightened many trying moments while enabling her to laugh at herself and her mistakes. Her love for community translated into a deep sense of commitment to every role she served in ministry. These qualities endeared her to her sisters, and so they chose her to lead the Enfield province for the next six years. The sisters saw Sister Lawrence as a woman of prayer, faith, and service, a woman in and for the community, in short, a woman of leadership. They saw her as a sister among sisters and they felt certain that she could lead them in promoting love and unity in the province.

To assist Sister Lawrence in fulfilling the responsibilities of her office, the sisters chose the following council members:

Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, vicar
Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, second councilor
Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, third councilor
Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, fourth councilor
Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, treasurer [8]



The provincial administration, 1989-1995
Seated (l to r): SM Laureann Alexandrowicz and SM Lawrence Lojko, provincial minister;
Standing (l to r): SM Florentine Myjak, S Joan Marie Swierzb, SM Bernardine Mucha,
SM Seraphine Liskiewicz

The installation of Enfield's new administration took place on January 1, 1989. In the presence of Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general, these sisters accepted the responsibility and promised their availability to serve the sisters for the next six years.

Father Kevin B. Sousa, brother of Sister Francine Mary Sousa, was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Eucharistic liturgy on January 1, 1989. He was assisted by chaplains Father Anthony Boryczka and Father Herbert H. Schmidt; Father Frederick V. Slota, pastor, St. Adalbert Parish, Providence, Rhode Island, the home parish of both Sister Lawrence and Sister Bernardine; Father Stanley Smolenski, parochial vicar, St. Martha Parish, Enfield; and Father Ignatius McCormick, OFM, Cap., from Norwich, who had directed the June retreat. Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, vicar general, also participated in the day's celebration.

Celebrants, guests, and sisters enjoyed a festive dinner in the social room of the convent, which the sisters decorated tastefully for the occasion. The new administration acknowledged the outgoing administration for their dedicated and faithful service over the past six years. Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski received a "Hands in Unity" collage symbolizing the united gesture of prayerful gratitude for her twenty-four years of loving and loyal service to the Felician Congregation as well as to Our Lady of the Angels Province.[9]

In her first letter to the sisters on that New Year's Day, Sister Lawrence extended the blessing from Numbers 6, the first reading from the Eucharistic liturgy for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, "to each sister for every day of 1989." Out of a deeply grateful heart, she wrote, "Your beautiful response of prayerful support is greatly appreciated. May Mary's words of acceptance be our model prayer of trust and commitment as we begin this new year FORWARD in HOPE with MOTHER MARY ANGELA."[10]

FELICIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

A directive of the Nineteenth General Chapter called for the Board of Directors of the Felician Healthcare System (FHS), Inc., to evaluate the objectives and the cost effectiveness of the System and recommend to the corporate board a decision regarding the future of FHS. The General Chapter also directed the Board to make recommendations for the future existence and/or direction for the System.[11]

Shortly after her election as superior general, Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski convened a special meeting of the provincial superiors of the Board of Directors and several of the corporate board members in Enfield, Connecticut, from September 18-19, 1988. Speakers from the Catholic Hospital Association of the United States (CHA), F. Daniel Krapf, vice president, Member Services, and Xaverian Brother Peter Campbell, nationally renowned lawyer on Catholic sponsorship, governance, and mission, discussed types and ramifications of health systems. They led the group in spirited dialogue on the essentials of leadership and management in Catholic hospitals and systems in today's economic society.[12]

Mother Mary Cynthia convoked a second special meeting for provincial superiors whose provinces sponsored a hospital, at Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Convent in Livonia, Michigan, from January 16–17,

1989. The purpose of this meeting was to further discuss the feasibility of creating a stronger hospital system. Provincial superior Sister Mary Lawrence represented the Enfield province. Sister Mary Augustine Kloza, FHS president, was also present.[13] F. Daniel Krapf from CHA returned to present four sessions along with Sister Virginia M. Gillis, RSM, vice president for sponsorship. In their presentation, they looked at essential issues that each province needed to evaluate to determine whether to remain in health ministry governance.[14]

When the Felician Health System Board of Directors met in Enfield for its annual meeting on June 5 and 6, 1989, the members reviewed the effectiveness of the original objectives of FHS as well as the cost effectiveness of its operation. Benefits gained over the years by the members whose funds supported the System were also presented. In response to this assessment, the recommendation of the Board of Directors was to dissolve the FHS corporation as a "System." However, to support healthcare ministry in the provinces, they took the following actions:

- An Interprovincial Healthcare Commission was established to bring together appointed representatives from hospitals, nursing homes, and infirmaries. A healthcare commission formed to set up structure and programs for this Commission comprised the following members: Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, general councilor; Sister Mary Modesta Piwowar (Livonia), hospitals; Sister Mary Claude Szyperski (Chicago), nursing homes; and Sister Mary Juanita Nowak (Buffalo), infirmaries. This Commission was dissolved in 1991 since, upon the advice of the Commission to the provincial superiors, institutions were best served by participating in existing regional or national healthcare networks.
- The Commission passed a resolution at its June 1989 meeting that the provincial superiors hold a special meeting on healthcare during the Biennial Assembly or when special meetings were held with the superior general.
- Upon the dissolution of the Healthcare Commission, the general administration approved a recommendation of the provincial superiors that the Health Ministry Council of Felician infirmaries continue to exist. Attended by the infirmary director, superior, and provincial house nurse, these regular meetings became a source of mutual support and provided means for better patient care for the sisters.[15]

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL

As the 1992 election approached, voters were worried about many issues: jobs, inflation and recession, their standard of living, the country's general direction, and soaring health care costs.[16] On a single day in early 1992, February 26, headlines in the *Bangor Daily News* (BDN) read, "Consumer confidence plunges to lowest point since '74 recession," "Stocks fall 24 points," and "Thousands of unemployed leaving recession-wracked New England: Region's jobless rate hits 8%."[17]

The Census Bureau's estimation that 31 million people in the United States (13% of the population in 1987) had no health insurance set the stage

for President Bill Clinton to act.[18] Shortly after being sworn in, he proposed the Health Security Act of 1993—a mix of universal coverage that respected the private insurance system formed on its own in the absence of legislation.[19]

It was an exciting and challenging time to be in health care as health care reform became *the* hot topic. Federal and state programs such as Medicare and Medicaid had gone through changes, managed care companies had grown, employers were dealing with escalating health insurance premiums, and hospital administrators were looking for more cost-effective ways to deliver quality patient care while trying to keep abreast of expensive new medical technologies.

A Lifetime of Caring

It was an especially challenging time for Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, St. Joseph Hospital (SJH) president, who combined her degrees from Tufts University and MIT, with a personal touch that sprang from her deep religious convictions as well as her roots in the working-class neighborhood of South Boston, Massachusetts. She said, "I couldn't do the job, both as a woman religious and as a businesswoman without some cornerstone or foundation. The foundation is prayer."[20] While guiding the 130-bed facility through its period of growth, Sister Norberta repeatedly emphasized the importance of retaining the personal touch. She told a reporter for the *Bangor Daily News,* "If we lose sight of that, all the technology is really unimportant." And she took the lead in staying connected with the concerns of patients by practicing her own brand of hands-on management, often making unannounced calls to hospital rooms without identifying herself or wearing a name tag. She delivered food trays at mealtime, talked with patients and, more importantly, listened to their concerns about the hospital. As a registered nurse, she knew she could take care of patients herself, but acknowledged that, "In this role, I know I can make a difference in the quality of care throughout the institution."[21]

Mission Effectiveness Director

Ardently believing that mission is everyone's responsibility, and that everyone who shares in a Felician ministry must be inspired to become a "mission bearer," Sister Norberta successfully secured the appointment of Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk as Mission Effectiveness Director for the St. Joseph Hospital Foundation and its subsidiaries, as of January 1990.[22] Sister Romuald brought a rich background and a wealth of experience to this position, including an MS in Social Work from the University of Connecticut and years of experience at St. Joseph Hospital, including initiating the hospice program in 1981. Her life of service exemplified the Felician charism of a "life lived guided by the Gospel, transformed by Christ and radiating joy and simplicity." She was known for having keen insights and intuition as well as strong listening skills. Her passion for service was unquestionable, and she was willing to do anything to serve others in God's name. [23]

Paying tribute to her on August 30, 2011, Ron Skarka, vice president for business development, wrote, "We've learned it's not about a program here and there, but rather a relentless pursuit of excellence every day and everywhere."[24]

Sister Mary Norberta, Advocating for Health Care Reform

As the hospital's chief executive officer, Sister Mary Norberta was a strong advocate in the Bangor community for impacting public policy on health

care. She brought valuable tools for creating change to the table, specifically knowledge, tenacity, the courage of her convictions, and passion for quality care. The respect she had as an administrator, nurse, and woman religious strengthened her ability to persuade elected officials as well as the public to create needed changes. She did not underestimate her ability to influence, and she used it when needed.

In late January 1989, she sent a Letter to the Editor of the *Bangor Daily News* voicing her concern over the decision to cut more than $5 billion in the Medicare program because, she contended, it would "substantially affect the health and care of our senior citizens."[25] In the *BDN*'s September 5, 1990 issue, she commented on the Bush administration's purported plan to reduce individual itemized tax deductions, including deductions for charitable contributions. In that day's "Guest Column," she wrote: "Reducing the deductibility of charitable contributions would add substantially to the obstacles charities like St. Joseph Hospital face in meeting a wide range of human needs." Further on, she pointed out that cuts in federal spending from 1982 to 1990 for human services totaled $120 billion, with $32 billion cut from services provided by nonprofit organizations. She concluded, "St. Joseph Hospital depends on charitable contributions in order that we may continue to provide advanced medicine in a caring environment. . . . Reducing the tax incentive for charitable giving would seriously harm all of us. It's a bad idea and should be rejected."[26]

Late in January 1992 Senator Bob Kerrey, Democratic presidential candidate, was campaigning at Momma Baldacci's Italian Restaurant in Bangor where he talked about the economy, education, and creating jobs. He took the time to talk one-on-one with several people, seeking their opinions on how to improve health-care delivery and chatted at length with Sister Norberta, who said she was "impressed with what he says about health care," and added, "There's no question we have problems with health care in the country. It's a very strong issue."[27]



Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska chats with SM Norberta Malinowski about national healthcare insurance while campaigning in Bangor.

Calling the plans to revamp the nation's health-care system "a political football" in the February 11, 1992, issue of the *BDN*, she enjoined Republicans and Democrats to "come to a consensus, the way they did in the space program." She asked, "How are we going to achieve the best plan based on trust and understanding?"[28]

It was important for Sister Norberta to be at the table to incorporate her experiences and insights into the health-care dialogue and consequently, better influence the public debate. So, when U.S. Rep. Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME) stopped in Bangor in October 1993 to share her concerns about health-care reform, Sister Mary Norberta was among the panel of experts on hand to listen to citizens' concerns. Before the meeting, Snowe said that her misgivings for health-care reform included both cost and the entire government structure. She said she found it difficult to address specifics of the Clinton plan, but was concerned about items in the draft that, for example, did not meet the American Cancer Society guidelines. Snowe told her audience she was focusing her effort on areas including malpractice reform, Medicaid reform, tax-deductibility of health care for the self-employed, and insurance reform in areas such as pre-existing conditions.[29]

On December 7, 1993, Sister Norberta was in Boston, Massachusetts, to participate in the New England Summit on Health Care Reform at the invitation of Senator George J. Mitchell (D-ME), Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, and Congressman Joe Moakley (D-MA). Nearly every Senate and House member from New England was there. Physicians and private citizens asked questions of health-care reform advocates and politicians, including, among many others, Senator William Cohen (R-ME), and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was working to stem erosion of public support for health care reform." During the "town meeting," Clinton fielded questions and heard comments from dozens of New Englanders about the cost and effectiveness of government-run medical care.[30]

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

The Center for Advanced Medicine

The Center for Advanced Medicine, the new medical office building that also served as the main entrance for St. Joseph Hospital, opened on February 5, 1990. Under construction since the summer of 1988 (see Chapter 2), the center opened with a brand new, spacious main entrance and lobby that fronted on Broadway, changing the hospital's address. The three-story building housed the administrative offices and admitting department of the hospital as well as the offices of the St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation. Three other hospital affiliates were also located in the three-story wing, owned and developed by Baldacci Associates of Bangor, including the Stone and Urology Center, with a docking bay for the mobile kidney stone lithotripter, and two medical laboratories, CellTech (a St. Joseph Healthcare-affiliated tissue processing laboratory), and Endotech. Physicians also contracted space for their office suites, which had direct indoor access to all the departments and services of the hospital.[31]

A formal dedication ceremony for the center took place on June 1, 1990. Friends and family of SJH gathered in front of the new lobby at 360 Broadway to celebrate this cooperative venture. The late morning program opened with a brief welcome by Sister Norberta, an invocation and blessing by Chaplain

Father Alex Lukasik, and remarks by Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, provincial superior and president of St. Joseph Healthcare. Following the ribbon cutting by Sister Lawrence, Sister Norberta and Bob Baldacci, Baldacci unveiled a bronze plaque in memory of his grandparents.[32]



Dedication of the Center for Advanced Medicine (CAM), June 1, 1990.
From l: Robert Baldacci, SM Norberta Malinowski, Mrs. Robert Baldacci,
SJH Chaplain Father Alexis Lukasik, OFM, Mrs. Robert Baldacci, Sr., Robert Baldacci, Sr.

Innovative Services for a Healthier Community

With the arrival of the Dornier HM4 (Dornier Medical Systems, Munich) kidney lithotripter, the St. Joseph's initiated the kidney stone lithotripsy program on February 9, 1990. The mobile lithotripter, owned and operated by Universal Medical Scanners Inc., of Warwick, Rhode Island, traveled to hospitals throughout New England, making visits to SJH an average of four days a month. The lithotripter was trucked to a dock at St. Joseph and the hospital paid Universal a fee based on the use of the equipment. Its visits to SJH eventually became one component of a complete Stone and Urology Center in the Center for Advanced Medicine. Within the first year, it exceeded expectations, treating more than 200 cases. Speaking of the procedure's benefits, Dr. Vernon McDonald, chief of urology, said the high-tech procedure was less costly than surgical treatment, and less invasive, allowing the patient to return home the same day, returning to work in twenty-four to forty-eight hours. He also credited it with placing St. Joseph Hospital in the forefront of such treatment.[33]

Dedication of the Esther Rosen Aisner Stone and Urology Center took place on Wednesday, April 1, 1992. The new center was one of several philanthropic efforts that the Rosen family supported, beginning with the St. Joseph Women's Center, the William H. Rosen Breast Diagnostic Center, and the critical care unit. Edward E. Rosen made the gift for the center on behalf of himself and other family members: Dr. Samuel E. Rosen, Doris C. Rosen, Dr. A. Everett Rosen, and Ruth E. Rosen. During the program, Sister Mary Norberta read a portion of a tribute to Mrs. Aisner's "totally selfless love," written by her son, James Aisner, who attended the dedication with his wife Virginia. Hospital chaplain Father

Richard Rokos offered the benediction, asking God's blessing for the staff and patients using the center. The center had served close to 2,000 patients in the previous year, 900 of whom made use of the lithotripter. The center also offered cystoscopy for urinary disorders, chemotherapy for bladder cancer, and prostate biopsies. Equipment in the procedure room also made it possible for staff to do regular x-rays as well as intraoperative fluoroscopy. Rosen directed his efforts not only toward alleviating pain and suffering in the community, but also toward preventive health care.[34]

In mid-1989, in cooperation with the hospital's Respiratory Care department, St. Joseph Hospital doctors began providing with good success a new technique called transtracheal oxygenation (TTO) to patients needing oxygen on a continual basis. Patients found the small catheter replacing the traditional nasal cannula more comfortable and they experienced less irritation. Additionally, the new therapy allowed the patient to get oxygen directly into the trachea, resulting in a much steadier oxygen supply. And, since patients used less oxygen, they found that their portable tank lasted much longer, allowing them to travel farther afield for longer periods.[35]

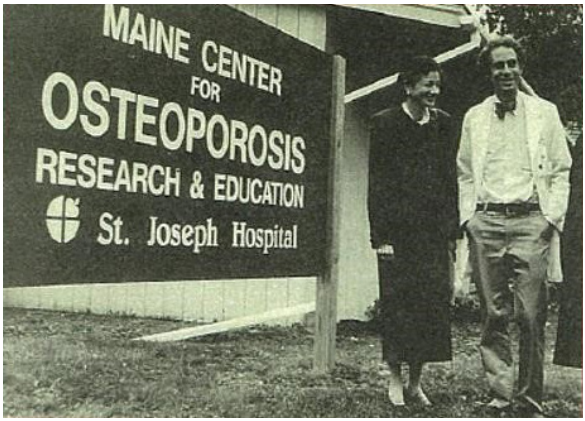
On December 19, 1990, the hospital introduced an innovative gallbladder removal procedure, using a laparoscope and YAG laser, which allowed patients a far shorter hospital stay and little discomfort. The laparoscopic cholecystectomy was far less painful and debilitating than conventional surgery, permitting patients to return to regular diets the day after surgery in most cases and to return to work within five to seven days.[36]

The following month, in January 1991, a highly sensitive MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) program became available to patients with the use of a $1.8 million mobile unit provided by a Presque Isle-based company, CT Shared Services, Inc. The MRI equipment, available at the hospital one-and-a-half days each week, gave physicians detailed maps of the body with minimal discomfort to patients. The process, which doctors hoped would serve more than 500 people a year, diagnosed back problems, leg weaknesses, brain tumors, strokes, multiple sclerosis, and other disorders. The arrangement between the medical service company and the hospital ensured two things: that the hospital was not required to produce large amounts of capital for purchase and that the latest equipment would always be available.[37]

On September 29, 1992, St. Joseph's progressed to become a home for research and education for osteoporosis when the Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education opened. Participants in the dedication included Sister Mary Norberta; Dr. Clifford Rosen, hospital chief of medicine and medical director of the new center; and Rep. Olympia Snowe who sponsored the Medicare Bone Mass Measurement Act that provided Medicare payment for bone densitometry tests.[38]

Dr. Rosen and his Osteoporosis Research Group first undertook osteoporosis research in 1986 with only a small grant from the Maine Dairy and Nutrition Council. Over the years, the researchers received major grants from that state group as well as the National Endocrine Society. In addition, it expanded collaboration to include the University of Maine and Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor. Since then, the group gained national attention through the development of research studies and the presentation of papers on the subject at national conferences, including a calcium-intake questionnaire

used at the Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital, and University Hospital in Boston. The group had also written papers on the impact of exercise, particularly weightlifting, on bone mass, and analysis of white blood cells and the effect of aging on blood proteins.[39]



The Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education opened at St. Joseph Hospital on September 29, 1992. Dr. Clifford Rosen and Rep. Olympia Snowe were at the dedication.

A special open house at SJH on May 16, 1990, featured displays on osteoporosis and tours of the research laboratory where visitors could see the bone densitometer used to measure bone mass. Later that day, Dr. Rosen gave a public lecture on osteoporosis. He said, "It's clear we're making an impact," as he spoke about expanding the research team, increasing its laboratory facility, and embarking on innovative studies. The research group included Dr. Susan Hunter, research assistant professor of zoology at the University of Maine; Leah Rae Donahue, nutrition researcher; and Kathryn Musgrave, University of Maine professor emeritus in nutrition. Affecting up to 28 million people in the United States, osteoporosis was becoming as common as type 2 diabetes or high blood pressure. The researchers found that women who reached menopause were at the greatest risk of developing the condition.[40]

Building for the Future

By mid-1990, Sister Norberta's assessment of the adequacy of the hospital's emergency room services—which had grown close to thirty per cent within the last year—found the current space unable to provide optimal services. Soon it became obvious that any plan to renovate and add substantively to the area would need a major capital campaign. The planning committee also recommended significant renovations to patient rooms to modernize the 1960 vintage rooms.[41]

On March 18, 1993, St. Joseph Healthcare announced the beginning of its multi-million-dollar construction project to renovate and expand the hospital. The project encompassed a new emergency room, inpatient and outpatient surgical suite, and patient rooms. Hospital officials hoped to begin work on the two-phase project—a three-story addition on Center Street and renovations to the 1964 building—as early as January 1994, if they were successful in

getting all the needed local and state permits. According to Sister Norberta, hospital rooms needed to be larger to accommodate medical equipment that did not exist when the hospital was first built. With the renovation, the hospital would reduce its bed capacity from the 130 it was licensed for to 112. Hospital officials hoped to raise $3 million of the $20 million needed for the project from the community.[42]

After a heated meeting with Sister Norberta in mid-July 1993, the Bangor city officials unanimously agreed to rezone two St. Joseph-owned homes so that the clerical staff could move in temporarily. The rezoning was related to the hospital's proposed $20 million expansion, and Sister Norberta was coping with the city council's opposition to the plan. She told the council that St. Joseph's competitor, Eastern Maine Medical Center, "is expanding all over the place with half the hassle."[43] Three months later, St. Joseph's kicked off the community portion of its $3 million capital campaign for additions and renovations to the hospital. At that point, the campaign, "Continuing the Mission," was already more than halfway to its goal, with $1.7 million in pledges. Before going out to the community for contributions, fund-raising volunteers looked to the "hospital family," which came through during efforts that spring and summer. The employees pledged more than $250,000, the medical staff $700,000, and the trustees $300,000.[44]

In addition, the hospital had just been notified that it had passed a major step in its application for a Certificate of Need, required by the state. The Certificate of Need granted approval prior to making major changes in the healthcare landscape. According to Sister Norberta, if there were no changes or corrections to the application within the next several days, it would go to the commissioner of the Department of Human Services, who would decide on the application within sixty days.[45] So as soon as SJH received its Certificate of Need in March 1994 from the Department of Human Services, planning began for the groundbreaking ceremony. The choice of November 21 was deliberate because it was on that date 140 years before, the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that Sophia Truszkowska, later Mother Mary Angela, founded the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice in Poland. And it was also an important date since on that day in 1964, the first five patients were admitted to the original St. Joseph Hospital building.[46] Planners for the project were the Sweetland Northland Health Group of Bangor, and Portland Berry and Sons was chosen to provide the construction management. Architects were Shepley, Bullfinch, Richard and Abbott, of Boston.

During the groundbreaking ceremony, Sister Norberta paid tribute to Ellen Paine, who founded the Paine Private Hospital in 1906, and whom she described as "a lady ahead of her time." Remarking on her achievement, she added, "It shows that one life can make a difference." She also recognized St. Joseph, noting that the new construction would proceed with a small statue of the carpenter buried beneath it, saying, "We ask St. Joseph to continue to protect us, to bless this construction and to intercede for us before the Almighty." She quipped, "It's nice to have a spokesman. God gets pretty busy sometimes."[47]

Ed Clift, who co-chaired the campaign with Maj. Gen. Nelson Durgin, thanked the employees, medical staff, auxiliary and trustees, who contributed more than half the $2.8 million raised to that point. Trustee President Ed

Darling identified their caring attitude as what really made the hospital, now and in the future, much more than would "new walls and the latest technology."

Guests included Dr. Donald Krause of the medical staff, U.S. Rep.-elect John Baldacci, and Helen and Carl Libby, honorary co-chairmen of the capital campaign. Both Libbys had given their time and talent to the hospital over the years and could remember when St. Joseph was in the Paine building on Center Street, and the city's firefighters carried patients up and down the stairs after surgery. "My heart and soul is in the hospital," Helen said. Carl had been affiliated with the hospital board and its committees in one way or another for nineteen years. John Supranovich, vice president for development and public affairs, said he considered the couple a cornerstone of the hospital. The Felician Sisters knew that many of St. Joseph Hospital's programs and facilities could not exist without continued philanthropic support, and SJH found ways to honor these friends for the transformative power their gifts held. So, on November 21, 1989, the 134th anniversary of the founding of the Felician Sisters, sisters, staff and community members gathered in the hospital chapel to give thanks for Sophia Truszkowska, who began the work in Poland, as well as for Helen A. Libby.[48]

Most Rev. Joseph J. Gerry, bishop of the Diocese of Portland, told the sisters that the signs of the hand of God could be seen in the work of Mother Mary Angela as well as the first five Felician Sisters who came to the United States, and, he added, in "your own coming to Bangor, dedicated to caring for the sick with a love for Christ. He led Mother Mary Angela to love with his love, to see with his eyes, and through her hands," to do God's work "with love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness." Concelebrating the Mass with Bishop Gerry were Chaplain Father Alex Lukasik; Father Richard Harvey, pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Brewer and dean of the Southern Penobscot Deanery; Father Clement Thibodeau and Father Michael Seavey, St. Mary's Bangor; and Father Michael Henchal of the chancery. During dinner that followed at the Ramada Inn, Helen Libby accepted the first annual Mother Angela Award, presented in recognition of her dedicated commitment to St. Joseph Healthcare and to the community. She had been associated with the Felician Sisters since the beginning of the St. Joseph Hospital Auxiliary.[49]

Living the mission

Sister Norberta and her administrative team understood community benefit activities as integral to the hospital's mission. While at times unnoticed, SJH's community investments improved health and promoted wellness for all who worked, played, learned, and made the greater Bangor area their home. In April 1990, the St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation made a $3,000 grant to the Orrington Volunteer Ambulance Service Squad to assist them in acquiring a state-of-the-art Marquette Monitor Defibrillator. The previous December, the hospital provided and served food to ninety-five guests at the Salvation Army Bangor Corps, bringing to 1500 the number of meals SJH served at the Dorothy Day Soup Kitchen during 1989. St. Joseph Hospital also met needs beyond the community. Contributions included $200 worth of medical supplies including medical gloves, catheters and disposable syringes to a poor clinic in Lesothos, Africa. In December 1991, the hospital donated a ventilator to Partners in Health, a volunteer organization that provides health care to people in the city

of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. Accepting the gift were two SJH physicians who volunteered their services in Nicaragua and other underserved countries. In May 1992, the organization received a second ventilator, an autoclave, and an operating light. In August 1993, to assist victims of the Great Flood of 1993, employees collected non-perishable food items, blankets, water and clothing.[50]

NEW VENTURES IN ENFIELD

The theme of the 1988 General Chapter, "Gospel Leaven in a Changing World," called the Felician Congregation to transform a world that demanded novel and creative strategies, and the sisters wanted to respond as they had done before, with their whole heart. In fact, since the 70s, the pursuit of justice had been a primary concern of religious women in this country. In 1981, the Holy See issued a new and creative challenge to religious to review their life and charism in the light of these four concerns: a) the option for the poor and for justice in our time; b) social activities and works of religious; c) involvement in the working world; and d) direct participation in politics.[51]

The document said that "The prophetic nature of Religious Life requires that Religious embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes." (n. 1/4) Earlier, it encouraged religious "to engage actively with all those who are struggling" . . . to overcome everything that condemns them to remain on the margin of life" (n. 1/2) and to provide a voice, a conscience, and a commitment for the voiceless and marginalized. In the bedrock tradition of the Felician Congregation, the preferential option for the poor, the desire to set aright the injustices that cause pain and suffering, emerged as a dominant motif. Mother Angela did not talk about the victims of injustice, she did something to relieve their plight.

FELICIAN ADULT DAY CARE

When the dissolution of the Felician Healthcare System in 1989 freed Sister Mary Augustine Kloza of her responsibilities as president, she immediately began to explore options for a ministry aligned with the charism and mission of the Felician Sisters, as well as a new use for a portion of the Enfield campus, while planting seeds for the future.

At the council meeting held on June 22, 1989, Provincial Superior Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko and the council endorsed conducting a feasibility study to determine the need for establishing an adult day-care center on the campus. The proposed site was a 1,000 square-foot classroom of the Felician Heritage Center. The provincial administration hoped to receive the results of the study by November 1, 1989.[52]

To broaden her knowledge of programs in the greater Enfield area, Sister Augustine, a registered nurse, visited the Suffield Visiting Nurse Adult Day Care Center in Suffield, Caring Connections in Windsor, and the Hebrew Adult Day Center in Hartford. As a result of these visits, she decided the Enfield center would offer arts and crafts, games, lectures on current events, and exercise programs.[53]

When Sister Augustine, who became the director of the Felician center, presented the results of her study for the proposed adult day-care center to the provincial and her council on November 14, 1989, she explained that the program would function from a social model rather than a medical model. "The

center could offer a respite for families and allow senior citizens to socialize," she said, and added that twenty-four-hour providers, especially those exhausted with next-of-kin with dementia or other mental disabilities, need time for themselves, a respite from the daily burdens. From her research, she found that adult day-care facilities were emerging significantly in every state to meet the needs of the country's aging or debilitated population.[54] A survey conducted in 1989 identified 2100 adult day-care centers, 40% of which had opened within the past four years. The Town of Enfield had no free-standing adult day-care centers.[55]

The provincial council acknowledged the considerable need for adult and senior care in the Enfield area but wanted to pursue further discussion with Sister Augustine about this new ministry. They learned that admission criteria included participants being ambulatory and capable of attending to their personal needs. The program design would assist persons who were lonely, dependent on caregivers, or require daytime supervision. Sister Augustine emphasized that this ministry to those in need of such services would be "responding to the call and ideals of St. Francis and our foundress, Mother Mary Angela." The council approved the plans, and established spring 1990 as a projected date for opening the facility.[56]

When Sister Augustine appeared before the town planning and zoning commission on December 18, 1989, she shared information about the center site and told the group that the private facility would charge $28 to $38 a day with proceeds benefiting the Felician Sisters. During a public hearing on the project on December 21, the planning and zoning commission officially approved the proposal to convert the selected area to an adult day care.[57] The following week, the provincial council decided to name the new ministry the Felician Adult Day Care (FADC). The sisters also agreed to have the local Meals on Wheels program provide the hot meal daily for program participants.[58]

In her memo to the sisters conveying the news about the adult day care, Sister Mary Lawrence wrote that the public hearing went very well and "there was much support and encouragement for the project." She asked the sisters to pray for this new ministry and to plead for "God's blessings and Mother Angela's protection . . . so that we may serve the elderly for the greater glory of God and their benefit."[59]

The headline of the first article in the April-June 1990 issue of *News Bits from OLA*, read, "DEO GRATIAS echoed and re-echoed in the spirit of Saint Felix on his feast day this May 18, 1990," as the day marked the beginning of the Felician Adult Day Care apostolate. After Sister Mary Augustine opened the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony with a prayer in the presence of the sisters, clergy, and potential candidates to the program, Sister Mary Lawrence, Mayor Francis A. Burke, and Attorney Robert B. Berger, the community's legal advisor, cut the ribbon. Most Rev. John F. Whealon, archbishop of Hartford, blessed the crucifix and the center. In his prayer, he implored the Holy Spirit to "make this Center a place of blessing and love. May God strengthen us by His grace, so that in serving the sick and the elderly with tender charity, we may serve Christ Himself, who lives and reigns forever."[60]

On Sunday, May 20, the Felician Adult Day Care held an Open House from 2 to 3:30 p.m. The Center officially opened for service on Monday, May 21,[61] with a staff consisting of two full-time sisters, the director, Sister Mary Augustine,

and her assistant, Sister Mary Beatrice Gesek. Two part-time staff members, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, offered arts and crafts workshops, and Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, in music appreciation, provided one-hour sessions each Friday.[62]

By the end of the year, Sister Mary Augustine was experiencing health problems and in January 1991, she was diagnosed with cancer. As a result, she stepped back from her role as director of the FADC. The provincial and council appointed Sister Patricia Marie as her successor.[63] After a brief struggle with cancer, Sister Augustine passed away on April 24, 1991.[64]

Less than a month later, when the day care celebrated its first anniversary, the open house also included a memorial service for Sister Augustine. Sister Patricia Marie unveiled a plaque with a photo of the founder saying, "She won't be here, but her dream will live on."[65]



S Patricia Marie Iagrosso continued SM Augustine Kloza's vision, and saw a growing number of seniors in need benefit from the Center's range of day-time services.

Since interest in the program had grown by the end of 1991, FADC extended its days of operation from three to five as of January 1, 1992. Additional clients required more space, and after giving this consideration, the provincial council decided to relocate the Center to the former Orrin Thompson mansion, the front area of the original provincial house, renamed St. Francis Center.[66]

After major renovation, the Rededication and Blessing took place on January 18, 1993. Sister Mary Lawrence extended a warm welcome to sisters and visitors, and Sister Patricia Marie, director, led the community in prayer. Father Robert T. Russo, pastor of St. Philip Parish, East Windsor, who blessed the Center, said, "After much planning, work and prayer by the members of the Felician Sisters Community, members of the Adult Care Staff and Board of Directors, hopes and dreams have become a reality. We gather now to bless and dedicate a new Felician Adult Day Care building. Here the clients will be comfortably cared for, enjoy the company of each other, and experience the love of God in an atmosphere of peace, concern and safety." Visitors enjoyed refreshments and a tour of the newly dedicated building.[67]

To increase interest in FADC's program, Sister Patricia Marie represented the agency on a round-table discussion on Channel 8, Continental Cable TV's public-access channel. Issues discussed by the panel included town-sponsored activities for seniors, projects to better meet the needs of area senior citizens, health care reform, and living wills.[68]

President Ronald Reagan signed a proclamation on September 27, 1983, designating the third week of September as National Adult Day Services Week. The annual celebration was intended to raise awareness of the availability and accessibility of adult day programs across the country. Each year, Director Sister Patricia Marie proudly recognized and honored the participants and staff of the day care center with events scheduled for each day of this special week.[69]

Ten years later, during National Adult Day Services Week in September 1993, at the FADC, Enfield Mayor Roxie Burke, State Representative Fred Gelsi, and District Representative Steve Jarmoc opened the week with an official proclamation from Governor Lowell P. Weicker, Jr. The Goldtones Choral Group, a senior singing group that entertained residents at local nursing homes and senior centers, delighted with a golden oldies song fest and Ms. Senior Connecticut and the Enfield Cameo Club sang and danced while recalling old Broadway hits. Father Robert T. Russo blessed a memorial board listing names of benefactors on Wednesday of that week following Mass and a special luncheon. The week closed with a formal dinner and a "Senior Prom" for the elderly clients.[70]

By the time the agency celebrated its fourth anniversary on May 18, 1994, enrollment had grown from five to twenty-seven people. The day-long event began with a Thanksgiving Eucharistic liturgy with Father Robert T. Russo as the celebrant and homilist. The Felician Sisters hosted the special luncheon for clients and families that followed. New program features included physical therapy, podiatry care, and a beauty parlor. Additionally, Sister Patricia formed a support group for caregivers.[71]

That year, FADC celebrated National Adult Day Care Week from September 18–24 with recognition, feasting, and fun. On opening day, Connecticut State Representative Fred Gelsi read the State Proclamation and an official citation for FADC. Town Councilman Adam Pierz read the Town of Enfield Proclamation. Other guests included Town Manager Lou Hayward, and Francis Burke, former mayor, as well as clients, family members, and friends of FADC. Sister Mary Lawrence, provincial council member, was on hand, welcoming guests and expressing appreciation for their support. Later in the week, Father Russo celebrated Mass for the clients and friends of FADC. Other events that week included a sing-along, dancing, special meals, and dessert days.[72]

THE ENFIELD DAY CARE CENTER

Once the decision to close Longview Catholic High School was made in February 1988, Provincial Superior Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski and the provincial council began to think about what might be possible for the building.

For three years prior to the closing of the high school, Mother Landeline and the council had considered locating a day care center at the school because they believed it would be in keeping with the mission of the Felician Sisters.[73] So, she welcomed initial discussion with the Town of Enfield officials in March 1988 when they expressed an interest in three classrooms on the first floor of

the Longview building. The town was seeking space for a day-care program for school-age children located at Asnuntuck Community College at the time. Since Asnuntuck planned a $5.54 million renovation, officials at the college said they could no longer provide space for the program.[74]

Mother Landeline said the sisters were exploring all the possibilities about what to do with the building. She told *Hartford Courant* reporter Jill Bilzi, "Here in Enfield we have a baby boom and we have so many working mothers. We would like to keep [Longview] a learning facility, and the nuns love children." She noted that before anyone occupied space in the building, certain fire-code violations needed to be corrected, including modernizing the emergency alarm system, replacing two doors, and rebuilding first-floor stairwells. She acknowledged that additional corrections might also be necessary.[75]

Just three days after the interview with Bilzi, the *Hartford Courant* published an article about the town council's interest in amending the zoning regulations to allow day care in business zones through special use permits. Requests from both Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance for its new Enfield headquarters and Bigelow Commons, the largest historic renovation apartment complex project in the state, drove the change. The article confirmed the need for day care in Enfield. Director of planning and community development John Pagini told the *Courant* that "Enfield has a dramatic deficit of day care." The *Courant* article reported that in a June 1987 study by the town social services department, eighty-five of 147 women receiving federal assistance said they would work if day care were available. "Enfield is one of the prime areas in need of day care," said Jeanne Milstein of Day Care Management Inc., and former program manager of day-care services for the Department of Human Resources. Milstein, who examined a site in the Enfield Memorial Industrial Park, said she planned to locate a center in Enfield as she began to establish centers across the state. "Enfield needs day care with all the companies coming in and housing going up," she said. "People like to have their children near them." Nancy Moriarty, day care licensing specialist for the state Department of Health Sciences, said that of the thirteen licensed day-care centers in Enfield, only four offered full-time programs. She added that most programs had a waiting list.[76]

Sister Mary Lawrence, spokesperson for the Felician Sisters, reiterated the desire of the Felician Sisters—simply to help the community: "You always feel, wherever you are, that you should help in any way possible. The crying need we see now is for day care."[77]

While the town originally planned to lease only the first floor for the program moving from Asnuntuck Community College, after further investigation, the town's social services department decided to move the entire program, including preschool children housed in a building on North Main Street, nearly 150 children. The day care center's director, Joann Suzor, welcomed the move to Longview, since, she said, the facility hadn't had a permanent home in several years. "We've never been able to find a permanent place. It's pretty upsetting to the kids because it means possibly changing schools."[78]

Dorothy Allen, director of the town's social services department, said, "It could be one of the best programs around. Longview is such a beautiful place." The plan was predicated on approval of an amendment to the town's zoning regulations that would allow day-care centers in existing school or church

buildings in residentially zoned areas. Longview was in a residentially zoned area.[79]

By late spring 1989, the town's day-care program planned to consolidate at the former Longview building, renovate all floors of the building to fire code standards, and expand the operation to add infant and adult day care. In July, the Felician Sisters agreed to lease the former high school building to the town for nine years at which time the province could reclaim the building or renew the lease.[80] Early termination of the lease agreement before the nine-year expiration period would penalize the province, which would be required to repay the Town of Enfield half of the initial cost incurred in the renovations. Other provisions of the lease stated that at the expiration of the lease, the premises would be left "in as good state and condition as reasonable use and wear thereof will permit." The Town of Enfield agreed to provide "all repairs and maintenance to the buildings" and "not to make any alterations."[81]

Once the town planning and zoning commission approved a special use permit for the program, it awaited approval from the State Bond Commission of a $100,000 grant to enable the town to renovate the first and second floors of the school.

On May 25, 1989, the town awarded its first contract in the effort to convert the former high school building into a day-care center. The bid selection came after a year of negotiations for use of the space and months after rejection of a first round of bids that exceeded the renovation budget of $150,000 by nearly four times. Town officials had hoped to open the day-care center in October 1988 but now planned to move in by September 1989.[82]

Desrosiers & Son Inc., of Chicopee, Massachusetts, had the low bid at $401,000. The town expected to receive a $200,000 grant from the state Department of Human Resources for the scaled back project in addition to the $100,000 previously received. The town added $75,000 to its initial $50,000 contribution.

But the following month, in June, the plans hit a snag when Joyce Palmer, an Enfield resident and a member of the Americans United for Separation of Church and State in Maryland, voiced her concern that the project violated constitutional guarantees of church and state. She said money spent leasing the building and $400,000 in renovation to meet fire and safety codes would directly benefit a religious group and violate the Constitution.[83]

Palmer's appeal to the town planning and zoning commission had no apparent effect on the day-care project until a letter arrived from the Americans United. The group's letter said the town should take a hard look at the arrangement with the Felician Sisters. Acting Town Manager Bonnie Therrien defended the town's position, noting the benefits of the plan, stating that the lease with the Felician Sisters would give stability to the program, and praising the beauty of the location and the safety of the outdoor play areas. Critics even questioned the proximity of the sisters' living quarters and use of nuns in the program. Robert Boston, communications director for Americans United, said, "Eventually, some sort of religious experience will work itself into the program." Boston added that Americans United would continue to monitor the case and if necessary, support a lawsuit. Palmer said, "If I have to be the lone plaintiff in this case, I will."[84]

Town officials said they were consulting the state to find a precedent for the arrangement but were proceeding toward a September opening.[85] David Dearborn, a spokesperson for the State Department of Human Resources, which was providing a $300,000 grant, said that the day-care program would not have any religious orientation. Town attorney Walter R. Dudek, said, "In our opinion, there is absolutely no conflict," and, at the direction of the town council, hired an appraiser to review the estimated cost of converting the Longview building to a town day-care center. He said the role of the appraiser would help avoid any suggestion of conflict of interest or impropriety between the town and a religious group.[86]

Construction finally began in early November with hopes of moving in February 1990, and the opening was delayed again because of the threat to sue, but no lawsuit was filed.[87] In May, controversy surrounded the plan yet again when the town council realized that for nine months, the town had paid $1,000 a month in rent on a building it had not moved into. Council member Charles Duren said he did not understand how the Felician Sisters could morally and legally keep accepting $1,000 a month rent on the building. Council members suggested the town either renegotiate the contract with the Felician Sisters or abandon the project altogether because the renovation costs were too high. Town Manager Bonnie Therrien's request for an extra $182,000 for the project angered the town council, which refused to consider the request until they inspected the site, and they asked the town attorney to renegotiate the contract on the project. Therrien said the project needed more money because the state did not pay for costs such as rent and utilities until the renovated center opened. She added that renovations were more extensive than originally expected, including electrical work.[88]

'Don't blame the nuns'

On May 14, 1990, the Hartford Courant published an editorial entitled, "Don't blame the nuns." The writer noted that while the cost overruns for the town day-care center upset the Enfield Town Council members, "their anger is misdirected," because "The nuns' contract with the town entitles them to the money, and they are not responsible for the delays in the town's conversion of the former Catholic school." Furthermore, the editorial writer demanded that Councilman Charles Duren apologize to the Felician Sisters "for saying publicly that he did not understand how the nuns could morally and legally keep the rent money while the building remains empty."[89]

At its next meeting two weeks later, the town council agreed to allocate the extra money—$182,000—to complete the long-delayed project at the former Longview Catholic High School. Although Mayor Francis A. Burke Jr. had expressed frustration over the Longview conversion, he conceded that there was nowhere else for the children to go. "There's an obvious need for day care and with the opportunity that's there, as well as the amount of time and money spent on that, it would not behoove us to go elsewhere," he said. Additionally, parents said they did not want their children in a temporary building. Since renovations had begun at Asnuntuck Community College, which provided space for the day care, the children had been staying at two temporary sites. Parents wanted a single location with space for different age groups.[90]

The long-awaited opening day finally arrived on October 24, 1990, when the Enfield Day Care Center had its official Open House. Provincial Superior Sister Mary Lawrence presented a gift for the infant room to Joan Colon, director of the center. Congresswoman Nancy Johnson delivered her congratulatory remarks via telephone, and town leaders addressed the guests. Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, music teacher, and Sister Mary Stella Motyl, who coordinated the food preparation, arranged for refreshments. Sister Carol Marie Saladin, who enjoyed working as an aide with the younger children, greeted visitors and answered questions from those who toured the facility. She said that parents were relieved that their children were housed in one building, especially because it made picking up and dropping off the children easier. The diligent staff appreciated the presence of the sisters and worked amicably alongside of them.[91]

FELICIAN OUTREACH

Covenant House, New York, New York

When Our Lady of the Angels Academy/Longview Catholic High School closed its doors in 1988, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl made the courageous and painful transition from the security and comfort of a traditional apostolate to a risky and vulnerable presence among the poor and marginalized at Covenant House in New York City. She said that, for a long time, she had been attracted to the work of Covenant House after hearing Father Bruce Ritter, OFM, Conv., speak at the archdiocesan teachers' convention in the late 70s and decided that was where she needed to be. By the late 80s, Covenant House was a sprawling organization, with seventeen shelters in the United States, Canada, and Latin America. Covenant House had become vital to the rescue system for runaways and homeless kids. In New York, it was *the* rescue system.[92]

Sister Connie never thought she would wind up in Times Square caring for homeless kids, who had suffered physical and sexual abuse. She began her ministry there in mid-August of 1988 as a youth specialist on the older girls' unit and, after three months, moved to the position of educational/vocational counselor, becoming the resource for educational/vocational issues, assessing the skills of the young women, and helping them to find a job or to continue their education. Sister Connie said that at Covenant House, she had come in close contact with the *anawim*, "those individuals who have invited me into their fragmented and painful stories. . . . I have found myself pained and sometimes outraged by the brokenness of the young people I meet here, exhilarated and encouraged by their resilience, overwhelmed by their honesty, and humbled by their trust and need."[93]

Allegations of sexual and financial misconduct against Founder Father Ritter in February 1990 resulted in plummeting donations to the privately funded organization that necessitated cutting programs and laying off staff.[94] Sister Connie's last day at Covenant House was July 31, 1990. She said, "I never dreamed I would be as happy as I was there."[91] Speaking about her painful separation, she said "I feel that there was still a lot to accomplish at Covenant House—a lot of kids who need help and, for me, a lot to give. But it was not meant to be."[95]

Marian Fathers, Stockbridge, Massachusetts

During a meeting with the provincial council on January 16, 1991, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, provincial superior, and Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, director of ministry, reported on their meeting with Father John Gayton, superior of the local community of the Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Father Gayton had asked the leaders of the Enfield Felicians about the availability of sisters to do the domestic work for the local community, including preparing meals for twenty people, providing laundry service, and caring for the chapel and sacristy. Father assured the sisters that the Marian Fathers would provide living space and the sisters would receive a salary as well as medical insurance and benefits. After careful consideration of the conditions offered, the provincial administration decided to accept this new apostolate.[96]

With the sanction of the bishop of the diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Most Rev. Joseph F. Maguire, as well as the approval of the general administration, three sisters began serving the Marian Fathers on Eden Hill on August 27, 1991: Sister Mary Benedict Ornowski, Sister Mary Joanne Wasilewski, and Sister Jeanne Marie Akalski. The three traveled to Stockbridge with Sister Mary Lawrence and Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, provincial treasurer, to open Mercy of God Convent, where the priests, brothers, and Marian Helpers warmly greeted them.[97]

Sister Jeanne Marie said that while the work was challenging at times, she was grateful for the experience because she mastered "the art of cooking." She even stepped up to the plate and served dinner to more than 200 guests when they gathered to celebrate the beatification of both Felician Foundress Mary Angela Truszkowska and Maria Faustina Kowalska, messenger of the Divine Mercy devotion, who were beatified together in 1993. Sister Jeanne Marie said that during the six years that she was engaged in this ministry, the best part was mingling with the priests and brothers because they all enjoyed many days of laughter, celebration, and sharing.[98]

The Cenacle: An Invitation to Prayer

In response to the plea of the Blessed Virgin Mary to gather in fervent prayer and fraternal love, Sister Joanne Marian Kaminski organized the Our Lady of the Angels Cenacle. The group, consisting of twenty-five sister residents of the provincial house and infirmary and two Felician associates, met for the first time on Monday, September 19, 1994, in the provincial house chapel and every subsequent Monday. Initially, the sisters and associates constituted the membership but later, the group welcomed priests and lay persons.[99]

Father Stefano Gobbi founded the Cenacle of the Marian Movement of Priests (MMP) in Italy. While on a pilgrimage to Fatima in May of 1972, Father Gobbi experienced an inner voice urging him to have confidence in the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to form a group of priests willing to consecrate themselves to the Virgin Mary and be strongly united with the Pope and the Church. The movement grew with the inclusion of laypersons, and in 1975, the Marian Movement of Priests in the United States was established.[100] Joining this movement, Sister Joanne's group answered the call to meet in "Cenacles," commemorating the upper room where the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles. Our Lady of Angels Cenacle invoked the Holy Spirit, recited the rosary,

prayed for the Pope, meditated on selected passages from Marian Movement readings, and incorporated the Chaplet of Divine Mercy with selected prayers and hymns.

Enrichment Center

In 1993, the Provincial Chapter drew up an Action-Direction Statement to address the cultural, social, and psychological needs of the sisters of the provincial house complex, and Sister Mary Angelora Floryan was appointed to implement a variety of enrichment programs.[101] The program launched on September 8, 1994, the feast of the Birthday of Our Lady, which became the catalyst for the group's first activity: sharing by each sister about her own day of birth. To emphasize the beauty of birth, Sister Angelora even invited parents to bring their babies to the convent for the sisters to hold and pray over.[102] Later, a large group of sisters enjoyed the hour-long drive to My Father's House Retreat Center in Moodus, Connecticut where they met Father William J. McCarthy, MSA, who welcomed them to the tranquil sixty-acre retreat center. Father Bill was the center's charismatic director as well as an internationally known speaker, the author of more than thirty books, and the director of the television program "In His Name," which aired on Connecticut Public Access Television. After enjoying a light snack, the sisters returned to Enfield.[103]

To further develop the enrichment program, a small team including the provincial minister, the provincial house local minister, and the director of the infirmary developed a monthly calendar of events that they posted throughout the convent to keep sisters aware of the daily activities. The team planned celebrations and entertainment for Valentine's Day, the feast of St. Joseph on March 19, the birthday of Blessed Mary Angela and the feast of St. Felix of Cantalice. Sister Mary Angelora coordinated a Passover Meal for the sisters during Holy Week and a Christmas social that featured a sing-along with Polish and English Christmas carols, special treats, and door prizes. Other musical presentations included entertainment by the St. Patrick's Children's Choir of Enfield and by the students from Sts. Cyril and Methodius School in Hartford, who presented Polish dances, poems and songs. The sisters' participation in the program was commendable, and it was their practical suggestions as well as material contributions that ensured its success.[104]

Poland's History and Culture

The Polish language and its study were important to many people in Enfield, and the Enfield Felicians were blessed to share the passion of Sister Mary Mechtilde Zalewski for all things Polish. Sister Mary Mechtilde found a larger audience for her interests when the May Department Stores Co., the parent company of G. Fox, decided to create space in its store as a meeting place for senior citizens in late 1989.[105] Doris May, whose husband David was the grandson of the founder of the May Department Stores Co., saw to the conversion of the restaurant in the Enfield store into the "OASIS," and the management invited Sister Mechtilde to present three lectures: "Poland, Its Settlement and Religious Customs," "Celebration of St. Nicholas," and "Wigilia." Sister Mechtilde had taught Conversational Polish as part of the University of the Third Age at Asnuntuck Community College in 1985. More than thirty seniors, many her former students, enjoyed the lectures and sat spellbound to hear of their heritage.[106]

Archdiocesan Invitations

Early in 1989, at the invitation of Father Norman J. Belval, director of Religious Education for the Hartford Archdiocese, Sister Theresa Mary Pietrzak and Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso accepted the challenge to work with candidates in the Archdiocesan Lay Ministry Program. The Archdiocese of Hartford offered this formation program to men and women who wished to broaden their theological education, improve their ministerial and helping skills and become more effective leaders in the parish. Both sisters shared their expertise in the field of gerontology.[107]

Sister Frances Marion Bonczar accepted the role of spiritual assistant for Saint Mary's Pre-Fraternity in New Britain, Connecticut. Secular Franciscan Order members gathered on a regular basis for ongoing formation. Drawing from her background in Franciscan Spirituality, Sister Frances Marion guided and influenced these secular Franciscans in their desire to live the Gospel life as followers of St. Francis.[108]

SHARING THE CHARISM OF MOTHER ANGELA: THE ASSOCIATES

The Second Vatican Council invited everyone into a new vision of partnership by recognizing that "The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God. . . " (*Lumen Gentium*, 41).[109] The American bishops affirmed the universal call to holiness in 1995 by writing, "The laity's call to holiness is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Their answer is a gift to the Church and to the world."[110]

In the Felician Congregation in North America, as early as 1986, the Interprovincial Vocation and Affiliate Committee proposed an Associate Membership Program.[111] The General Chapter of 1988 encouraged individual provinces to establish associate programs for lay persons "as a concrete means for sisters to:

a. Share and witness the evangelical lifestyle with persons who feel called to a deeper understanding of their baptismal call;
b. Share the richness of the founding vision and charism of Mother Mary Angela;
c. Encourage more active lay involvement in the spiritual renewal of the world;
d. Share their life and mission with those who wished a non-vowed temporary form of association with the Felician Sisters."[112]

Engagement with lay associations was the practice of Felician Sisters from the very beginning of the Congregation, as the following passage from the *Memoirs* shows:

> The *goal* of the sisters, . . . that specific and unique manner of performing acts of charity and influencing people, which the Congregation has developed and maintained from the beginning . . . [is] to inculcate and propagate *true piety* in all classes of society, teaching people to fulfill always and everywhere the Will of God and to seek His glory in all things. . . . Even though the world is not yet inclined to understand the value of piety, a need is surfacing for fostering it. This is evident from the great number of souls who, desirous of a life of piety, until now have associated with the Congregation and who reap great spiritual

benefits thereby. In this the sisters should perceive the sign of God's Will and of their vocation . . . [and] devote all their efforts to this apostolate and work towards the attainment of this goal.[113]

Involvement with lay associations decreased considerably when the needs of the early twentieth century directed the ministry of the sisters to the education of children and youth. The delegates to the General Chapter of 1988 recognized this shift in apostolic focus. Highlighting the Congregation's primary mission of "cooperating with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world," they affirmed the implementation of lay association in several forms.[114]

In 1989, Sister Mary Lawrence, provincial superior, asked Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz to research associate programs, establish a program for the Enfield province, and begin to seek candidates. With the fervor and dedication that marked all her endeavors, Sister Seraphine used her gifts to develop this program. The first brochure created to market the program invited potential applicants with the words of Mother Mary Angela:

I wish that I could multiply myself a thousand times
and travel to all parts of the world
and live God's love
and teach his merciful love to all living souls.

The associates were adults who had come to know the Felician Sisters through contact with an individual sister, a group of sisters, or through a sponsored ministry of the Felician Sisters. They were young, middle-aged and elderly, women and men, single, married, or clergy.[115]

According to Sister Seraphine, the program began with three young women who applied in 1991.[116] On May 16, 1992, Celine Cote and Joan Harding of Enfield and Bernadette Szymanczyk of South Boston, Massachusetts—the sister of Sister Helen Marie—became the first Felician Associates in the New England Province during a brief ceremony held in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel. The ceremony followed the Mass of Thanksgiving celebrating Community Day. Chaplains Father Herbert Schmidt and Father Antoni Bury, S.Ch, presided, along with Father Kevin B. Sousa, brother of Sister Francine Mary.[117]



Enfield's first three Felician Associates made their commitment on May 16, 1992. From l: SM Seraphine Liskiewicz, director; Bernadette Szymanczyk, Joan Harding and Celine Cote with SM Lawrence Lojko, provincial minister.

Following their declaration to associate membership with the Felician Sisters, in an expression of community support, the sisters responded: "We share in the joy of these candidates, and we promise to support them through prayer and example. Thanking our Lord for their presence among us, we ask his blessing upon them as they will continue to deepen their love for him.[118]

Associates participated in an orientation period that began with an overview of the program followed by five more sessions, when the applicant learned about the Felician charism and mission, Felician spirituality, prayer life, and praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Associates made a commitment for one year, renewable each year after soul searching and self-evaluation. Lay people eager to be involved and intimately connected to the Felician Sisters but who, because of distance, health issues, and family commitments were unable to be "active," chose to become Prayer Associates. They kept in touch with the associate director and provided prayerful support to each other and to the Felician Sisters.[119]

Faith-sharing was a prominent feature of associate life, and monthly meetings provided an opportunity for prayer as well as discussion about ways to develop a close relationship with the Lord. Associates were assigned companion sisters who stayed connected with them. Missioning of sister sponsors for the program had taken place at the provincial house on October 20, 1990, following the fall provincial assembly. Twenty sisters committed to guiding the women and men seeking closer association with the Felician Sisters.[120]

Associates joined the sisters for prayer and substituted for them at Eucharistic adoration during meetings or assemblies. They volunteered their services at fund-raising events, including the annual Lawn Festival, Pre-Christmas Sale, and Polish Supper, and sponsored Bingo games and ice cream socials for the sisters in the infirmary. As Sister Seraphine noted, "Their desire for greater spirituality and building a closer relationship with the Lord is inspirational, their eagerness to assist, edifying."[121]

The program grew slowly and, the following year, 1993, with the recent beatification of the Felician Foundress, the theme of the commissioning and recommitment ceremony was "With Blessed Mary Angela to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary." On June 18, which also celebrated the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Celine, Joan, and Bernadette renewed their commitment for another year, with Catherine Chilicki and Rita Sonski of Somers, Gilda Dziewisz of East Hartford, and Margaret Genco and Joan Schmid, both of Enfield, making their first commitment. Sadly, Bernadette was called to her eternal reward on October 12, 1993. Felician companions at the time included Sister Mary Alda Kosiba, Sister Mary Angelica Mycek, Sister Mary Angeline Kisiel, Sister Mary Desponsata Biadasz, Sister Mary Esther Sibiga, Sister Mary Helene Hadam, Sister Mary Laetitia Plona, Sister Mary Presentia Kaznocha, and Sister Mary Veronica Zacharczyk.[122]

Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, vicar, representing the provincial superior, accepted the commitment of the associates in the name of the province and commissioned their companions. Sisters present once again affirmed their support for the associates through prayer, witness, and participation in community activities so that all would be mutually enriched by their common search to be more deeply united with the Lord.[123]

On June 10, 1994, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, as seven associates renewed their commitment, five candidates made their first commitment: Louise and George Archambault, Jean Makar, and Jean Harris, all of Somers, Jennie Falkowski of Enfield, and Barbara Slaughterback of Easthampton, Massachusetts.[124]

By 1995, Sister Mary Seraphine accepted two additional candidates who had applied: Phyllis Rookie of Enfield and Mary Rusek of Three Rivers, Massachusetts, bringing the total to thirteen associates and two candidates. New companions included Sister Mary Evelyn Rybicki, Sister Mary Leontine Burza, Sister Mary Michaeline Jurgielewicz, and Sister Mary Paulinette Trzaskus. During the service that followed the Eucharistic celebration, each candidate received a pin from Sister Mary Lawrence as a reminder to strive for deeper growth through Gospel living. The candle they received from Sister Mary Seraphine, director, encouraged them to "let our light shine before people so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven."[125]

Reflecting on her commitment as an associate, Catherine Chilicki said that, since the beginning of her journey, her "faith in God is deeper and more trusting and . . . more fearless in this changing world." She also spoke about the "loving prayers" of both the sisters and her fellow associates "in both good times as well as difficult times . . . [as} a gift from God." She credits this spiritual development with moving her outward to Eucharistic ministry for those in nursing homes, as reader and Eucharistic minister in her parish, and, along with her husband, providing mentoring for couples preparing for the sacrament of marriage. Cathy noted the special place in her heart for her first companion sister, Sister Mary Angeline Kisiel, and treasures the singular relationship between them. She is deeply grateful to Sister Angeline for teaching her how to pray *The Liturgy of the Hours,* saying, "I still love to pray this beautiful Christian prayer." Finally, she counts the task of editing *Angel Wings,* the associates' newsletter, among her blessings.[126]

FORMATION, A CONTINUOUS GROWTH PROCESS

The first words of Chapter VI of *Response to Love*, "Religious Formation," describe religious formation as a "continuous growth" process that is "dynamic." The text continues, "Harmonious development of the whole person is essential for religious life." To achieve this goal, "we integrate the human, Christian, and religious-apostolic aspects of formation, so that each sister can attain full maturity of her personality."[127]

Consequently, during the period following the 1988 General Chapter, the Congregation focused on the wholistic development of the sisters, particularly on the preparation of candidates prior to entering the Congregation. The Interprovincial Formation Commission prepared helpful programs that the provinces put into action. In addition, handbooks for all levels of formation were either compiled or updated and approved by the general administration.[128]

The main thrust of the proposals presented by the Formation Commission was the wholistic approach to formation on both the initial and ongoing levels because the group felt the acute need to integrate more fully the spiritual, physical, personal, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects of human development, and to provide a program to enable both young and old to be better capable of facing the demands and challenges of religious life.[129]

Formation programs in the Enfield province were implemented by a team, initially consisting of:

Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko	Provincial superior, Coordinator of formation
Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha	Director of sisters in temporary vows
Sister Frances Marion Bonczar	Director of novices, postulants, affiliates
Sister Joan Marie Swierzb	Vocation ministry, Ongoing formation, Group I
Sister Mary Florence Pelczynski	Ongoing formation, Group II
Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski	Ongoing formation, Group III
Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz	Director, Associate program[130]

These formation leaders formed a common bond with and gained positive strength from meetings with their sisters across the province. Enfield formation personnel participated in meetings of interprovincial formation coordinators, novice directors, and vocation directors. Discussion focused on wholistic development, Felician/Franciscan spirituality, and the feasibility of an interprovincial novitiate for the North American provinces.[131] The document published by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life on February 2, 1990, addressed this latter topic. Entitled "Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes," it provided guidance to religious institutes in formation, and even noted the necessity of placing "formation (personnel and institutions) in common, in order to collaborate in such an important work [formation], which they could no longer accomplish by themselves."[132]

The San Francisco Earthquake of 1989

Annual meetings of the National Congress of Religious Formation Conference also served to educate and strengthen formators in their ministry. And the National Congress of Religious Formation Conference of 1989 in San Francisco, California, will remain forever etched in the memories of Sister Mary Bernardine and Sister Frances Marion. Both were looking forward to participating in the conference when their plans changed drastically as an earthquake devastated northern California.[133] The tremor struck at 5:04 p.m. Pacific Time, at the height of the rush hour, while the two were enroute to the conference site. The quake registered 6.9 on the Richter scale, with the epicenter eighty miles southeast of San Francisco, in the San Andreas fault, and lasted about fifteen seconds. A sharp aftershock followed, and lesser aftershocks continued into the evening. An earthquake of six on the scale can cause severe damage. A seven reading is a "major" earthquake, capable of widespread heavy damage. The earthquake killed dozens of people, collapsed buildings, twisted freeways, set off major fires, and caved in a section of the San Francisco Bay Bridge. It caused power and water outages over a vast area, disrupted telephone service, and closed airports. Of the bridges that connected the Bay Area's many communities, only the Golden Gate remained open. The quake stranded thousands of commuters as darkness fell, and there were reports of looting.[134] While the sisters did not experience physical harm, they shared the anxiety of Californians and tourists alike. Sister Bernardine said that both she and Sister Frances felt the protection of Divine Providence while attempting to book a flight to return to Connecticut.[135]

Felician Formation Convocation

The Felician Formation Convocation held at Maryville Center in Holly, Michigan, from October 13-19, 1991, brought together formation team members from all the North American provinces as well as Superior General Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, members of the general administration, and Sister Mary Rut Stawska, director of postulants in the Kenya Mission. Keynote speakers addressed relevant topics such as "Compassionate Journeying: Vulnerability, Transition," "Psycho-social Issues Impacting on Candidacy and Initial Formation," and, "When God Calls, Who Responds?" Felician Sisters from several provinces were among the presenters. Participants from Enfield included Sister Mary Lawrence, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Marianne Los, Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, and Sister Mary John Fryc, director of pre-tertians.[136]

The 19th General Chapter of the Felician Congregation encouraged "a close examination of guidelines for all levels of formation and their internalization," as well as "an updating of all Formation Handbooks."[137] Consequently, in the spring of 1991, the general administration appointed sisters to membership in the core committee to rewrite the *Fundamentals of Felician Formation,* 1982, as well as sisters to serve as consultants to the committee. Because at that time, she was serving at Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces, the Felician generalate in Rome, Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski assumed responsibility for the technical production of the document. Mother Mary Cynthia's hope was that the revised document would "reflect and articulate the Felician identity and evolving Felician charism."[138]

As the provincial superior, Sister Lawrence appointed a director of initial formation, realizing that the education of the formator was essential and required the best possible preparation. She knew that this woman and those who would collaborate with her were co-creators of the province's and Congregation's future in a special way. They made the initial decisions about who would and who would not be encouraged to pursue a religious vocation in the Felician Congregation.

In the fall of 1989, Sister Mary Ann Papiez enrolled in the Institute of Formative Spirituality Program at Duquesne University, which was enjoying remarkable success as a preparation program in Christian formation.[139] She said that the program helped her connect her own spiritual formation with what she was learning, making it real and practical. When she returned from the program in June 1990, she assumed responsibility for directing the initial formation program in Enfield.[140] Unfortunately, health issues made it impossible for her to continue in this role and she stepped down early in 1991.[141] In August, Sister Marianne Los succeeded her.[142]

In her role as vocation director, Sister Joan Marie Swierzb discerned with the women who contacted her, assisting them to face the call of the Lord in their life commitment within the Church. She assessed the maturity and ability of the candidate to be servant and sign as well as their readiness to live out and to invest in the religious lifestyle of the Felician Congregation.[143]

During the period 1989-1995, the Enfield province accepted six affiliates, and all but one entered the postulancy. Three—Kathleen Seekings, who became Sister Mary Clare on August 11, 1992, Margaret Lecko, who became Sister Margaret Mary in 1993, and Jennifer Berryhill, who became Sister Clare

Marie in 1997—were invested with the Felician habit. Sister Margaret Mary made first vows on August 13, 1995. Sister Clare Marie made first vows on August 14, 1999.[144]

Because of their small number, the sisters in annual vows continued to join the per-tertians for weekends of prayer and sharing held primarily at the provincial house. Guided by their directors, these sisters focused on the vows using a wholistic approach, continually striving to integrate their spiritual and human development. During the renewal program, the sisters took advantage of opportunities for discussion, and private and communal prayer, as well as meeting with their directors as needed.[145]

Interprovincial renewal programs

Three of the six sisters in annual vows remained in the community for second novitiate and went on to pronounce their final vows. Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek participated in the interprovincial second novitiate program held in Polonia, Wisconsin, during the summer of 1990, under the direction of Sister Mary Jovilla Yurek, general councilor and formation coordinator. After this fruitful experience, she returned to Enfield and made her perpetual profession of vows on August 11, 1990, the feast of Saint Clare.[146] After completing the second novitiate program held at St. Michael's Convent in Livonia, Michigan, Sister Mary Peter Valliere made her perpetual commitment of vows in Enfield on August 6, 1994.[147] From June 24 to August 7, 1995, Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak participated in the second novitiate program at St. Francis Convent in Mount Arlington, New Jersey, under the direction of Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak, general councilor. She said the program "truly renewed me in body, mind and spirit as I, and the other two sisters in the program, were imbued with the Felician charism during classes on Mother Angela, prayer, prophetic witness, the vows, and Blessed Mother, . . . along with spending time together being sister with one another. Second novitiate allowed us to have the time and space to really discern and affirm our call for our permanent profession of vows into the Felician Congregation. For this, I am grateful."[148]

St. Ignatius says, "Tertianship is the school of the heart" (Const. 516), and six sisters benefited from this time of great blessing and insight as they opened their hearts and let God take hold of them anew. From June 27 to August 7, 1989, Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, and Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz participated in this period of spiritual and physical renewal along with eight other sisters at St. Francis Retreat Center in Mount Arlington, New Jersey. Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, vicar general, the director, was assisted by Sister Mary Charlene Nowak (Buffalo).[149] The group lived out their program theme, "The gift you have received, give as a gift," (Mt. 10:8) as they prayed, shared, and engaged with each other in serious moments as well as fun times and celebrations, accepting one another as they were.[150]

From June 30 to August 9, 1992, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz and Sister Francine Mary Sousa participated in the interprovincial tertianship program in Mount Arlington, New Jersey, along with six sisters from Buffalo, one from Livonia, and one from Chicago. Engaged in various ministries, the sisters shared their personal stories, enriching their communal experience. Once again, Sister Mary Raymond, assisted by Sister Mary Charlene, directed the program. A

highlight of the program was the creative prayer experiences and Eucharistic liturgies enhanced by several talented musicians in the group.[151]

Sister Mary Ann Papiez participated in the tertianship experience held at Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, under the guidance of Sister Mary Celestine Giertych, vicar general, from June 26 – August 7, 1995.[152] Sister Celestine was a hands-on outdoors woman, and Sister Mary Ann recalled a memorable camping trip that included everything from pitching the tents to preparing dinner on a campfire. When a dreadful thunderstorm struck, the group took shelter in the van and prayed the rosary. The next morning, they discovered the storm was really a hurricane that had uprooted trees and knocked out power in other areas of the campground. She said, "Divine Providence had spared us!"[153]

Ongoing formation

Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski, facilitator of ongoing formation for the golden jubilarians, planned a renewal program focusing on Justice Spirituality from July 26-27, 1990.[154] Fifty-one sisters benefited from the close study of *Mary: Model of Justice (Meditations on the Themes of the Canticle of Mary)* by Father William F. Maestri. Sister Landeline credited the address given by Pope John Paul II to the Superiors General of Women Religious at their annual meeting on May 14, 1987, as the catalyst for the program topic. In his talk, the Holy Father reminded the religious leaders that the Church has always "protected childhood, educated youth, . . . assisted the sick, the elderly, exiles, prisoners, claiming the rights of the most humiliated categories against all forms of oppression and exploitation." He shared his hope that they would "be able to look at Mary in this way" and "discover ever more deeply in her the model of their consecration to God, and at the same time that of their apostolic commitment to the service of their brothers."[155]

The 1991 summer program, held from July 25-27 included a review of the justice spirituality theme.[156] From August 12-13, 1992, thirty-seven sisters reflected on the virtue of justice as understood and lived by Mother Mary Angela. To prepare for the beatification of Foundress Mother Mary Angela, the group resolved to continue reading *Selected Writings: Mary Angela Truszkowska.*[157]

The golden jubilarians who met at the provincial house for the annual program from August 16-17, 1994, were inspired and challenged by the conferences on "Blessed Mary Angela and the Will of God," given by Father Michael Zielke, OFM, Conv. Father's presentations nourished their desire to continue the story of a 19th century Polish woman, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, in the Church and in the world.[158]

'YOU WILL BE BURIED AT A GOOD OLD AGE' (GEN 15:15)

In many cultures, an aspect of blessing is to offer a wish that the recipient live to one hundred years old. In Poland, *Sto lat,* a wish to live a hundred years, is a traditional form of praise and good wishes, and the song "*Sto lat, sto lat*" is sung at birthday celebrations—making it the most popular song in Poland and among Poles around the globe.

Sister Mary Basil Misiaszek

In the United States, newspaper stories, television broadcasts, and family parties regularly fete people who reach 100. With three sisters celebrating

their 100-year milestone and beyond in 1989 and 1990, the sisters in Enfield hosted twelve celebrations from 1989 to 1994.

Born in Samocice, Poland, Sophia Misiaszek was one of ten children. When she and her family emigrated to the United States, they settled in Nashua, New Hampshire. At the age of seventeen, she left home for Buffalo, New York, where she began her initial formation in the Felician Congregation at Immaculate Heart of Mary Provincial House and her life of loving dedication and service to the Lord. At her ceremony of investiture in the Felician habit, she received the name Sister Mary Basil. She made her first profession as a Felician Sister in August 1909 and sealed that commitment for life with her final profession in 1915 in Lodi, New Jersey. In 1934, she was transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut.

A dedicated primary school teacher, Sister Basil taught in schools staffed by the Felician Sisters in the Buffalo area, the Middle Atlantic states, and New England for more than fifty years. Gifted with a great mother's heart, she touched the hearts of her students. When time and age took their toll, she retired to the provincial house where she engaged in less demanding tasks.

When her health declined, she became a patient in Holy Family Infirmary where she spent time in prayer and silent preparation for her Lord.[159] Sister Mary Basil Misiaszek's 100th birthday began with a Eucharistic celebration in her intention in the infirmary chapel on February 22, 1989. The party continued that afternoon with a sing-along, a specially decorated cake, refreshments, and a blessing imparted by chaplain Father Anthony Boryczka. Relatives, friends, and former students sent loving wishes to tell her that life can't be measured in terms of years alone, but by thoughtful ways and kindnesses, and reminded her that she had "made an art of giving warmly, living fully."[160] On February 22, 1990, when Sister Basil reached 101, WTIC (AM) radio personality Bob Steele made the grand announcement on his early morning radio program. Sisters in the infirmary, decorated with festive balloons, celebrated her with a birthday treat during their mid-afternoon break.[161]

By the time of her 105th birthday on February 22, 1994, Sister Basil was no longer alert and active, but a silent reminder of God's providential care for those who love him. On the morning of December 28, 1994, at the age of 105, the oldest member of the province and a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for eighty-eight years, Sister Basil died; God came to take her home.[162]

Two additional centenarians

During the festivities for the annual Community Day celebration at the provincial house on May 19, 1990, Provincial Superior Sister Mary Lawrence presented certificates from the Connecticut State Department of Aging and Disability Services to Sister Mary Innocenta Jasion and Sister Mary Consilia Gladysz. Sister Mary Innocenta had celebrated her 100th birthday on April 1, and Sister Mary Consilia was anticipating her celebration on September 21. The letter accompanying the certificates read: "You are one of 620 known centenarians in our state. Throughout your life your strengths and talents have helped to forge our society into a stronghold of spiritual and democratic principles. You have, indeed, been an inspiration to us all."[163] The sisters of Enfield were proud to be among those extending birthday wishes to the two sister centenarians.

Anna Jasion, who was born in Gleboko, Poland, on April 1, 1890, came to the United States with family members and settled in New Haven, Connecticut. On November 7, 1914, at the age of twenty-four, she began her life in the Felician Congregation in Lodi, New Jersey. As Sister Mary Innocenta, she professed her first vows on December 30, 1918, and her perpetual vows on July 24, 1924. In 1934, she was transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield. Sister Innocenta spent most of her life performing domestic duties in Felician convents in the Middle Atlantic and New England states, radiating the gentleness and compassion of Christ, the focal point of her long life. Whatever her task, she drew her peace and strength from prayer and from a humble surrender to God's will. As she lived, so she died—peacefully—resting in the eternal embrace of her Shepherd God, early in the morning of January 19, 1993, at the age of 102, having lived seventy-eight years as a member of the Felician Congregation.[164]

Sisters and relatives celebrated Sister Mary Consilia's 100th birthday at the provincial house with Mass and a special luncheon. She was a resident of Our Lady of the Angels Convent and needed no special assistance in performing her daily tasks while also devoting her day to prayer. Sister Mary Consilia was born Thecla Gladysz in Haloszczynce, Poland, on September 21, 1890, one of eleven children. When her family migrated to the United States in 1907, they settled in Greenwich, Connecticut. Shortly after professing her first vows in the Felician Congregation in 1913 in Buffalo, New York, she was transferred to the Lodi, New Jersey, province, where she made her perpetual profession of vows on August 24, 1919. In 1934, she was transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield. Sister Consilia served as a primary school teacher for almost sixty years in parish schools staffed by Felician Sisters in the Middle Atlantic states and New England. She loved children and cherished the privilege of preparing them to receive Jesus in their First Holy Communion. A deeply spiritual person, she lived in the presence of God, always seeking to do his will. In 1971, she became a resident of the provincial house in Enfield where she engaged in handwork, assisted with domestic duties and spent countless hours before the Blessed Sacrament. She lived out her last days in Holy Family Infirmary, waiting for her Beloved to lead her to her eternal home. She died on February 14, 1993, at the age of 102. [165]

The three sister centenarians lived out the words of Pope Saint John Paul II: "Arriving at an older age is to be considered a privilege: not simply because not everyone has the good fortune to reach this stage in life, but also, and above all, because this period provides real possibilities for better evaluating the past, for knowing and living more deeply the Paschal Mystery, for becoming an example in the Church for the whole People of God."[166]

TO WEAVE A GARMENT

During World War II, Conventual Franciscan friar Maximilian Maria Kolbe volunteered to take the place of his fellow prisoner at Auschwitz for a sentence to death by starvation. The saved man, Franciszek Gajowniczek, who despaired, "My wife, my family, I shall never see them again," at his death sentence, was still alive when Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski awaited the publication of her book, *To Weave a Garment,* the biography of St. Maximilian's mother.[167] (See Chapter 2)

Gajowniczek, who had been in the Polish underground resistance army, and ended up in Auschwitz as a prisoner of war, was on a five-week visit to the United States, in part to dedicate a shrine to Maximilian in Chicago, Illinois, when he stopped at Our Lady of the Angels Convent in Enfield on April 21, 1989. In softly spoken Polish, Gajowniczek gave an account of his experiences in Auschwitz, including the July day in 1941 when a German commandant singled out ten men to be starved to death in reprisal for a recent escape by a prisoner. Kolbe, who offered to take Gajowniczek's place, survived fifteen days, offering solace to the other nine men until the Germans, impatient for him to die, injected him with carbolic acid. Gajowniczek told the sisters that, although he felt guilty about the friar's death at first, the love Kolbe demonstrated sustained him for five more years of imprisonment.[168]

"I did not have a chance to thank Father Kolbe because we were not allowed to speak," he told the sisters through an interpreter. "However, our eyes met as he was being led away. I thanked him with my eyes. His face had a little smile on it and he was very serene. I think his smile was meant to tell me, 'I am at peace with my decision to take your place.'"[169]

Gajowniczek's story deeply moved the audience of Felician Sisters, most of them children of Polish immigrants. The sisters, some in tears, lined up to shake the hand of the man who inspired Kolbe's sacrifice, which led to his canonization by Pope John Paul II in 1982. It led Gajowniczek to spread the word about the power of faith and love.[170]



SM Felicita Zdrojewski with Franciszek Gajowniczek who survived Auschwitz and spoke to the sisters in Enfield about his experience on April 21, 1989.

Sister Felicita had received a personal invitation to meet Gajowniczek at St. Hyacinth's Seminary in Granby, Massachusetts, (affiliated with the Order of Friars Minor Conventual). She reversed the invitation and became an instrument in sharing the privilege with sisters and friends in Enfield.

Gajowniczek's wife Janina, as well as Father James McCurry, a Conventual Franciscan Friar, and national director of the Militia of Mary Immaculate, an order founded by St. Maximilian, accompanied him.[171]

When *To Weave a Garment: The Story of Maria Dąbrowska Kolbe, Mother of Saint Maximilian Kolbe* was published at the end of May 1989, Sister Felicita said she considered it an expression of gratitude to the lady who rendered many years of devoted service to the Felician Sisters in Krakow, Poland.[172] One reviewer wrote, "You will fall in love with this Mother of a true saint."[173] Father McCurry praised the book for giving the reader "an insightful glimpse into the Christian social fabric of Poland in the first half of the twentieth century," adding, "Sr. Felicita's skills . . . have combined to give social forces a human face. This book is excellent."[174]

THE BEATIFICATION OF MARY ANGELA TRUSZKOWSKA

In mid-April 1989, Padre Paolino Rossi, OFM, Cap., vice-postulator for the cause of Mother Angela's beatification, informed Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, superior general, that the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints had commissioned a *Consulta Medica*, a Board of Physicians, to meet on April 29, 1989, in the interest of the alleged cure attributed to the intercession of the Servant of God Mary Angela Truszkowska. If the doctors rendered an opinion and conclusive statement on the medical certainty of the cure of the diabetic neuropathy of Lillian Halasinski, the beatification process could move to the next step. Mother Cynthia asked the sisters to intensify their prayers for a favorable outcome.[175] In Enfield, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, provincial superior, designated the week of April 24-29 as one of prayer and fasting, pleading with the sisters to make this a "united effort of our entire Felician family."[176]

In official Church procedures there are three steps to sainthood: a candidate becomes "Venerable," then "Blessed," and then "Saint." Venerable is the title given to a deceased person recognized formally by the pope as having lived a heroically virtuous life or offered their life. To be beatified and recognized as a Blessed, one miracle acquired through the candidate's intercession is required in addition to recognition of heroic virtue or offering of life.[177]

Unfortunately, the five-member *Consulta Medica* was unable to make a definitive statement but decided that the alleged miraculous cure must again be studied anew to determine that a medically inexplicable healing took place. The team stated that more time must necessarily pass before the permanence and inexplicability of the alleged cure could be accepted.[178] Meanwhile, because of serious illness, Padre Bernardino da Siena Rosignoli, OFM, Cap., resigned his position as postulator for the cause and Padre Paolino Rossi, OFM, Cap., accepted the appointment as postulator for the cause of the Venerable Servant of God Angela Truszkowska.[179]

The results of the meeting of June 13, 1991, postponed from June 6, were also inconclusive and the medical experts of the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints requested additional reports on the alleged cure.[180] Finally, on March 5, 1992, the *Consulta Medica* unanimously accepted the cure as instantaneous, lasting, and inexplicable by modern scientific knowledge.[181] This drove the process into its final stages, with only the special meeting of the theologians and the meeting of the cardinals and bishops of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints still to be convened.[182]

In her memo sharing this information with the sisters, Mother Mary Cynthia wrote, "As daughters of Mother Angela, let us unite in praying the *Magnificat* from March 17 to March 25, the solemnity of the Annunciation of Mary."[183] When the sisters in Enfield received this "glorious message," the provincial house chronicler recorded, "Joy and tears welled in our hearts and eyes as we gathered in the chapel to give THANKS to our Lord for this long-awaited grace to honor the blessedness of Mother Angela."[184] The sisters in the provincial house shared this news with the members of the Interprovincial Documentary Sources Committee, who were meeting there. On March 10, at the Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated in the chapel, the chaplain wore the chasuble, worked in needlepoint by Mother Angela herself, to celebrate the Eucharistic liturgy.[185]

To prepare for the Tenth Anniversary of the Issuance of the Decree on the Heroicity of the Life of Mother Angela, the sisters began a triduum on March 30. Readings consisted of designated portions of the decree, and the sisters lit the Mother Angela candle as they continued to praise and thank God for this great grace.[186]

The theological consultants met on June 19, 1992, and evaluated the extraordinary nature and supernatural aspects of the cure. On July 7, the bishops and cardinals of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints convened and, acknowledging that the healing was miraculous, attributed it to the intercession of the Servant of God Mary Angela Truszkowska. Pope John Paul II accepted and ratified the medical and theological conclusions with a formal decree on July 11, closing the Process of the Cause of Beatification of Mother Angela and opening possibilities for planning for the beatification ceremony. Once again, Mother Cynthia wrote: "As daughters of Mother Angela, let us rejoice and unite in prayers of praise and thanksgiving. I invite each sister to plan for herself a three-day program of prayer and fasting. I request that, in a spirit of unity and solidarity, a Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving be celebrated in the provincial house chapels on August 2, 1992."[187]

In Enfield, the sisters received this news via FAX amid last-minute preparations for the annual Lawn Festival. Sister Mary Lawrence's announcement added an exalted moment to the already existing thrill of the day. A booth alerted patrons of the event to this auspicious event with a banner that read: "Pope accepts Mother Angela's beatification spring of 1993."[188] When the sisters gathered for the celebration of their provincial feast on August 2, the feast of Our Lady of the Angels, they offered thanksgiving and praise for the announcement of the final act of the process for the cause of Mother Angela's beatification and celebrated the province's 60th anniversary, thanking God for the countless blessings showered on the province since its inception in 1932.[189] Additionally, they rejoiced with the seven sisters celebrating their jubilees: Sister Mary Emilette Bonczar and Sister Ann Marie Ciulik, seventy years of religious life, and Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, Sister Mary Rosalette Janeczek, Sister Carol Marie Zygo, Sister Mary Andriette Tomaszewski, and Sister Mary Joanne Wasilewski, sixty years.[190]

Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford, was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Eucharistic liturgy with the provincial house chaplains Father Herbert Schmidt and Father Anthony Bury, S.Ch., concelebrating. Father Daniel Plocharczyk, secretary to the archbishop, was

Master of Ceremonies. Gifts carried in the entrance procession included a portrait of Mother Angela; a key that symbolized opening the door to the new foundation in Enfield in 1932, Our Lady of the Angels Province; bread and salt, that was presented in the Polish cultural tradition by Father Joseph Tomikowski to the sisters upon their arrival in Enfield; and a photograph of the first provincial administration along with a list of the names of the first sisters assigned to the new province.[191]

Meanwhile, the general administration initiated the planning stage for the beatification event. By November, decisions regarding the statue, medals, and medallions of Mother Angela were completed; relic cases and reliquaries were designed; artists were engaged to paint new portraits of Mother Angela; events associated with the celebration of the beatification were planned; and organizational work for the publication of a magazine in English and Polish was in process.[192] Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, CSSF, offers a complete account of the events leading up to the beatification in her memoir, *On an April Morning.*

On November 2, Mother Mary Cynthia notified the Congregation that the Office of the Secretariat of State, Vatican City, had confirmed the date for Mother Angela's beatification ceremony at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome on April 18, 1993.[193] She urged the sisters to initiate plans for the formation of pilgrimage groups and for travel to Rome. Again, she encouraged the sisters to "thank the Lord that our waiting is ended and unite in praying the *Magnificat* in our local communities for nine days." Finally, she requested that a Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving be celebrated in the provincial house chapels on November 8, 1992. With tears in her eyes, Sister Mary Lawrence joyfully announced this news to the sister residents of the provincial house.[194]

The sisters in Enfield had already begun planning for representatives to travel to Rome for the beatification ceremony. At the orientation meeting for the 1993 Provincial Chapter on October 10, the names of eight sisters were drawn as winners of an all-expense paid trip to the beatification underwritten by the province. The sisters were: Sister Mary Vincent Rutkowski, Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, Sister Mary Peter Valliere, Sister Ann Marie Ciulik, Sister Mary Bernice Pikul, Sister Mary Alexa Oleszczuk, Sister Mary Evelyn Rybicki, and Sister Mary Sylvine Kotlarczyk. Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski and Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz were chosen as alternates.[195]

A Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving was solemnly celebrated in the Enfield chapel on November 8. Hymns of joy and thanksgiving that resounded through the chapel bespoke the sisters' gratitude for the grace bestowed on Mother Angela and the Felician Community. Provincial superior Sister Mary Lawrence carried a photograph of Mother Mary Angela in the entrance procession.[196] Chaplain Father Herbert Schmidt delivered an inspiring homily on the virtues of Mother Angela. Late in 1994, Father Schmidt offered his compilation of a "Novena of Meditations in Honor of Mother Angela" to the sisters.[197]

On December 18, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Re of the Office of the Secretariat of State, sent formal notification confirming that the date for the beatification of Venerable Servant of God Mary Angela was set for April 18, 1993. When Mother Mary Cynthia announced the official date of the beatification to the sisters, she also disclosed the program of spiritual preparation for it, a nine-week program of looking to Mary, who played such a vital part in Mother

Angela's life. For this novena, Mother Cynthia stressed the meditative use of the *Marian Reflection Booklet* prepared by the general administration.[198] In the "Preface," Mother Cynthia wrote, "It is fitting that as we approach the last stage of the Church's recognition of the holiness of our Foundress, Mary Angela Truszkowska, we look to Mary who played such a vital and prominent place in Mother Angela's pilgrim journey as the first Felician Sister."[199]

On February 9, in Krakow, Poland, Mother Mary Cynthia, Sister Mary Angelika Spychalska, general councilor and vice postulator for the exhumation process, Padre Paolino Rossi, OFM, Cap., postulator, and a six-member team of experts, along with several Felician Sisters, witnessed the exhumation, identification, and transfer of the mortal remains of the Servant of God Mary Angela Truszkowska. The relics of Mother Angela were relocated from the mortuary chapel of the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Krakow to the side altar of the church for public veneration after the beatification.[200]

Then on March 25, 1993, the Congregation for Divine Worship approved the text of the Collect or Opening Prayer in honor of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, virgin and foundress. Mother Cynthia asked that each province offer one Mass each month in the provincial house in honor of Blessed Mary Angela until April 1994.[201]

For the last time, the sisters of the Congregation and in Enfield celebrated the feast day of Mother Mary Angela on February 13, since it was transferred to the date of her death, October 10. Fittingly, the title of the entrance hymn was, "Let Heaven Rejoice," and the penitential rite incorporated excerpts from the writings of Mother Angela.[202]

Preparing for the Beatification at the Local Level

While planning for the celebration in Rome, preparations were also underway at the local level in Enfield. By the end of March, Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin and eleven members of the clergy, twenty-seven sisters from the Enfield province, and fifty-two lay persons comprised the Enfield travel group. Numerous people shared in the joy of the Felician Sisters, and congratulatory messages arrived from friends and associates of the community.[203]

Among the preparations for the beatification was a biography of Mother Angela that Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko wrote. Early in 1991, Sister JoAnn responded to the request of Superior General Mother Mary Cynthia to prepare such a resource after she read a creative project Sister JoAnn had written on Mother Angela's life in partial fulfillment of the requirements for her degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies at Wesleyan University. Sister JoAnn completed the 100-page chronological biography while serving as principal of St. Martha School in Enfield. At the time of the beatification, *On Earth as in Heaven* was being published by St. Bede's Publications. The sisters received their copies in late September.[204]

On Earth as in Heaven recounts Mother Angela's personal history as well as her involvement in the social, political, and religious events of 19th century Poland. Excerpts from her letters to the sisters provide a glimpse of her total commitment to the growth of the Felician ministry. In her poetic, narrative style, Sister JoAnn highlights not only noteworthy events, but also Mother Angela's vision and dream for her spiritual daughters.[205] Sister JoAnn said, "I read everything I could in English. My emphasis was to show her [Mother

Angela] in her relationships to people—either to her family or to other sisters. She was a very compassionate person and very much ahead of her time." Before leaving for Rome for the beatification, Sister JoAnn said, "I think the most important fact of the beatification for me as a religious is to make Mary Angela Truszkowska's life more significant in my own."[206]

When the Mercy of God Shrine in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, hosted "Meet the Author's Day" on August 27, 1994, Sister JoAnn was on hand to autograph copies of *On Earth as in Heaven.*[207] Later that year, when she was the guest speaker at the St. Patrick/St. Anthony Ladies Guild Communion Breakfast in Hartford, she highlighted aspects of Blessed Mary Angela's life in her presentation.[208] On December 4, she traveled to her home parish in Brooklyn, New York, Our Lady of Consolation, where she spoke to the members of the Rosary Sodality Communion Breakfast, briefly outlining the life of Blessed Mary Angela for the attendees.[209]

On Wednesday, April 14, sisters and friends gathered in the parking lot on the north side of the campus to bless those traveling to Rome for the beatification. At noon, Chaplain Father Antoni Bury, S.Ch., invoked the guardian angels, praying that they keep careful watch over the travelers to ensure that they reach their destination safely. Even the youngsters from the Enfield Day Care Center were on hand to bid farewell to the travelers, waving and throwing kisses to all, but especially to their music teacher, Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, giving her hugs and cheers as she set out on her trip. As the travelers boarded the bus bound for Boston's Logan Airport, the first leg of their journey to Rome, well-wishers sang "God Bless America."[210]

On Friday, April 16, Paul McCarthy, a reporter from the archdiocesan Office of Radio & Television, and the executive director of *The Catholic Transcript* visited Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House and the archives, to take pictures of the campus and gather information about Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska. Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial secretary, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial councilor, and Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda, historian, shared information about the life, works, and accomplishments of Mother Angela for the broadcast billed as "The beatification of a saint and its Connecticut connection," which aired on WVIT-Channel 30's "That's the Spirit."[211]

Saturday, April 17, 1993

Hundreds of Felician Sisters, priests, and friends—including the delegation from Enfield—arrived at the generalate in Rome to receive their beatification bags and tickets for all the beatification events. The sisters met as provincial groups with Mother Mary Cynthia for an orientation session.[212] They came again that evening for an emotional ceremony of the unveiling and blessing of the newly sculptured statue of Blessed Mary Angela by Father Paul A. Litwin of Buffalo, New York. The wooden statue depicts Blessed Mary Angela in the traditional brown habit. In her right hand, the Foundress holds a scroll representing the Constitutions while her left hand grasps her Felician crucifix. Through the generosity of Father Henry P. Fiedorczyk, Our Lady of the Angels Province would soon receive a similar statue.[213]

Following the blessing, the chapel resounded with the joyous singing of the traditional Felician hymn of thanksgiving, the *Magnificat.* Because

of limited space in the chapel, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, and Sister Bernarda Mary Jarosz represented the Enfield province. They also had their picture taken in front of the newly dedicated statue with Lillian Halasinski, who was cured through the intercession of Mother Angela.[214]

The Solemn Beatification Ceremony

On Sunday, April 18, 1993, under a canopy of bright sunshine and brilliant blue skies, Pope John Paul II beatified Mary Angela Truszkowska. The author of the *1994 State of the Congregation Report* wrote: "The magnificence of the solemn beatification ceremony, the thrill of hearing the Holy Father's solemn proclamation that our Mother Angela is now officially proclaimed BLESSED, the unrivalled majesty of St. Peter's bells as her image was unveiled, the grandeur of the music and singing, and then the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass which Mother Angela cherished so completely. . . .None of it will ever be forgotten!"[215]

Pope John Paul II was the principal celebrant of the Eucharistic celebration along with Cardinals Edmund C. Szoka, Detroit; Józef Glemp, Warsaw; and Franciszek Macharski, Krakow; Bishops Kazimierz Romaniuk, Warsaw; Stanisław Smolenski, Krakow; Adam J. Maida, Detroit; Donald W. Wuerl, Pittsburgh; Edward D. Head, Buffalo and others concelebrating. Clergy representing the New England and eastern New York regions included Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin of Hartford and his secretary Father Daniel Plocharczyk; Most Rev. Alfred J. Markiewicz, Rockville Centre, New York; Father Francis E. Filmanski, Floral Park, New York; Father Richard E. Harvey, St. Joseph Hospital, Bangor, Maine; Father William P. Przybylo, Father Stanley Smolenski, Father Chester A. Bieluch, and Father Henry P. Fiedorczyk, from the Archdiocese of Hartford; Father John C. Chwalek, Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts; Father Andrew T. Grelak, Archdiocese of Boston, Massachusetts; and Father Thomas M. Tokarz, Diocese of Worcester, Massachusetts.[216]

Pope John Paul spoke in heartfelt terms of Blessed Mary Angela during the beatification sermon:

> Today I go on a spiritual pilgrimage to . . . my beloved Kraków, where the Felician family developed . . . Christ led Mother Angela by a truly exceptional path . . . Her greatest desire was to become a 'victim of love.' And she always understood love as a free gift of herself. Loving means giving. Giving everything that love asks for. Giving immediately, without regrets, with joy and wanting even more to be asked of us. . . . She was able to kindle the same love in the hearts of the sisters of her Congregation.[217]

During the presentation of the gifts, Mother Mary Cynthia, accompanied by Lillian Halasinski's daughter Geraldine, carried a monstrance, symbolic of the Congregation's privilege to have daily exposition in the provincial houses of the community, and a symbolic chasuble, representing the handcrafted vestment that the Holy Father wore at the Beatification Mass. Each provincial and a provincial council member participated in the offering of gifts after the liturgy—thirteen chasubles made by the Felician Sisters for distribution to poor churches in the world, as well as 100 sets of chalice linens, 200 bibles, and a reliquary and statue of Blessed Mary Angela. As the provincial superior, Sister

Mary Lawrence represented the Enfield province with Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz. [218]



Mother Mary Cynthia, superior general, accompanied by Lillian Halasinski's daughter, presents a monstrance to Pope John Paul II during the Beatification Mass on April 18, 1993.

Following the Mass, the Felician garden at the generalate provided rest and refreshment for the two receptions that hosted the hierarchy, clergy, men and women religious, as well as families and friends. Having the relatives of Mother Angela present—twelve grandnephews and nieces—as the special guests of the Felician Congregation, "was like having a living part of Mother actually there."[219]

At home in Enfield, many sisters joined in spirit with the pilgrims in Rome as they gathered in the chapel at 4 a.m., to rededicate themselves by renewing their vows, praying the "Glory be to the Father" in thanksgiving, and singing the *Magnificat* in Polish, *Wielbij Duszo Moja Pana.*[220] A Liturgy of Thanksgiving in the chapel began with the sisters processing from the outdoors, carrying candles, flowers, the Franciscan Rule, *Response to Love,* and a picture of Blessed Mary Angela. The processional hymn, "Canticle of the Sun," expressed the joy and thanks of the sisters for the grace of the beatification. Sister Mary Laureann read the "Beatification Declaration of Blessed Mary Angela" before Chaplain Father Herbert Schmidt celebrated the Eucharist.[221] During the brunch that followed, the sisters watched the beatification "special" Part 1, "The Story of Mother Truszkowska, foundress of the Felician Sisters" on WVIT-TV, Channel 30, produced by the Archdiocesan Office of Radio and TV. Sister Mary Lawrence and Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin were interviewed for Part II on their return from Rome. Evening Praise brought the day-long celebration to a close with the hymn "Be Exalted, O God," by Brent Chambers and the "Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary," written by Mother Mary Angela on February 25, 1874.[222]



The Beatification Banner that was unfurled at St. Peter's Basilica, designed and executed by SM Colette Michniewicz



SM Lawrence Lojko, provincial minister (center), and SM Seraphine Liskiewicz at left, in St. Peter's Square, awaiting the beginning of the solemn beatification ceremony.



SM Edmund Dzienkowski and SM Fabian Cymes (at far right) join Felician Sisters from all over the world in St. Peter's Basilica.



SM Norberta Malinowski at the statue of Blessed Mary Angela in the Felician Sisters Generalate chapel in Rome, Italy.

Monday, April 19

Pope John Paul II, who played a great part in the beatification of Mother Angela, addressed the group on Monday, April 19. From 1967-1969, as cardinal of Krakow, he conducted her Apostolic Process. In 1982, he proclaimed the heroicity of her virtues and now, in 1993, he announced to the world that she is Blessed Mary Angela. The Holy Father called her "faithful in suffering, faithful in love, faithful to the end." At the conclusion of his address, he exhorted the Felician Sisters to do likewise, saying, "May Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska be for you an example of fidelity to Christ even to Calvary; an example of daily fidelity to the evangelical counsels in the spirit of the Gospel."[223] That afternoon, sisters and guests made their way to the Church of the Gesù where Cardinal Edmund Szoka officiated at the first of the Solemn Masses of Thanksgiving. Among the concelebrants was Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin of Hartford. Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko was honored to proclaim the First Reading and attendees sang Sister Mary Evelyn Rybicki's composition in honor of Blessed Mary Angela.[224]

Tuesday, April 20

Participants in the beatification events gathered in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls on Tuesday for the concert celebrating the beatification of Mary Angela Truszkowska. The concert of piano and organ selections was planned and performed by Felician Sisters with selections celebrating the precious legacy that Blessed Angela transmitted to her Felician Congregation: Franciscan, Eucharistic, Marian, Ecclesial, and Evangelical aspects of her spirituality. The concert was dedicated in praise of the Creator for giving life to the Felician Foundress, a fitting tribute to her since she lived in silence for thirty years, the result of a hearing loss. That afternoon, the second Solemn Concelebrated Eucharistic Celebration of Thanksgiving took place at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls with Cardinal Józef Glemp officiating.[225]

Wednesday, April 21

The finale of these momentous days was reserved for Mother Angela's daughters. The more than 600 Felician Sisters from around the world arrived at the generalate, the Felician international headquarters, on Wednesday afternoon for a reception, followed by a solemn closing of the beatification ceremonies. This stream of Felicians processed through the convent garden, singing songs to Mary. When they stopped at the grotto in front of the image of Our Lady of Częstochowa, Mother Mary Cynthia summoned the sisters to rededicate themselves to Mary, to whose Immaculate Heart the Congregation had been dedicated in 1864. Alternating in Polish and English, the sisters rededicated themselves in formal prayer and, as the closing song, sang the Hymn of the Felician Congregation, which had been sung by Mother Mary Angela and the first Felician Sisters at the first dedication in 1864: *Niepokalana Panienko Przeczysta."* ("O Maiden Pure")[226]

When the sisters arrived from Rome, elated and spellbound by their experiences, they eagerly and enthusiastically shared their sentiments about their memorable trip, this extraordinary event in Felician history. Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz said, "It was an awesome feeling to be with Felicians from all over the world recognizing Mary Angela's holiness and

accomplishments in the Church for the glory and honor of God." Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor said that seeing "our banner portraying Blessed Mary Angela as a woman of deep faith, penance and suffering as she embraces the cross in a field looking into the distance, as if to say, 'It's all worth it,'" made her eyes fill with tears. "I was so proud, so grateful." "Words are inadequate to express my experience," recalled Sister Theresa Mary Gondek, as she spoke about what the banner meant for her. "The hand that embraced the Cross seemed to say, 'Thy will, not mine be done.' The other hand, calling, extending, saying, 'Come, I have given you an example, serve others for the glory of God.'" Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko said she felt "privileged, grateful and joy-filled to be present at that graced moment—to hear the resounding applause of the people of God rejoicing over another soul who finished the race and won the prize—to see the power of 600 Felicians present and to see Mother Angela's legacy carried out through these women."[227]

Even before the beatification, the sisters shared their joy with the children, students, adults, parish groups, and associate members, board members of Felician institutions, city officials, the sick, in short, with all their family members, friends, and co-workers in ministry. They invited them to their liturgical celebrations, spoke in their parishes on the life and holiness of Mother Angela, gave interviews on radio stations, and mailed or personally distributed hundreds of medals, holy cards, relics, posters, brochures, books, or booklets. New buildings, rooms, or separate wings of a building were named or renamed after Mother Angela, and many parishes, schools, and institutions where the sisters serve or had served held special liturgies in their churches to honor her.[228]

In Enfield, once again, Sister Mary Doloria Jaracz picked up her pen and wrote a "Felician Reflection" on the festive occasion of the Beatification of our saintly Foundress Mother Mary Angela Truszkowska:

Never is my soul
so magnified with His glory
than when pain
touches the depth of my being

IMMACULATE HEART of MARY is my STRENGTH

Never is my heart
so inflamed with God's tender love
as when I try
to bless and touch others with love

IMMACULATE HEART of MARY is my STRENGTH

Never is my spirit
so touched with His silent presence
as when I kneel
in humble prayer before the Holy Eucharist

in union with the IMMACULATE HEART of MARY.[229]

Archdiocesan Celebration

May 30, 1993, was a highlight of the province's celebrations of the beatification of Mary Angela Truszkowska. The more than 900 guests who

attended the Eucharistic Celebration in Thanksgiving for the Beatification of Mary Angela Truszkowska at St. Joseph Cathedral in Hartford, Connecticut, helped to honor the Felician Foundress in the most splendid way possible. Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford, was the main celebrant and homilist. Most Rev. John A. Marshall, bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, along with Bishop Thomas L. Dupre, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, and more than thirty priests, concelebrated. Several religious communities shared the heartfelt joy of the Felician Sisters on this Pentecost Sunday event. Attendees returned to the provincial house where they enjoyed the reception as well as the company of the sisters and friends. Months of planning by the committee members—Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, and Sister Francine Mary Sousa—honored Blessed Mary Angela.[230]

Feast Day of Blessed Mary Angela

October 10, 1993, commemorated the 94th anniversary of the death of Blessed Mary Angela and marked the first time that it was celebrated as part of the Church calendar. At Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House, each of the day's events, from the solemn procession beginning the Eucharistic liturgy joined with Morning Praise to brunch, Evening Praise, and supper, the sisters displayed their pride in being faithful daughters of Blessed Mary Angela.[231]

Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski, promoter of the Cause of Blessed Mary Angela, had encouraged the sisters to appropriately celebrate this unique commemoration. She reminded them that Mother Angela understood the many desires of her sisters and urged them to read, reflect upon, and live the spiritual principles given to the Felician Congregation by Mother Angela, to thank God for the countless blessings received through her intercession, and, above all, "appreciate her loving prayer" for all her sisters.[232]

In Bangor, Maine, the St. Joseph Hospital Mission Advisory Committee designated October 8 as Mother Angela Day. The theme of the day, celebrating Mary Angela's beatification, was "One Life Can Make a Difference." Each hospital department created a panel depicting the mission value best exemplifying how the department made a difference. Unique events of the day included a display of the value banners, and musical performances and audiovisual presentations were offered throughout the day.[233]

On October 3, parishioners gathered at Holy Trinity Church in Lowell, Massachusetts, for a Mass of Thanksgiving for the beatification of Blessed Mary Angela. Sixteen sisters from area convents—Boston, Enfield, Providence, and Manchester—joined provincial superior Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko and council member Sister Mary Seraphine for the celebration and presented a large picture of the Felician Foundress as a gift to the parish.[234]

'Welcome, Blessed Mary Angela'

A phone message on January 10, 1994, sparked a sense of excitement at the provincial house. The message: the long-awaited statue of Blessed Mary Angela had arrived at Bradley International Airport. Once the sisters completed the documents to clear customs, the exquisitely hand-carved wooden statue arrived at its new home, the Enfield provincial house chapel. A certificate attested to the authenticity of its being entirely hand carved by a sculptor at Giuseppe Ortisei Stuflesser of Bolzano, Italy.[235]

Council members Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz and Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha carefully unpacked the treasured gift, donated by Father Henry P. Fiedorczyk of Holy Cross Parish in New Britain, Connecticut, in memory of the deceased members of his family.[236] The statue was situated in an appropriate space on the sisters' side of the chapel and, on January 17, Father Herbert Schmidt and Father Anthony Bury, S.Ch, chaplains, officiated at the unveiling and blessing of the statue.[237]





Above left: SM Seraphine Liskiewicz and Kevin Bielanski carefully unpack the long-awaited statue of Blessed Mary Angela, a gift of Father Henry P. Fiedorczyk.

Above right: The statue of Blessed Mary Angela in Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel.

The intercessions during the Mass recalled the Felician Foundress's dedication in serving the needs of the Church at the time, her total submission to the will of the Father, and her spirit of expiation for the transformation of the world. The celebration concluded with her consolations of love:

> May he give you a humble love which expends itself,
> A generous love which forgets itself
> A strong love which is not afraid of pain
> A patient love which can bear everything
> A fervent love which never weakens,
> A constant love which never falters.[238]

Unfortunately, because of a prior commitment, Father Fiedorczyk was unable to be present at this special event; however, when he did visit later, he was pleased with the fine piece of artwork and so satisfied with the sisters' reaction that he donated another statue for the public side of the chapel.[239]

First Anniversary of the Beatification

To mark the conclusion of the year of praise and thanksgiving for the gift of Blessed Mary Angela, Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general, encouraged the sisters throughout the Congregation to celebrate a Solemn Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving in the chapels of all the provincial houses as well as local convent chapels, churches, and provincial institutions on April 18, 1994, the first anniversary of the beatification of Mary Angela Truszkowska.[240] In a spirit of love and praise, the sisters in Enfield closed the year rejoicing in the Church's recognition of the sanctity of Mother Mary Angela with a Eucharistic liturgy in the provincial house chapel, attended by sisters residing there as well as sisters from nearby parish convents, associates, and invited guests. Chaplain Father Herbert Schmidt was the celebrant and homilist. Dinner followed the liturgy.[241]

The author of the *1994 State of the Congregation Report* wrote, "These Eucharistic liturgies fittingly closed the greatest event in the history of the Felician Sisters – to be repeated, God willing, at the canonization of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska."[242]

'PRECIOUS IN THE EYES OF THE LORD IS THE DEATH OF HIS FAITHFUL ONES'

The thirteen months from February 11, 1994, to March 14, 1995, were a time of painful loss for the province as the sisters said goodbye to towering figures in the community, respected leaders, sisters who were an inspiration and enriched the lives of those with whom they lived and served.

When **Sister Mary Regis Waszak** arrived at St. Joseph Hospital (SJH) in Bangor, Maine on August 26, 1950, she created the bookkeeping and accounting system while learning to administer business transactions of a hospital. She was appointed administrator of SJH in 1955, a role she fulfilled with dedication and prudent judgment.[243] With her pleasant and calm manner, she attracted many people to work with her and for her, to strengthen the mission of the Catholic health care ministry in the Bangor community.[244] After earning her master's degree in hospital administration from St. Louis University, she resumed the position of administrator and, shortly after, became the director of the proposed construction of the new St. Joseph Hospital. Groundbreaking took place on March 19, 1962, and on October 11, 1964, the city of Bangor celebrated the dedication of the new medical center of St. Joseph's Hospital.[245] After leaving the hospital in the fall of 1970 to become the provincial treasurer, she continued to be involved with all major transactions, remaining on the board of trustees until June 11, 1980, with the reorganization of the board's structure.[246] She fulfilled her responsibilities as provincial treasurer until 1982 and continued to assist in the treasurer's office until 1992 when she resigned because of failing health. Sister Mary Regis died on February 11, 1994, at the age of 86, a beloved member of the Felician community for 68 years.[247]

After studying the philosophy and methods of Dr. Maria Montessori, noted Italian educator of the 20th century, **Sister Mary Aniela Urbanek** received her teaching diploma from the Washington Montessori Institute in Washington, D.C. She returned to Enfield to open the Enfield Montessori School (EMS) in the building formerly occupied by the aspirancy and then the residence hall at 1370 Enfield Street, on September 13, 1965, serving as its first director. Previously, she was the director of Our Lady of the Angels Reading Clinic in Enfield.[248]



SM Aniela Urbanek, first director of the Enfield Montessori School, with a group of EMS students.

Along with Sister Mary Anastasia Holak, the school's co-founder, the first ten children, from two-and-a-half to six-years of age, began exploratory tasks to cultivate their natural desires to learn. The classroom offered opportunities to choose from a variety of graded materials, with Sister Aniela and Sister Mary Anastasia Holak, leading the children from one level of complexity to another.

Sister Aniela carefully guided the beginning of the school, graciously hosting visitors, including Felician Sisters from other U.S. provinces, administrators from other religious orders, education specialists, teachers, and college students who wished to learn more about the Montessori approach. She lectured to teachers, parent-teacher associations, and members of a variety of parish societies.[249] Achievements of the first year enticed parents to give their children further experiences in informal learning, and the enrollment almost tripled for 1966-1967, when the sisters welcomed twenty-five students. When the school opened for the 1967-1968 school year, a second classroom was created in the Our Lady of the Angels Kindergarten, with Sister Mary Anastasia Holak as its teacher, to accommodate the thirty-three EMS students.[250] A loyal and dedicated member of the Felician community and a lover of peace in the true Franciscan spirit of humility, Sister Aniela graciously modeled love and kindness to others as she served in her ministry with satisfaction and joy. Sister Mary Aniela died on March 18, 1994, at the age of seventy-eight, a beloved member of the Felician community for sixty years.[251]

Sister Mary Victima Kaznocha completed undergraduate and graduate work at the Catholic University of America, preparing her to serve the province as prefect of schools and community supervisor, as well as provincial council

member from 1946-1959. Energetic and tireless in her ministry of education, her summer workshops delighted sisters who came away with creative projects in-hand for each new school year. From 1959-1970, Sister Victima performed clerical and domestic duties at Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces, the Felician generalate, in Rome, Italy. As superior of the Enfield provincial house from 1970-1976, she once again rendered the humblest services with dedication and unusual energy. As coordinator of ambulatory services for Holy Family Infirmary, she tended to those who needed special supervision and care from 1976 until 1993, when she herself became a patient in the infirmary. Sister Mary Victima passed away quietly and peacefully into the arms of her Shepherd God on May 1, 1994, at the age of eighty-six, a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for sixty-nine years.[252]

A lifelong teacher and administrator, **Sister Mary Viterbia Dyka** earned impressive academic credentials, including a BA and an MA in chemistry from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. In addition, she held an MS in Education from Fordham University and, in 1972, received a doctorate in Foundations of Psychology and Measurement, also from Fordham. Sister Viterbia served the community as an elementary school principal, as teacher and first director of Our Lady of the Angels Academy from its founding in 1944 until 1959, and from 1945 to 1953, as an instructor at Our Lady of the Angels Teacher Training Institute. She held the position of dean at Our Lady of the Angels Junior College from 1953 to 1964 and, from 1970 to 1972, as president of Longview College. Additionally, she served as provincial councilor and supervisor of schools for the province (1946-1959) and provincial superior from 1964-1970.[253] The sisters remember her for her understanding, gentleness, and kindness.[254]

A woman of vision, Sister Viterbia was concerned about the development of religious life and the future of the community. She was directly involved in formation as directress of aspirants from 1944 to 1951 and directress of tertians from 1954 to 1959. She served on the original board of directors for the newly formed Religious Educators Foundation program in Washington, D.C., which provided the opportunity for the intercommunity formation of young, professed sisters.[255]

Along with Sister Mary Viterbia Kozlowski of Lodi, New Jersey, Sister Viterbia edited the four volumes of Mother Angela's *Selected Writings.* During her fifteen-year career at Felician College, she was professor of psychology and director of psychological services. In 1987, when her time at Felician was coming to an end, President Sister Theresa Mary Martin bestowed the rank of *Professor Emerita* with all its rights and privileges on Sister Viterbia stating that, her "commitment to higher education, Christian values, scholarly pursuits, teaching excellence and service to Felician College has been extraordinary." She went on to say, "She is the personification of academic professionalism and is an asset to the professoriate. Felician College is especially proud to name Sister Mary Viterbia its first *Professor Emerita."*[256] On December 13, 1987, the President's Medallion was presented to her for her unique contribution to the college.[257] On August 27, 1994, Sister Mary Viterbia went to her eternal reward, at the age of eighty-four, a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for sixty-nine years.

It was in the Felician community that **Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda** received her continuing higher education and found a career in education. She received a BS in education from Fordham University in 1951 and an MA in history from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., two years later. She taught in schools staffed by the Felician Sisters in the Middle Atlantic and New England states and served as principal at St. Bernard School in Enfield as well as superior at the local convent (1962-1965). Her last teaching assignment was at Longview College on the provincial campus grounds in Enfield.[258] Sister Amadeus also received a certificate in archival administration from American University and completed additional course work at Marquette University (1961) and at Catholic University (1965-1966) until a heart condition led to the termination of a program of doctoral studies. History was her special love. She was a member of the original North American Felician Historians group called together by Mother Mary Simplicita Nehring, superior general, in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, in 1949.

After retiring from teaching, Sister Amadeus served as provincial historian and labored while in frail health, to complete the province's history, *Blazing New England Trails: Love and Service.* She completed nine chapters, bringing the story to 1970. Sister Amadeus understood the importance of her work and, according to Stanislaus A. Blejwas, professor of history at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut, was a "participant observer." Blejwas, Sister Amadeus' mentor and guide for Enfield's history, defined a "participant observer" as an individual "who may provide the unique insight into the spiritual dimension, mission of service, and motivation of life organized in a religious collective."[259] On March 14, 1995, the Lord called to himself Sister Mary Amadeus unexpectedly, at the age of eighty-three, a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for sixty-five years.

The sisters understood that losing their sisters is a reminder of the fragility of life, as well as a reminder to take care of one another to the best of their ability. But while experiencing sorrow for sisters no longer with them, they also took comfort in the gifts they gave while they were here, grateful to God for their sisters who changed the world and the Felician community for the better.

STEWARDSHIP

Chapter VIII of *Response to Love,* entitled "Administration of Temporal Goods," clearly defines the relationship between the religious institute and the administration of temporal goods as set forth in Canon 634. "Temporal goods are God's gift to us." As such, they are to be used "in a Franciscan spirit of charity and poverty in praise of the Creator." *Response to Love* explains that the Church allows a religious congregation to possess material goods "to assure the support of its members, to realize the apostolic end of the Congregation, and to be able to share with the poor and needy."[260]

The major superior of each institute exercises a role of stewardship for safeguarding these material and human resources and using them responsibly, key aspects of stewardship. As stewards, religious women are constantly mindful about receiving God's gifts gratefully, cultivating them responsibly, sharing them lovingly in justice with others, and returning them with increase to the Lord.[261]

In the Felician Congregation, prime responsibility for stewardship also falls to the treasurers "under the supervision of their respective provincial superiors and their councils" (*RTL*, Article 129). As stewards of the province's resources, Provincial Superior Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, and Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, provincial treasurer, along with the provincial council, had a large amount of work to do, with oversight for all the buildings on the Enfield campus—Our Lady of the Angels Convent and Holy Family Infirmary, the Felician Heritage Center, the Orrin Thompson Mansion, the Enfield Day Care Center, Mother Angela Residence, St. Clare Guest House and the Enfield Montessori School—as well as St. Adalbert's Cemetery and the Ludlow property. During the years 1989 to 1995, additions and repairs in the provincial house included the installation of a ramp in the auditorium to accommodate the elderly or those with mobility difficulties. Automatic doors installed in the chapel and the infirmary provided easy access to these areas of the building. The new fire alarm system ensured improved fire protection, and an electronic eye installed in each elevator kept incoming and outgoing passengers from injury from closing doors.[262]

Holy Family Infirmary

Early in its term, the Enfield leadership team hosted the general visitation team for the canonical general visitation from November 4 through December 21, 1991. A major concern that the team cited in its report of "Observations and Recommendations" was Holy Family Infirmary. The team recommended that the provincial administration undertake an assessment of the facility, "especially the dining room, community room, occupational therapy room, the room where the Eucharistic Liturgy is celebrated, and the use of the balcony of the Provincial House Chapel."[263]

In addition, an Action-Direction Statement from the 1993 Provincial Chapter read: "We will restructure the physical environment of the infirmary to provide a wholesome, relaxed and inviting atmosphere" (M2-c).[264] As a result, the provincial administration approved minor renovations in the infirmary. A clinic room, established on the first floor of the south wing of the provincial house, accommodated sisters in need of medical attention, including consultation and blood pressure and prescription checks. Nursing staff also arranged doctor appointments. A computer installed in the nurses' station assisted both administration and staff with the preparation of reports and patient records. Lastly, the provincial council appointed Sister Mary Margaret Perkowski, who had retired from her position maintaining medical records at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, a part-time staff member, to evaluate, reorganize, and update individual records.

Additional equipment and furnishings were purchased, including a sitting scale, electric recliner, small breathing mechanisms for patients with asthma and emphysema, small televisions, a portable phone for patient calls, and room divider curtains for the ward. Cable TV was installed, and a table and chair set was purchased and added to the patients' recreation room.[265]

St. Clare Guest House

The provincial administration arranged for the assessment of the cottage located next to the Enfield Montessori School at 1370 Enfield Street, which was previously used as an employee residence. Once the general administration

approved the renovation project, it went ahead at an estimated cost of $40,000. The house served as a temporary residence or overnight accommodation for up to four people including priests, religious, and family members of the sisters or for community guests. On August 11, 1992, the feast of St. Clare, Father Herbert Schmidt, chaplain, blessed and dedicated the building as St. Clare Guest House during open house ceremonies.[266]

Mother Angela Residence

During the Chapter phase meetings and the 1993 Provincial Chapter, as well as the past-chapter meetings, the sisters voiced their concern about uses of the original infirmary building, later Mother Angela Residence, which housed the Our Lady of the Angels Academy faculty until 1988. On March 5, 1994, at the Provincial Assembly, the provincial administration assumed responsibility to proceed with a feasibility study to assess the building's suitability. The sisters hoped to transform the building to an affordable residence for the elderly or needy family members.[267] An architect who examined the building found it structurally sound, and the interior capable of being renovated into twelve housing units. The architect projected renovation costs at between $2 to $2.5 million. Operational costs were estimated at $15,000 annually per resident. Edward Kulik, the province's financial advisor and consultant, suggested that the sisters become familiar with Connecticut State Building Code Regulations. He also encouraged further discussion regarding how the project would impact the Felician Community.[268]

At the administration's corporate board meeting in October, the sisters discussed Kulik's projected costs for the project. Cost of the complete building renovation was projected at $1,650,000. A range for additional expenses including furnishings, utilities, parking area and insurance was estimated at $300,000, bringing the total cost of the project to between $2 to $2.5 million. Members of the administration contacted and/or visited other existing residential sites and considered the return on the investment, as well as the financial benefit to the province. After envisioning the details of the project, the sisters presented them to Attorney Robert B. Berger. Impressed with the project, Berger offered to personally approach Town Planner Mike O'Leary regarding zoning. [269]

As of early March 1995, the provincial administration awaited feedback from the town planner concerning zoning ordinances and Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial vicar, shared this information with the sisters during the March Provincial Assembly. Unfortunately, emergency situations arose with the provincial house, making immediate repairs to the roof and repointing of the bricks a priority.[270] An assessment of St. Francis Center, the original Orrin Thompson Mansion, indicated that the building was worth renovating. The provincial administration decided to move forward with plans to renovate the second floor to house sisters working in various ministries who were currently residing in the Mother Angela Residence building. On May 29, 1995, Father Adolphe Renkiewicz, chaplain, blessed the new residence during a special prayer service attended by several sisters. On June 18, Sister Mary Stella Motyl, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, and Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor moved into the new Mother Angela Residence, located on the second floor of St. Francis Center, with a new address of 1333B Enfield Street. In

silent procession, the sisters transferred the Blessed Sacrament to their new chapel. On June 21, Sister Rosemary Zawada joined the group, completing the community. On June 28, Father Renkiewicz celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy in the new chapel for the first time.[271]

Summer Cottage

For years, the Enfield sisters hoped to acquire a home they could use for vacations. After the sisters decided to rent, rather than purchase a home, several sisters suggested sites; however, no further action was taken on these suggestions.[272] So, on Thanksgiving Day, 1993, when Victoria and Josephine Szymczyk presented Sister Mary Lawrence with the keys to the cottage owned by their late brother, Father Ladislaus J. Szymczyk, it seemed an answer to a prayer. On February 14, 1994, St. Valentine's Day, the deed was officially transferred to the Felician Sisters.[273] Located on Hammond Pond in Goshen, Massachusetts, the lakefront cottage offered an opportunity for rest and relaxation for the sisters to swim, kayak, hike, or just soak up the quiet, the perfect setting for a retreat.

With the renovations completed, the Portiuncula of St. Francis officially opened on June 5, 1994, with an open house.[274] The sisters visited the beautiful, peaceful surroundings by groups, and from June to September, nearly 100 sisters spent a few days relaxing and enjoying each other's company away from the daily routine.[275] Going forward, many sisters enjoyed the cottage with its scenic landscape and rural character for several days and sometimes weeks at a time, grateful to the Szymczyk Family for this great blessing.

Ludlow Property

In April 1993, the province sold the 105 acres of land located in Ludlow, Massachusetts, a gift from Frederick and Margaret Nadeau to the Felician Sisters of Connecticut through Sister Mary Frances Polowniak, in 1966. The Enfield sisters had envisioned that someday they would build a nursing home, convent, and chapel on the wooded property with its variety of trees and shrubs, logged twenty-five or more years ago.

Despite purchasing 16.5 acres on December 6, 1966, at a cost of $14,000, that was intended to give the sisters access to this original property, they found that it was still landlocked. Undeterred, the sisters went ahead and consulted architects, surveyors, and an appraiser hoping to realize their vision for a ministry on this property. However, after the province invested nearly $90,000 in its development, in September 1968, Most Rev. Christopher J. Weldon, bishop of the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, advised the sisters to discontinue the project.

Since there was no charitable institution on the property, the province paid taxes on the land to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In 1982, the property tax was $145.20. In 1983, when the tax increased to $3,799.55, the provincial administration decided it was time to sell the property and submitted a request for its alienation to then Superior General Mother Mary Amadeus Lewicka. The province also had to seek permission from Most Rev. Joseph F. Maguire, who succeeded Bishop Weldon as head of the Diocese of Springfield.

Once the provincial administration received the permissions, the process to sell the land began, with the transaction managed by James Brody, the Springfield diocesan real estate counselor. In January 1993, the sisters submitted

his proposed agreement for the sale of the property to their attorney, Robert B. Berger. When the property was finally sold with net proceeds of $100,000 in 1993, total expenditures had exceeded the proceeds by more than $12,000.[276]

St. Adalbert Cemetery

An early morning phone call from Father Adam Subocz, pastor of St. Adalbert's Parish in Enfield, disrupted the peace at Our Lady of the Angels Convent on Sunday, November 14, 1993. Father shared the distressing news that early that morning, vandals toppled 171 gravestones in St. Adalbert's Cemetery, 142 of which marked the graves of Felician Sisters.[277]

Information from neighbors and high school students at Enfield's Fermi High School led to four arrests in the desecration. Police said they believed drinking was involved and charged the juveniles with first-degree criminal mischief and desecration of a cemetery, both felonies. Police arrested the youths on Monday evening, November 15, and released them into the custody of their parents. The suspects' names were not released because of their ages. Three of the juveniles were fifteen, while the fourth was fourteen. Police eventually arrested a fifth person, a sixteen-year-old.[278]

When Sister Mary Bernard Skrocka visited the cemetery and saw the simple white monuments, each topped with a cross, lying in rows on the grass, she said, "My heart is just bleeding. This is our sacred spot. Every time I come to town, I come here to pray. To see this happen is really a heartbreaker." Father Subocz said, "The only thing I can do at this point is pray for the families whose monuments have been vandalized and desecrated and pray for the healing of the minds of the people who did it." Besides the monuments, vandals knocked over several statues, including one of the Virgin Mary.[279]

Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz said she sympathized with the parents of the arrested youths "because they also must feel devastated to realize that their children are involved in such vandalism." She told the *Hartford Courant* reporter that the sisters had received major support from the community. Most of the monuments had been repaired by Tuesday, November 16, and the sisters felt a deep sense of relief that the matter had been resolved so quickly.[280]

On March 17, 1994, the *Hartford Courant* reported that the sixteen-year-old teenager who was involved received a two-year prison sentence for his role in the vandalism under a special program for youthful offenders. He was the only adult charged in the case. The four juvenile boys were also charged and referred to juvenile authorities.[281]

Financial Stewardship

Successive administrations of the Enfield province have well understood that the management of the financial resources God has assigned to them included the individual and collective choices they made, as well as planning, conserving, safeguarding, expanding, and channeling the wealth God had placed in their care.

Coopers & Lybrand of Springfield, Massachusetts, conducted an annual audit of the province's financial systems and statements, carefully managed and monitored by the provincial administration. The provincial minister and council worked with Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, provincial treasurer, to plan, adjust, and approve budgets, reports, proposals, renovations, and studies.

Support of the elder and infirm sisters was a priority for the provincial administration, who enlisted consultants to assist with financial planning and participated in quarterly meetings with bank investment advisors. After studying pension plans and consulting with financial managers, the provincial administration invested in the Massachusetts Pension Plan. The administration wanted to ensure retirement for all the sisters and to provide an assured monthly income for the provincial house and infirmary. After an initial investment of $2 million, the plan became effective on January 1, 1992. Sisters sixty-eight years or older became eligible for the $400 per month benefit. In 1992, 127 sisters who were eligible were enrolled. Over the next ten years, the province paid out $151,473 annually.[282]

In the State of the Province Report prepared for the 1993 Provincial Chapter that recounts each of these challenges, the author wrote: "We must continually remember that the 'all of us' is greater than the 'one of us' in our mutual joyful witness to consecrated life. . . . Each administration adds its small piece to the history of Our Lady of the Angels Province. We stand supported on the shoulders of those who have gone before us."[283]

CONVENT CLOSINGS

While the number of Catholic schools grew in the years immediately following World War II, this growth began to slow in 1964, and by 1970, it was clear that the number of students attending Catholic schools was decreasing every year.[284] At times, the declining numbers were directly related to financial difficulties caused by a decreasing number of priests, sisters, and brothers. The numbers of women religious alone decreased by 48.8 percent between 1964 and 1989. As women religious moved away from a primary ministry of education and pastors had no choice but to hire lay teachers, the cost of staffing and administering parochial schools increased. The prohibitive cost of maintaining these schools eventually forced many to close. In addition, demographic changes impacted parochial education on all levels as did changes in the ways in which dioceses and religious communities made and implemented these decisions.

As of June 1990, the Enfield sisters were ministering in:

17 parish schools in 10 dioceses, staffed by 17 principals, 32 teachers, and 15 aides

3 parish ministries staffed by 11 sisters

Enfield Montessori School, staffed by 3 sisters

Hospital ministries staffed by 11 sisters

Felician Adult Day Care staffed by 2 sisters and 4 volunteers

Holy Family Infirmary staffed by 7 sisters

Covenant House, 1 sister

Sixty-eight sisters were residents of Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House, and another twenty-nine sisters were patients in Holy Family Infirmary. The median age of the sisters in the province had risen to seventy-three. Sixty-two of the 103 sisters in full-time/part-time ministry ranged between the ages of 60-78; twenty-five were between 40-59; nine were between 25-39, and seven house aides were between 80-88.[285]

By October of 1991, Sister Mary Lawrence and her council had studied each school and parish ministry to determine strengths and weaknesses, affecting the decision to withdraw or remain in each case. Criteria for their decisions included effectiveness in the parish, financial viability, enrollment, availability of Felician personnel especially principals, and options for other ministries within the parish if the school were closed.[286]

The years from 1989 to 1991 had already seen withdrawals from three schools and two parish ministries: St. Stanislaus School, New York, New York, 1989; Our Lady of Częstochowa School, Coventry, Rhode Island, 1990; St. Hedwig School, Floral Park, New York, 1991; and catechetical centers at Holy Family Parish in Pittsfield and Sacred Heart Parish in Greenfield, Massachusetts in 1989. The closing of St. Stanislaus School on the Lower East Side of New York City was the result of the decision of the New York Archdiocesan School Office.[287]

Coventry, Rhode Island

In the spring of 1990, the Diocese of Providence Catholic School Office and Our Lady of Czenstochowa Parish in Coventry, Rhode Island, jointly decided to close the school in a merger with St. Vincent de Paul School in Coventry, which took place that September. Declining enrollment and the soaring expense of operating the facility led to the decision by the school board to close in April.[288] The school held its last elementary school graduation on June 10, 1990. Former principals and teachers gathered with former students and parishioners at the Mass of Thanksgiving and reception that followed to remember the abundant graces and blessings God bestowed on the parish through the witness of the Felician Sisters there for fifty-six years.[289] In his invitation to the sisters for these events, Father Kenneth Suibielski, pastor, wrote that it would be "the last opportunity we will have to reassure you of our deep appreciation and heartfelt gratitude for your outstanding work at O.L.C. through the years."[290]

Floral Park, New York

For several years, the Roman Catholic kindergarten-through-grade 8 St. Hedwig's School in Floral Park, New York, was facing challenges of declining enrollment, the parish's already substantial debt, and increasing costs related to the operation of the school.[291] When he learned that the Felician community was withdrawing a principal and a teacher, Father Francis E. Filmanski, pastor, felt compelled to make the decision to close the school in June 1991.[292] On April 11, he announced the closing to faculty and staff, the regional board, and parents of the students.[293] In the face of substantial opposition that included a protest rally, he and parish representatives reviewed possible ways to keep the school open.[294] However, when Most Rev. John McGann, bishop of Rockville Centre, New York, studied the situation, he confirmed the original decision to close St. Hedwig's in June 1991.[295] On June 19, Father Filmanski celebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving for blessings and graces received during the current school year and for the past eighty-three years, the life span of the school. At 11:45 a.m., the dismissal bell rang for the last time and the doors of St. Hedwig School closed permanently.[296] After serving the parish children for eighty-three years, the sisters left for Enfield on July 12.[297] Several years later, the three-story brick structure, built in 1926, was transformed into housing for the elderly, St. Hedwig's Gardens.[298]

Hempstead, New York

In a move to protect Catholic education in Hempstead, the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York, went ahead with its plan to regionalize schools and made the decision to merge St. Ladislaus School in Hempstead with two other parish schools in the spring of 1992.[299] Many students from St. Ladislaus enrolled in the new regional school, Saint Martin de Porres in Uniondale.[300] The sisters who had served the school for twenty-eight years completed their apostolic ministry at St. Ladislaus on June 18 and closed the convent on Saturday, July 30, 1992.[301] During a farewell party the previous Thursday, Father Edward Wawerski, pastor, and the parishioners wished the sisters Godspeed and expressed their heartfelt gratitude for teaching their children.[302]

Easthampton, Massachusetts

Due to a lack of personnel to meet the needs of the parish's ministry, the provincial council withdrew the sisters at Sacred Heart Parish in Easthampton, Massachusetts.[303] Sacred Heart School closed in 1988, but the sisters remained for parish ministry until August 1992. On October 18, the parishioners held a farewell reception to express their gratitude to the Felician Sisters who ministered there since 1923.[304]

South Boston, Massachusetts

Near the end of 1991, both Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, provincial minister, and Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, director of ministry, met with the pastor of Our Lady of Częstochowa Parish in South Boston, Massachusetts. Their discussions focused on the effectiveness, need for, and witness of the sisters in the parish and the school. The pastor, Father Paul Miskiewicz, OFM, Conv., agreed that there appeared to be a definite need for the sisters in this inner-city school and while he had only been in his role for a few months, he, with the School Advisory Board and Pastoral Council, were seeking a new direction for the school with a new administration.[305] With fewer young women entering the Felician community and sisters aging, Sister Lawrence maintained she was unable to provide anyone else and explained that if a sister were not the principal, the other sisters would be in an awkward situation. Consequently, she informed Father Paul that the sisters would be withdrawn for the end of the 1994-1995 academic year, hoping to have 1993-1994 as a year of planning and transition. However, the parish council proposed plans for withdrawal at the end of the 1994 school year. Father Miskiewicz labeled the sisters' leaving after 88 years of dedicated service as "unfortunate and sad," but encouraged his parishioners to see God's hand in this, "pushing us into a future where we would not have gone on our own."[306] Most Rev. John P. Boles, auxiliary bishop of Boston, was the principal celebrant of the farewell liturgy on July 23. The informal reception that followed offered the parishioners the opportunity to join in the farewell gathering. Father Miskiewicz said, "For all the sisters did for us, we owe them a great debt."[307]

Middletown, Connecticut

At the same time, both Sister Mary Lawrence and Sister Mary Laureann also met with the pastor of Our Lady of Częstochowa Parish in Middletown, Connecticut. Here, again because of a lack of personnel, Father Al Kisluk and the provincial administration agreed that the Felician Sisters would leave

the parish school in June 1993.[308] Because the parish was financially strong, the school's enrollment was essentially stable, and it enjoyed high academic standing, the provincial administration felt the school could be staffed without the sisters and continue to operate effectively.[309] On June 11, the last day of school, the sisters were honored with gifts from the children and the Home School Association.[310] The celebration of a Eucharistic liturgy in the convent chapel with Father James Sucholet, parochial vicar, presiding marked the final day of the sisters' presence. The small group that gathered on July 13 prayed for all the Felician Sisters, living and deceased, who served at Saint Mary of Częstochowa Parish. Father Kisluk concluded the liturgy with the blessing of St. Francis, noting that even though the sisters would no longer be there, the Felician spirit would remain.[311]

As of March 1995, the province had 162 perpetually professed sisters, one sister in annual vows, and one novice. The median age of the sisters was seventy-six.[312] A bleak picture, indeed, yet, the sisters trusted that, in ways beyond their understanding or imagining, God does somehow, in all things, work for good. They could take heart from the *State of the Province Report* for 1988-1990, that read: "We take hope in the sisters who daily give their best and are truly dedicated in their common commitments; the sisters who extend themselves beyond their years, fatigue, health, and personal satisfaction and conveniences. We take hope in these daughters of Mother Angela."[313]

'To RECLAIM, to REJUVENATE, to RECREATE'

At the Biennial Assembly of 1990, Superior General Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski commissioned a task force of three provincial superiors—Sister Mary Dennis Glonek of Livonia, Michigan, Sister Rosemarie Goins of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak of Lodi, New Jersey—to research a format for a Chapter of Issues in preparation for the provincial chapters of 1993 and the general chapter of 1994. This task force met several times to review information from more than seventy-five religious communities along with recommendations for consultants and facilitators. They weighed the merits of a Chapter of Issues using the reflective method with Sister Ann Carville, OSF, as consultant, and they recommended this to the general administration and the provincials of the North American provinces at the meeting held at Maryville Center in Holly, Michigan, on October 17, 1991.[314]

After discussion, a plan was tentatively adopted, with an affirmative decision made during the Biennial Assembly held in Rome from April 27-May 11, 1992. The participants learned that both the provincial and general chapters would include greater participation and would use a reflective method, a Directional Chapter of Issues. Intense spiritual preparation would take place during the Advent season of 1991, 1992, and 1993. In the Enfield province, each local convent received a candle and an antiphon to pray with the *Magnificat,* communal prayer for Our Lady's intercession.[315]

When the provincials and chapter coordinators shared these decisions with the sisters throughout the Felician Congregation on January 21, 1992, they invited them to reflect on and respond to a survey based on the directional papers prepared for the provincial chapter of 1987. It was hoped that the responses to the survey would assist the planning committee in seeing where the sisters were/should be as well as to gain a sense of the current spirit at this

time in their history.[316] According to Sister Ann Carville, this important work would undergird the work of the chapter whose goal was "to define and affirm the desired future of the Congregation and our roles, functions, and structures, into the year 2000." She went on to say, "It is our hope that we will build on the existing direction papers, utilize the gifts and talents of our members in reverent and appropriate ways and develop 'ACTION – DIRECTION' statements that will be confirmed and validated by an international 'visioning process.'"[317]

Meanwhile, preparation for the chapter continued behind the scenes. Both Sister Mary Lawrence and Sister Mary Laureann participated in the Biennial Assembly that took place from April 27 to May 11, 1992, during which they received additional information and directives regarding the conduct of the provincial chapter.[318] On June 8, 1992, Sister Laureann, the chapter coordinator, shared the names of sisters who would constitute the Central Committee: Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, and Sister Theresa Mary Gondek.[319]

When Sister Lawrence formally convoked the Provincial Chapter of 1993, she shared this information as well as dates for future meetings: October 10 and November 21, 1992; January 23 and March 13, 1993. She impressed on the sisters the importance of their presence and called them to active anticipation in the chapter process. She also announced the theme, writing, "The Holy Spirit is associated with power to **reclaim**, **rejuvenate**, and **renew. . . .** In faith and trust, we place the members of our province under the guidance of this same Spirit in preparation for the Chapter of 1993."[320]

Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz designed the logo that included a large letter "F" and a heart with a door opening. The words "Reclaim," "Rejuvenate," and "Recreate" flowed outward through the heart's open door. Sister Mary Doloria Jaracz composed the chapter prayer:

> **Felician Pursuit**
>
> Lord Jesus, look upon our Felician Community
> assembled before you,
> to **RECLAIM** our past
> charism and traditions,
> to **REJUVENATE** anew our daily
> commitment, trust and courage,
> to **RECREATE** and bring to completion
> the vision and mission
> you have begun in us
> for your praise and glory. Amen.[321]

To keep the chapter theme constantly before the sisters, each local house superior received a framed copy of the chapter logo. The sisters were asked to recite the prayer communally every Sunday.

During the first Pre-Chapter Orientation Meeting that took place on October 10, 1992, Sister Ann Carville, chapter facilitator, explained the purpose of a Chapter of Issues using the Theological Reflection Process. Sister Ann answered questions and motivated the sisters to realize the formidable task before each member of the community. Sister Mary Laureann clarified directives for the Phase I meeting on November 21.[322]

Sister Mary Lawrence explained the levels of participation—prayerful, consultative, and deliberate—she asked each sister to prayerfully consider the expectations for each level and to determine in which level she could best serve. She briefly reviewed the methods for listing names on the ballots for delegates. Three members of the Central Committee—Sister Mary Rosalma, Sister Marie JoAnn, and Sister Jacqueline Mary—summarized Methods I, II, and III, respectively for the Election of Delegates to the Provincial Chapters.[323] The sisters chose Method II, which divided a list of the sisters vertically by vocation (seniority in religious life) into five equal groups and allowed for a total of thirty-three delegates including the eight *ex officio* members.[324] The first round of voting, published on November 9, resulted in the election of twenty-one delegates, twenty perpetually professed sisters, and one sister in annual vows.[325] By November 21, the sisters had selected four additional delegates from the open list as well as eleven alternates.[326]

When the sisters met at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House for the PHASE I meeting on November 21, 1992, working in thirteen small groups, they began their reflection on the God-given purpose of the Institute, the Felician Charism, Mission and Values as well as the Focus/Vision and Action-Direction Statements within the framework of the chapter theme, "Reclaiming, Rejuvenating, and Recreating." After sharing on the "heart of the matter," the critical issue for the sisters as Felician Franciscan women, they raised ideas to address future directions of the province. At the conclusion of their deliberations, they identified the five issues they saw as being most important: Community Life, Lay Associate Program, Ministry, Pre-Retirement/Retirement, and Vocations. This material laid the groundwork for the task of the Central Committee on December 12 who took the work of the thirteen small groups and provided rationale as well as supporting documentation.[327]

The PHASE II meeting, held on January 23, 1993, once again brought together sisters from across the province to continue to discern issues for the chapter. After reviewing the five priority concerns—community life, the lay associate program, ministry, vocations, and pre-retirement/retirement—the sisters broke into small groups with each group selecting two priority issues for discussion. The Central Committee used this information to develop focus statements and to prepare the province for PHASE III.[328]

The 1993 "Storm of the Century" that dumped two feet of snow in the Hartford area caused the cancellation of the Phase III Pre-Chapter meeting on March 13. When the sisters gathered again on March 28, 1993, they fine-tuned the issues for presentation at the provincial chapter. After studying the Focus Statements, they identified three priority issues. In Session I, they considered Community—How can we improve the quality of community life and nurture mutual support, foster unity, and nourish holistic growth? The focus of Session II was Ministry—How can we effectively minister to the People of God considering our charism, community life, personnel and resources? Finally, in Session III, the sisters looked at Vocations—In what ways can we develop and support a more viable vocation recruitment program? Before concluding the meeting, they developed Action-Direction Statements for each focus.[329] Sister Ann Carville, chapter facilitator, met with the chapter delegates in a special session from June 9-10 to clarify the process that would enable chapter

participants to share "from their depths." Sister Mary Laureann, chapter coordinator, explained schedules and procedures.[330]

PROVINCIAL CHAPTER 1993

On August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the 1993 Provincial Chapter of Our Lady of the Angels Province convened with the celebration of the Eucharist. Father Michael Kołodziej, OFM, Conv., was the presider and homilist. A solemn entrance procession with banners displaying symbols representing the various aspects of the distinctive Felician charism, evangelical, ecclesial, Eucharistic, and Marian, as well as the chapter theme—"Reclaim, Rejuvenate, Recreate"—reminded the sisters to be leaven for the spiritual renewal of the world.[331]

Father Michael also facilitated the day of retreat, the immediate spiritual preparation for the chapter, on August 16. A commissioning service concluded the day, with the delegates promising to collaboratively participate in formulating policies—holy, impartial, and faithful to both Franciscan values and the vision of Blessed Mary Angela.[332] In her introduction to the "Prayers for a Chapter," Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, liturgist, captured the spirit of the day and the week well when she wrote, may our prayer "keep us open to the possibilities of a new creation and may it open us to the graces that this sacred time holds for the community, the Church, and the world."[333]

Provincial Superior Sister Mary Lawrence convened the chapter with the thirty-three elected delegates, six consultants, and several observers in daily sessions. Drawing on her skills as an organizational development consultant, Sister Ann Carville, OSF, chapter facilitator, moved the sisters through the chapter process together, drawing out their opinions and ideas, prioritizing three major concerns for the province: Community, Ministry, and Vocations. The chapter body formulated twenty Action-Direction Statements in four areas: life of prayer, community life, apostolic life, and religious formation. Sister Mary Magdalen Pytelewski, Sister Joanne Marian Kaminski, and Sister Francine Mary Sousa served as secretaries for the chapter.[334]

In the last action of the chapter, the chapter body elected Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar as delegates to the Congregation's 20th General Chapter. Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski and Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko were elected as alternates.[335]

The Provincial Chapter of 1993 concluded with a prayer service that focused on water as the undying source of life, invoking the following blessing: "As we prepare to leave this gathering place, we pray God's blessing on what we have done together, on what has been shared and mingled in the hope of fashioning a new future, carrying the vision into the 21st century."[336]

When the delegates affixed their signatures to the official chapter document, they affirmed their acceptance of the challenge to shape the direction of Our Lady of the Angels Province for the next six years in the spirit of their Foundress Blessed Mary Angela.

During the post-chapter meeting that brought the province together again on November 20, 1993, the sisters discussed their impressions of the chapter and suggested ways to implement the Action-Direction Statements.[337] Sister Mary Laureann reported on the pre-general chapter meeting held in Rome, Italy, from September 13-22. The purpose of that meeting was to collate and

prioritize the issues and focus/vision statements submitted by the provinces for consideration for congregational implementation.[338] Sister Laureann assured the sisters that delegates to the general chapter would seriously consider each province's needs as expressed in the Focus Statements to shape the vision of the Felician Congregation. She said it is the intent of the chapter body to take the energy flowing from each province into the Congregation to formulate the Congregational Vision Statement. Three categories emerged from the group's analysis and evaluation: Eucharistic piety/spirituality, Sisterliness, and Service.[339]

20TH GENERAL CHAPTER

Prior to the 20th General Chapter, Superior General Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski asked the sisters to intensify their prayers and fasting so that "the Holy Spirit truly be present to all of us during this time of immediate preparation for the General Chapter."[340] She invited each sister to participate in an intense program of prayer and fasting, reminding the sisters to "heed the call of the 20th General Chapter":

TURN TO THE LORD, YOUR GOD,
AND BE EUCHARIST,
SISTER,
AND SERVANT TO ALL.[341]

Forty-eight delegates representing 2,647 Felician Sisters in twelve provinces from Poland, the United States, Canada, and Brazil, participated in the 20th General Chapter of the Congregation held at the generalate, Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces, in Rome, Italy, from July 3 to 22, 1994. In her opening address to the delegates, Mother Mary Cynthia encouraged the sisters to accept the challenge to preserve the Felician charism, to uphold the community's traditions, and to attain the goals that constitute the Felician heritage.[342]

The enactments of the 1994 General Chapter included the following: engaging a professional archivist to assist in establishing the major archives of the Congregation; establishing a Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska Museum in Krakow; forming a commission to research, translate, and publish materials on the life and charism of the Foundress; and appointing a Felician Sister as the postulator for Blessed Angela's cause of canonization.[343]

- An important change affecting the entire Congregation was the use of the term "minister" to replace the term "superior." From now on, the title "sister" would be used for every sister in the Congregation.
- The method of general visitation will be determined by the minister general and her council in consultation with the provincial minister and her council. The generalate in Rome will be retained.
- All formation manuals and handbooks will be revised or rewritten to be in accord with the Felician Congregation's document, "Fundamentals of Felician Formation – The Spirit's Creative Presence."
- The sisters of each province will design their own method for choosing delegates to the provincial chapter.[344]

A proposal passed allowing each province to establish its own policies relating to an alternate habit. The sisters could choose to wear an alternate

habit consisting of a brown, black, beige, or white skirt, blazer, suit, or jumper along with a white blouse. Sisters wearing the alternate habit wear the Felician crucifix along with the ring received at final profession and may wear it with or without a veil.[345]

The delegates also sent an official letter to the members of the United Nations regarding the situation in Rwanda. From April 7 until about July 15, 1994, a period of about 100 days, members of the Tutsi minority ethnic group, as well as some moderate Hutu and Twa, were killed by armed Hutu militias. Approximately 800,000 people were slaughtered. On July 21, the delegates spent an hour in prayer pleading with the Spirit of God "to bring peace to our hearts, peace to the hearts of people of the world, and peace in countries that are at war." In addition, each province sent a financial contribution to the International Red Cross for relief work in Rwanda. [346]

The final act of the chapter was the election of the Congregation's leadership. Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski (Livonia, Michigan) was re-elected minister general. Also elected were:

Sister Mary Celestine Giertych (Canada)	Vicar
Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak (Lodi)	Second Councilor
Sister Mary Jana Szmigielska (Warsaw)	Third Councilor
Sister Mary Janice Ziolkowski (Livonia)	Fourth Councilor, Secretary
Sister Mary Lee Przybylski (Coraopolis)	Fifth Councilor[347]

SECOND SESSION OF THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

The Enfield sisters gathered for the final session of the provincial chapter in the auditorium of Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House on August 18, 1994. Chapter delegates Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar provided an overview of the Felician Congregation's 20th General Chapter as well as a report on the Acts and Directives of the Chapter. Each sister received a copy of the Congregational **Vision Statement,** and each local house received a large, framed copy of the Vision Statement, the culmination of the sisters' hopes and desires for the future of the Felician Congregation.

TURN TO THE LORD YOUR GOD
Accept His unconditional love.

BE EUCHARIST . . .
Centered in Jesus,
Gift received, Gift given.

BE SISTER . . .
Live the Paschal Mystery,
Nurture, encourage, and celebrate.

BE SERVANT . . .
Faithful daughter of Mary and Blessed Mary Angela.
Embrace all in Franciscan joy,
Be compassionate and merciful,
Be a prophetic witness to a world in need of healing.
Proclaim the saving presence of God to all.

Following the meeting, His Eminence Bernard Cardinal Law presided at the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy in the provincial house chapel, assisted by his secretary Father Paul McInerny in honor of Blessed Mary Angela. The celebration continued with dinner. Cardinal Law encouraged the sisters to remain faithful to their Felician charism and addressed current problems facing today's Church. After informally greeting the sisters, he visited the infirmary and imparted a special blessing to the sister residents. The Central Committee of the Chapter, under the direction of Sister Mary Laureann, provincial councilor and chapter coordinator, organized the day's events.[348]



Bernard Cardinal Law at the celebration dinner. At left, SM Bernardine Mucha and SM Lawrence Lojko. At right, SM Laureann Alexandrowicz.

Chapter 4
Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, 1995 – 2001
Is there a new vision God is inviting us to pursue?

Traditionally, following the conclusion of the Congregation's general chapter and the second session of the provincial chapter, the sisters began to prepare for the election of the provincial minister and council. However, during the council meeting that took place on March 24, 1992, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, provincial superior, and her council proposed remaining in office for an additional six months to ease the transition for the incoming administration.[1] Thus, the election schedule was adjusted accordingly:

Initiation of election process	April 1, 1995
Announcement of provincial superior	May 12, 1995
Announcement of councilors	June 15, 1995
Installation of administration	June 29, 1995

On April 9, 1995, Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski officially announced Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz as the new provincial minister of Our Lady of the Angels Province[2] and the announcement of the provincial councilors came on May 23. The sisters named to support Sister Mary Laureann in leadership were:

Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, vicar and first councilor
Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, second councilor
Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, third councilor
Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, fourth councilor[3]

Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz

Sister Mary Laureann began her ministry in the Felician Congregation as an educator and school administrator until she was called to serve as a provincial councilor in 1989. She brought her commitment to excellence to her role as a provincial councilor and during that time, she distinguished herself as she lived out the function of authority described in *Response to Love* "as one of leadership and service." The sisters remember her as giving "100% to whatever she did," and thriving "on making others happy."[4]

In her open-hearted book *Redeeming Administration*, Ann Garrido notes that the word "administer" shares a common root with the word "ministry," and therefore conveys a common understanding of service to others. Always gracious and willing to be of service, Sister Mary Laureann assisted anyone in need, whether to provide transportation to a doctor's appointment or to find that unusual gift to add to a feast day or birthday celebration. And she generously shared her abundant talents, particularly in arranging flowers and decorating the chapel for varied liturgical feasts. The sisters marveled at her ability to create a masterpiece from scraps of materials.[6]

Inspired by Paul's second letter to Timothy, "The Spirit of God has given me no cowardly spirit but one that makes us strong, loving, and wise" (2 Tim 1:6-7), Sister Laureann knew that she was not alone on this journey, that the One who called her walked with her. She believed that God was faithful to his promises, that God was near, standing always at her side. Faced with increased

responsibilities, she realized she was more in need of God's input, wisdom, and power, but trusted that the gap between her and the required role would be filled by the Holy Spirit. She nourished the relationship with her Beloved with a deep prayer life, listening to the still, small voice of God strengthening and confirming her.

Having served as the director of ministry from 1989 to 1995, she quickly assessed concerns in ministry and the need to reassess/structure ministries considering the Felician charism as well as personnel and financial resources. Despite the loss of active sisters due to aging, illness, and death, she realized the necessity of taking risks in ministry possibilities. She wholeheartedly supported establishing the Felician Adult Day Care and was always available to assist as needed to assure the program's success.[7] She favored initiating the ministry of service to the Marian Fathers in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, at their request in 1991.[8] She led the collection and analysis of data concerning the former Mother Angela Residence, focusing on it as a potential ministry that could generate income for the province,[9] and she was committed to her role as a member of the board of St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine.

Always keeping the Congregational Vision Statement in the forefront, *Be Eucharist, Be Sister, Be Servant,* Sister Laureann was concerned for the common good and the general welfare of the province, as well as the welfare of each individual sister. She had a deep love for the senior sisters in the infirmary and worked diligently to provide a wholesome, relaxed, and inviting atmosphere there.[10]

As the coordinator of the 1993 Provincial Chapter, Sister Laureann led the province through the preparation for the chapter that returned the sisters to the time of St. Francis when everyone gathered and was involved. In her collaborative leadership style, she invited a group of sisters to serve on the Central Committee to assist her in this task. They, as well as the sisters who worked closely with her in other ways, came to appreciate her organizational skills and attention to detail that resulted in the smooth production of plans and events.[11]

In her previous role, Sister Laureann accompanied Provincial Superior Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko on visitations throughout the province. She came to know the sisters and their ministries, and they came to know her. Additionally, she brought firsthand experience from which to draw upon in the role of provincial minister. This, along with her breadth of vision and her tireless work to forward the mission of Our Lady of the Angels Province, made her the sisters' choice to serve as provincial minister for the next six years.

In her first official communication to the sisters, she wrote, "Love permitting, I have taken the liberty to gather all of you to stand with me before the Lord to address the concerns, feelings, hopes and dreams, the known and unknown we face together as we approach the third millennium. Let us embrace the future in peace and joy, trusting in God's unconditional love for us and ours for Him."[12]

INSTALLATION

Motivated by the mandate, "Reclaim, Rejuvenate, Recreate," the sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province celebrated the installation of their new provincial administration during a Eucharistic liturgy at the provincial house

on June 29, 1995. Hartford Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin was the principal celebrant. The concelebrants were Msgr. Daniel J. Plocharczyk, moderator of the curia and chancellor of the archdiocese; Father Thomas M. Ginty, secretary to the archbishop; and chaplains Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz and Father Herbert H. Schmidt. Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski led the prayers for the installation ritual prior to the offertory of the Mass. She and Sister Mary Lee Przybylski, general councilor, graced the event with their special presence, prayers, and words of support.[13]



The provincial administration, 1995-2001
From l: SM Florentine Myjak, SM Rosalma Fish, SM Lee Przybylski, general councilor;
SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister; Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin;
SM Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general; S Joan Marie Swierzb,
S Frances Marion Bonczar, S Janice Marie Gaudette

In his homily, Archbishop Cronin noted that the installation was taking place on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, two of the most influential members of the Church. The archbishop told the congregation that the faith of the two saints was reflected in the faith and service of the Felician Sisters. "The life of any religious sister, as with any priest, is intimately connected with the life of faith that person leads," he said. "A life of religion can make no sense to a person without a life of faith." He asked, "What better way to celebrate the faith and confession of faith [of the Felicians] than on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul?" The archbishop concluded his remarks saying, "Just as Peter and Paul expressed their faith in Jesus Christ and communicated it, we hope that the new provincial administration will encourage the community."[14]

Sister Mary Laureann said that her main hope for her administration's six-year term was to uphold the responsibilities of the Congregation and the province's charism in the archdiocese of Hartford. "The quality of commitment is important," she said. "We hope to follow in the footsteps of our foundress

[Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska]. It is not what I want to do, it is what we as a province want to do." Sister Laureann added that one of the main responsibilities of the new administration was to live out the Felician Sisters' Vision Statement and the province's Mission Statement. The Vision Statement calls on Felician Sisters to "turn to the Lord your God," and to "Be Eucharist, Be Sister and Be Servant to All."[15] After the Mass, the sisters and guests enjoyed a luncheon in the social room.

Sister Laureann wrote her first letter to the sisters in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament because, she said, "I wished to begin there where I believe my call to ministry as provincial minister originated—in God, and likewise, to seek out the guidance of the Holy Spirit as I reach out to you." Defining her leadership style as collaborative, she wrote, "I have taken the liberty to gather all of you to stand with me before the Lord to address the concerns, feelings, hopes and dreams, the known and unknown we face together as we approach the Third Millennium." She encouraged the sisters to trust in God's unconditional love and "to become what He and our Blessed Mary Angela has called us to be—

> Faith-filled and Faithful
> to each other
> to the Congregation
> to the Church.
> Forward together
> 'as prophetic witnesses
> by being signs of God's saving presence'
> to all.
> (Mission Statement)
> And, always in
> 'acceptance, mutual support and fraternal love.'"[16]
> (Mission Statement)

1995 PAPAL VISIT

Pope John Paul II returned to the United States on October 4, 1995, the latest leg of an almost non-stop world tour he had begun seventeen years ago. The centerpiece of John Paul's latest journey—his fourth to this country—was his U.N. address. Other major appearances included celebration of Mass at Giants Stadium in New Jersey on October 5, at the Aqueduct Racetrack in New York on Friday morning, October 6, and in Central Park on Saturday, October 7. On Sunday, he visited Baltimore, Maryland, and returned to Rome that evening.[17]

The Mass at Aqueduct Racetrack

On Friday, a small delegation from Enfield made the trip to New York on a bus chartered by the Knights of Columbus. The group left in a cold rain, but arrived in sunny skies and warm temperatures, joining 75,000 people who poured into the Aqueduct Racetrack for a papal Mass of elegant pageantry. The racetrack is in the Jamaica, Queens, section of New York City. The New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens make up the Brooklyn diocese, which

counted 1.6 million Catholics. Sisters from the provincial house attending were Sister Mary Andriette Tomaszewski, Sister Mary Celestine Kaczor, Sister Mary Esther Sibiga, Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek, and Sister Mary Margaret Perkowski along with affiliates Jennifer Berryhill and Joan Boyarchok.[18] Sister Margaret Mary Lecko, who ministered in Webster, Massachusetts, joined the group.

The Mass was celebrated on an altar nearly the size of a football field. People sat in the 60,000-seat grandstand and on another 15,000 folding chairs set up on two of the three tracks that were covered with Astroturf for the occasion. A bank of multicolored floral displays in front of the altar was made in the diamond-shaped symbol of the New York Racing Authority. Bishops in the vicinity who were invited to celebrate Mass with the pope included Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin of Hartford and Bishop Edward M. Egan of Bridgeport. More than 500 priests and deacons were also on the altar and distributed communion in less than a half-hour, row-by-row, to the worshipers.[19]

During his homily, Pope John Paul II reiterated a theme he had dwelled on during his papacy—the obligation of rich people and nations to share their wealth with the poor, and the obligation of America to welcome immigrants compassionately. He told the crowd, "America has a reputation the world over, a reputation of power, prestige and wealth," adding, "But not everyone here is power; not everyone here is rich. In fact, America's sometimes extravagant affluence often conceals much hardship and poverty."[20]

The Mass in Central Park

On Saturday, the Pope began his day with Mass in Central Park. According to the *New York Times*, the Mass was the

> centerpiece of a day of devotion that many had anticipated for weeks . . . and it unfolded on a morning of ethereal beauty, with gray mists moving in veils over park woodlands touched by russet and yellow-gold, and treetops swaying like waves rolling on a green sea. . . . The overcast skies wept from time to time and the ground was muddy from days of rain. The crowd was vast and cheered wildly, chanting their love, snapping pictures, and waving flags as the Pope arrived shortly after 9 a.m., circling the field in his popemobile. Participants joined in prayer and song for the two-and-a-half hour solemn and festive Mass.

The Archdiocese of New York said 118,000 tickets had been distributed for attendance on the Great Lawn and said thousands more were in the park. The police estimated more than 125,000 on the lawn, and there were at least 5,000 in the North Meadow.[21] Joining the crowd were the sisters from St. Adalbert Parish in Staten Island, New York—Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, Sister Mary Peter Valliere, and Sister Constance Marie Tomyl. The sisters left Staten Island at 4:30 that morning, traveling in the dark, to arrive at Central Park for admission before 8 a.m.[22]

The altar at the south end of the lawn was huge, perhaps 100 feet across, and was constructed of marble and wood from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and North and South America, and contained relics of saints from many lands. In the most sacred moments of a Mass concelebrated by John Cardinal O'Connor and other American cardinals, as well as bishops and priests from the ten-county Archdiocese of New York, the Pope consecrated bread and wine

and distributed Eucharist to about forty people. Thousands of others received Holy Communion from priests who fanned out into the crowd. The Mass, though conducted in English, also celebrated America's diversity with readings and intercessions offered in Italian, German, Gaelic, Spanish, Polish, Chinese, Slovak, Ukrainian, Korean, Creole, and Japanese.[23]

In an extraordinary moment during his homily, the Pope began to sing. Sister Constance said, "You had to be there to hear the Pope sing the Polish Christmas carol, *Wśród nocnej ciszy* ("Deep is the silence"). This was picked up by a Polish group nearby, and then the choir and crowd responded, singing 'Silent Night.'" She added, "It doesn't get any better."[24] The Pope said, "If I speak of Christmas, it is because in less than five years we shall reach the end of the second millennium, 2,000 years since the birth of Christ on that first Christmas night in Bethlehem." He said Cardinal O'Connor had proclaimed 1996 "a year of evangelization," for "the teaching and the love of Christ to all who will listen, especially to those who, for some reason, may have wandered away or been alienated from the Church." Speaking to the young people there, he said, "Cardinal O'Connor will need all of you, . . . to help the Church enter the third millennium. You young people will live most of your lives in the next millennium. You must help the Holy Spirit to shape its social, moral and spiritual character. You must transmit your joy in being adopted sons and daughters of God through the creative power of the Holy Spirit. Do this with the help of Mary, Mother of Jesus. Cling to her Rosary, and you will never wander far from her side."[25]

The Rosary in St. Patrick's Cathedral

That afternoon, Sister Marie JoAnn and Sister Constance joined 4,000 people—priests, religious sisters and brothers, and families representing every one of the over four hundred parishes in the archdiocese—who crowded into St. Patrick's Cathedral in a space normally occupied by about 2,000 to pray the rosary.[26] Sister Constance said, "The atmosphere in the cathedral itself was emotionally charged as the Pope walked slowly down the center aisle, kissing the heads of nuns, blessing children hoisted on their parent's shoulders, and accepting flowers." She noted that their tickets for this event were scanned at a makeshift booth set up in front of Saks Fifth Avenue to determine their authenticity, and they had to pass through metal detectors before being allowed inside the cathedral.[27]

Following the rosary, in words taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, the Pope told the religious: "Do not, then, surrender your confidence; it will have great reward (Hebr. 10: 35). Society needs your prophetic and unmistakable testimony of God's closeness." And he appealed to them to be "in the heart of the Church in the United States, what the Second Vatican Council called you: 'a blazing emblem of the heavenly kingdom'" (*Perfectae Caritatis,* 1).[28] Reminding the families that they are "at the heart of the Church's mission and of her concern for humanity," the Pope spoke about two immediate things which the Catholic families of America could do to strengthen home-life. "The first is prayer: both personal and family prayer." The second suggestion was to encourage families "to use the Catechism of the Catholic Church to learn about the faith and to answer the questions that come up, especially the moral questions which confront everyone today."[29]

While she served in the role of director of ministry, Sister Mary Laureann also chaired the province's Ministry Commission. As the members worked to develop a proposed action plan for the Action-Direction Statements generated at the 1993 Provincial Chapter, they soon came to realize that with the diminishing number of sisters and the growing number of retired and infirm sisters, honoring commitments to parishes to staff schools as well as the province's own ministries, and providing leadership was becoming a near impossible challenge.[30]

The Action-Direction Statements in the ministry area read:

M 1-a We will reassess and restructure our ministries, faithful to our charism and in light of our mission, needs and human resources.

M 1-b We will reassess and restructure our ministries, faithful to our charism and in light of our mission, needs and financial resources.

M 1-d We will maintain and support ministries that fulfill our mission.[31]

Consequently, the Ministry Commission drafted a letter they hoped to send to the Congregation's general administration and to present at the 1996 Biennial Assembly. At the provincial council meeting of May 6, 1995, after Sister Laureann's election as provincial had been announced, she shared the letter from the commission requesting "that the general administration set into motion a vehicle for interprovincial collaboration to address a severely limited human resource pool in all provinces."[32]

Following review of the draft of the letter at their September meeting, the Ministry Commission decided to submit it to both the provincial administration and the provincial assembly.[33] At the October 29, 1995, provincial assembly, the sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province unanimously agreed to forward a letter to Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski and members of the general administration, formally petitioning the Congregational leadership to set into motion a vehicle for interprovincial collaboration "to strengthen our ministry in the Church today."[33] Sister Laureann explained to the sisters that discussion of this issue was already in progress among the North American provinces since all were facing difficulty.[34]

After further prayer and consideration, Sister Mary Laureann sent the letter to Sister Mary Cynthia and the members of her administration on March 14, 1996, noting that "a re-active mode of response to current situations is not generating a hopeful view for the future." She presented the relationship between the limited number of new vocations and its impact on the human resource pool as it affected the financial prognosis for the provinces. Once Sister Laureann formally petitioned setting into motion "a vehicle for interprovincial collaboration," she suggested that "knowledgeable representatives from the provinces could collaboratively examine our strengths and together search for ways to pool these interprovincially, in ways that would benefit all."[35]

In her response dated April 9, 1996, Sister Mary Cynthia said that she and the general administration could "set into motion" such an "interprovincial collaboration" and were willing to bring this topic to discussion at the Biennial Assembly in September 1996 but needed to know "the parameters and other particulars which you have probably considered." She encouraged Sister Laureann to pursue this and hoped for a response within the next month.[36]

Sister Laureann's response on May 16 provided the statement of the proposal, rationale, and specifics about the nature of the collaboration. She suggested areas that a planning committee might need to examine, including spiritual needs, health needs, the formation program, financial assets, development, and various aspects of ministry. Sister concluded her report with an analysis of the number of sisters in each of the North American provinces which totaled 1,593 as of April 18, 1996.[37]

At about this same time, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the National Association for Treasurers of Religious Institutes (NATRI), and the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), published a document entitled, *A Critical Juncture: Assessing the Viability of Religious Institutes.* Subtitled "An Instrument for Self-Evaluation," the publication had its genesis in a think tank convened by LCWR, NATRI, and NRRO in November 1994 to explore issues related to the viability of religious institutes. The group identified four elements as essential to viability:

- A focus on mission, reflected in a corporate preoccupation with witnessing to the gospel through ministry, spirituality, and community life
- A critical mass of members to support mission
- A pool from which leadership of the institute could be drawn
- Adequate financial resources to maintain the institute and its members; to support the mission; and to provide for spiritual, professional, and personal enrichment of members.

Groups and individuals who were consulted while developing a tool that institutes could use to assess their viability added three elements:

- The willingness to take risks
- Healthy relationships within and beyond the institute
- Effective long-range planning[38]

In the document's introduction, entitled "The Think Tank on the Viability of Religious Institutes," Presentation Sister of the Blessed Virgin Mary Margaret McCafferty, LCWR executive director, discussed reconfiguration and its costs to the institute and its members, as well as the gains. She wrote, "Participants suggested that if by realigning the structures of their institutes, they sparked life for the future, then they bore responsibility both to what the past had given them and to what the future might hold to move in that direction" (iii).[39] Further on, she reported that the reflectors suggested that "religious step outside the boundaries of their past experience to imagine the future, to look at all structures as flexible," and insisted that the goal was "to build religious institutes from which new life could emerge." The think tank group suggested that the leaders of women religious ask questions such as, "What needs to be done, now?" and "What expression of religious life would support that mission?" Finally, Sister Margaret urged the leaders of women religious to use the resources available to them: "an abiding faith in the future of religious life, the ability to face issues squarely, and amazing creativity."[40]

"Is there a new vision God is inviting us to pursue?'

It was with all this in mind that Sister Laureann set about presenting her proposal to Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia, the general councilors, and members of the 1996 Biennial Assembly held in Rome, Italy, from September 15 to 26. She began her presentation on September 18,[41] urging the group to let go of "the fears and concerns which face us as we approach a new millennium" to create "a realistic vision of our Felician Community for the 21st century." She reminded the sisters of the impact that aging, health issues, and the lack of new vocations have on religious life, particularly ministry, noting that these factors "compel us to work toward a possible restructuring of ministry to meet the needs of our times in the Congregation, Church, and society."[42]

Sister Laureann also spoke about the benefits of resources, such as actuarial studies that would provide provinces with a complete picture of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as direction for the future. She suggested that collaborative services such as a centralized development office and establishment of a central fund would also help generate a hopeful view for the future. Very aware of the enormity of this project, Sister Laureann told her sisters, "There is a risk in bringing this forward, but we feel there may be a greater one if we do not. . . . we experience some fear of the unknown." After acknowledging that a project such as interprovincial collaboration was "much larger and beyond the ability of a province," she turned to the Congregation for help, "to focus on a direction if our perceived need is real."[43]

She continued, "In our vow formula, we state, 'I take this Congregation for my family . . .' and that is why, in sincerity and confidence, we come before you with this concern. Today's prayer service reflection stated, Each day God challenges us to dream, to imagine, to vision what might be. Is there a new vision God is inviting us to pursue?" Sister Laureann then shared copies of the proposal as well as a position paper supporting the proposal with the group. She also distributed copies of the "Instrument for Self-Evaluation," and urged the sisters to read, reflect on, and pray over the materials.[44]

After meeting in small groups whose primary agenda item was the pros and cons for interprovincial collaboration, Sister Laureann shared the responses from the two discussion groups on Friday, September 20. In the end, she posed three questions to the group:

- Do we see the need to begin to act in preparation in the not so far away future regarding our Congregation in the USA?
- What resolution if any, do we wish to make as the outcome of surfacing and facing this concern?
- What message do I take back to my province?[45]

Trusting that the Spirit of God is always at work in the body and moving in ways they could not see, the members of the 1996 Biennial Assembly unanimously agreed to the proposal and resolved "to initiate and explore a *collaborative* viability study for all provinces of the United States that will be coordinated by *The Felician Sisters of the United States Collaborative Viability Study Committee.*" The group further resolved to establish its headquarters at the Felician Heritage Center at 1315 Enfield Street in Enfield, Connecticut, and that costs incurred for initial consultation would be shared by the seven

provinces of the United States.[46] The group assigned several tasks to the Collaborative Viability Study Committee, including:

- Contacting the Collaborative Viability Project Committee of Silver Spring, Maryland consisting of representation from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR); the National Association for Treasurers of Religious Institutes (NATRI) and the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO).
- Applying for a grant from the National Religious Retirement Office to cover the expense of the collaborative viability study.
- Scheduling joint meeting(s) with the consultant, the minister general, and provincial ministers of the United States at a convenient time or times between January and March 1997.[47]

Sister Mary Laureann, along with Sister Mary Antonelle Chunka, provincial minister of the Lodi, New Jersey province, and Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, provincial minister of the Coraopolis, Pennsylvania province, comprised the Collaborative Viability Study Committee. Their first task was to communicate with the Collaborative Viability Project Committee, which directed them to Sister Janet Roesener, CSJ, of Silver Spring, Maryland.[48]

After serving as the Superior General of the new Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille for eight years, Sister Janet became executive director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious from 1986 to 1992. She then accepted the position of Director of the National Religious Retirement Office in Washington, D.C., from 1993 to 1997, and subsequently ministered as a full-time facilitator working with religious communities throughout the United States.[49] On January 28, 1997, the three committee members met with Sister Janet in Lodi to discuss their concerns and Congregational needs with her.

'Who do we hope to be in the 21st century?'

As a result of their conversations, the committee members engaged Sister Janet to prepare a proposal for a viability study to present to the members of the general administration and provincial ministers during the meeting scheduled for October 13 to 14, 1997, in Livonia, Michigan.[50] The committee met again with Sister Janet in Silver Spring, Maryland, on August 31 to finalize the agenda for the October meeting. In addition to the agenda, they prepared four reflection questions that they disseminated to the provincial ministers for their reflection.

- Who are the Felicians now and who do we hope to be in the 21st century?
- What do we need to do together to realize this hope?
- What is frightening about our journeying together into the new millennium? What is exciting?
- What responsibility do we as leaders have to engage the sisters in creating this future?[51]

The session that Sister Janet facilitated at the Livonia meeting in October 1997 began with consideration of membership statistics in the eight North American provinces. While the national median age for women's religious communities in the United States was sixty-eight, six of the seven provinces in

this country were well above that, ranging from seventy-two to seventy-seven. Additionally, the seven U.S. provinces were recording losses of more than fifty sisters per year. These statistics were incentive enough for the group to commit to serious future planning while still in a position of strength. Sister Janet also noted that, with more than 1500 sister members, the Felician Sisters in the United States was a large group in comparison to most religious congregations in the country, half of which numbered under 100 members. But she cautioned the group of its need to be vital, not self-serving, and spoke about quality leadership as a necessary and determining factor for survival.[52]

The provincial leaders realized that, as consecrated women called to mission, they could not be complacent and were being called to meet the needs of the time. During a brainstorming session, assumptions and needs shared by the participants included:

- Our provinces will be joined into one large region encompassing the USA.
- We will have more sponsored institutions.
- Some boundaries culturally will collapse.
- There will be initial cooperation and resistance when action is required.
- Belonging to community on all levels will have a new meaning.
- We will collaborate with other communities and laity.[53]

Their plan of action included determining the levels of participation for various constituencies to work together with the provincial ministers and the general administration. Sister Janet affirmed dialoguing with the sisters as well as finding out their needs. The group resolved to return to their provinces and to call their sisters to be open and trust each other, to move from thinking only in a provincial mode to a congregational mode, to continue dialoguing, sharing, and moving together into the future, and to discerning what was essential. Before leaving Livonia, the provincial ministers decided to meet for one day during the Biennial Assembly in Rome in March 1998 to continue sharing and dialoguing before acting. Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak, general councilor, was appointed to chair the meeting.[54]

Sister Mary Laureann shared the news from the October meeting in Livonia with the Enfield sisters during the provincial assembly held on October 25, 1997, before announcing her plan to arrange small area group meetings for discussion before the March 1998 Biennial Assembly. Each sister went home with a packet containing materials designed to assist her to go deeper, listen more intently,[55] and to "turn around radically and walk with the Mystery."[56] Her hope was that the insights that the sisters shared during their discussions would stimulate a future life in the community and mission in the Church. The questions she asked the sisters to consider were:

- Where do we stand as a province? (How viable are we as a province at present? What are our gifts?)
- What is frightening about looking to the future? What concerns do you have? What is exciting about the future?
- Are we open to collaborating with other provinces? (shorter-term venture)

Partnering? (joint longer-term ventures)
Merging? (Joining two or three provinces)
Refounding? (combining—equals in all matters)

- How are we sisters to other provinces? How do we relate to them? They to us?[57]

Actuarial Study

When Sister Mary Laureann shared the information from the October 1996 Biennial Assembly with the sisters in Enfield during the provincial assembly on March 1, 1997, she also introduced the concept of an actuarial study for the province. She explained that the study was being undertaken in response to the Action-Direction Statements of the Provincial Chapter of 1993 (noted at the beginning of this chapter) as well as at the suggestion of Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski during the general visitation of the province that took place from October through December 1996.

Sister Laureann explained that the study began on February 25, 1997. Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski, president, Felician Services, Inc., (FSI) Chicago, was coordinating the study along with FSI staff Gerhard Mahr, executive vice president who would direct the study; Joseph Parrillo, executive vice president of finances; and Jerome Serwa, vice president, finance. A visit to the province, from April 17 to 18, 1997, would provide an opportunity for the group to speak to knowledgeable persons about the history of the province, as well as to obtain reports on ministries, operating finances, and properties. The study, designed to assess the current state of the province, would provide information for the collaborative viability study, identify issues, develop a long-range plan, make projections with respect to its future, and produce recommendations. She added that the provincial administration was already gathering information for the study, estimated to take three to four months.[58]

During the provincial assembly of February 14, 1998, Sister Laureann shared highlights of the completed report, including finances, number of sisters, mission and ministries, and size of the campus. Felician Services, Inc., identified several major issues from its analysis of data and presented complementary recommendations in each area.

- The province will have sufficient funds to maintain the existing ministries and properties, as well as to support the projected number of sisters until the year 2049.
- The number of Felician Sisters in the province will decline until the year 2051, when there are no sisters projected to remain in the province.
- Consideration should be given by the province to evaluate all its ministries on an ongoing basis and make changes as appropriate to be assured that the sponsored ministries accomplish the mission/philosophy of the province.
- Investment performance during the last several years has been very favorable, resulting in growth of the investments managed by Fleet Investment Advisors.
- The council could adopt as a major direction/goal to seek alternatives to reduce the cost of the provincial house, buildings, and grounds related to the declining number of sisters.

- The infirmary is now fully occupied and is projected to exceed capacity until the year 2000. Thereafter, occupancy is projected to decline until in the year 2041 when there will be only two sister patients in the infirmary.
- If it is a goal of the Felician Sisters to continue their mission and ministries perpetually, strategies should be developed that would include the identification of all key positions presently occupied by the sisters and strategies should be developed for how to fill these key positions as they become vacant by either sisters or lay individuals.

The report also contained the following caveats:

- Assumptions being made are conservative.
- The province has the option to remain *status quo* or consider changes selectively.
- Strategies in the plan could change substantially.
- The establishment of a long-range plan will enable the province to maintain the desired extent of influence and control.
- Ongoing evaluation will bring us to a stronger future.[59]

Finally, Sister Laureann quoted from Sister Constance Marie Tomyl's written responses to the discussion material used at the house meetings during the annual visitation:

> The change must be gradual and accompanied by sufficient prayerful reflection. . . . It will be a death of sorts, to be sure. But all of us will have to come to embrace this death in the spirit of resurrection for it is only by recognizing and accepting cheerfully the will of God for us that we will really testify to what is at the very heart of religious life: union with Christ in his death and resurrection.
>
> Gerald Arbuckle, who has done a great deal of writing on refounding, says: 'Even if it is God's will for a congregation to die out, until we can unequivocally read the writing on the wall, we must fight on and not surrender. It is not for us to commit congregational suicide.'
>
> 'While we need to plan and prepare, no amount of merely human effort or experimentation on our part will bring about the refounding of any religious congregation. Our best prepared planning may be of little or no value, for we relate to a God who is humanly inconceivable and unpredictable in his ways, but who is at the same time all-loving, merciful, and compassionate.'[60]

The 1998 Biennial Assembly

By the time of the 1998 Biennial Assembly held in Rome in March 1998, several provinces readily admitted that, after reviewing membership statistics, they felt they were no longer able to function independently, at least in some areas.[61] One enactment of the Biennial Assembly of 1998 was a resolution that "Felician Services, Inc., be engaged to conduct a long-range strategic plan of the North American provinces for the purpose of making recommendations to assure the viability of the Felician mission in North America through collaborative action."[62] Consequently, at the meeting of the North American

provincial ministers held in Chicago, Illinois, from September 23 to 24, 1998, the members learned that FSI would complete this strategic plan by March 2000. The intent of this resolution was to have the process move forward, regardless of changes in the membership of the provincial or general administrations. FSI's report to the group would include the areas of governance and information on the availability of sisters to carry on the Felician mission, as well as commitment to pension, retirement plans, and investment services.[63]

At that same meeting, a subcommittee of the North American Provinces (NAP) Group was formed to generate a proposal for the general chapter to adopt a resolution that would empower the general administration to act on government-structure recommendations from the NAP Group without further action by the general chapter. This would allow the NAP Group to take appropriate action in a timely manner as opposed to having to wait for the next general chapter in six years. The original ad hoc committee consisting of Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Mary Cabrini, and Sister Mary Antonelle was reactivated to form the subcommittee. When the subcommittee requested additional members, Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, provincial minister in Chicago, volunteered. The subcommittee agreed to prepare the outline by February 1, 2000, contact the members for their input, and then draft the proposal and rationale. The group also urged the members to continue to communicate to the sisters the ongoing work of the NAP Group as well as the studies conducted by FSI.[64]

Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski, president and CEO of Felician Services, Inc., explained that it would take six months for the FSI Team to complete a provincial study. With the last site visitation taking place in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, from March 13 to 14, 2000, and the report presentation calendared for September 11, 2000, the next meeting was scheduled for Friday and Saturday, September 14 to 15, 2001. Sister Mary Barbara Ann offered to host the meeting in Chicago.[65]

By early February 2000, the NAP Group had formulated its draft proposal for the Congregation's 21st General Chapter. The delegates to that chapter resolved that:

> The 21st General Chapter empower the General Administration to approve the plans for the potential restructuring of the North American provinces, according to these guidelines:
>
> - That the plan is to be developed by the North American Provinces Group (NAP).
> - That the ratification of the plan is to occur without the convocation of a subsequent General Chapter.
> - That Felician Services, Inc., orientate the newly elected general and provincial administrations relative to the history and development of the plan.
> - That Felician Services, Inc., be retained as consultants to the NAP group for as long as the group deems necessary so that opportunities for synergies that become evident in each provincial study may be maximized.
> - That a progress report be given at the Biennial Assemblies of 2002 and 2004.[66]

GENERAL VISITATION, 1996

When Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, announced details of the general visitation to the sisters of the Enfield province, she reminded them that it is "a time of grace. A time . . .

> **to reflect** on our authentic response to love and life in community;
>
> **to resolve** our need for communal and personal conversion;
>
> **to rejoice** in the hundredfold promised and received.[67]

Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general, and three members of her council—Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak, Sister Mary Jana Szmigielska, and Sister Mary Lee Przybylski—arrived on October 23, 1996, and the visitation formally opened on October 26 with celebration of the Eucharist at 11 a.m. in the provincial house chapel. Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford, was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Mass attended by many sisters from all parts of the province. Msgr. Thomas Ginty, secretary to the archbishop, served as master of ceremonies and Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, concelebrated. The theme for the opening of the visitation was "Dwell in Us – Change Our Lives." Following the impressive liturgy,[68] the sisters enjoyed dinner in the social room, tastefully decorated with fall décor, including pumpkins, corn husks, and gourds. In the name of the sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province, Sister Mary Laureann welcomed Sister Mary Cynthia and the visitators, as well as Archbishop Cronin and the guest priests. Following dinner, each general councilor also addressed the sisters. Before leaving, Archbishop Cronin extended his blessing to the sisters and the general visitators.[69]

The program for the next seven weeks included preliminary meetings of the general visitators with the provincial administration and informational meetings with administrators of the corporations sponsored by Our Lady of the Angels Province for the presentation of reports on the state of their apostolic ministry. The visitators also conducted private interviews with the members of the provincial administration. They traveled throughout the province, holding eight regional meetings, and visited most of the local homes and ministry sites. They also spoke with sisters who wished an interview.[70]

During the visit to the sisters at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, Sister Mary Cynthia presided at the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the new 10,000 square-foot emergency wing on Thursday, November 21, the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the anniversary of the foundation of the Felician Congregation.[71]

'A Wellspring of Affirmation and Encouragement'

With the visitation completed, Sister Mary Cynthia and the visitators expressed their gratitude to the sisters in their letter of December 16 for the privilege of being "sister with you in your lived reality for a brief moment in history." They wrote, "During the seven weeks of general visitation, we have had the joy-filled experience to witness your response to the call of God to make him known, loved, and glorified in the northeastern part of the United States through a life of vowed commitment rooted in the Gospel, prayer, community living, and service."[72]

One purpose of the visitation is to be "a wellspring of affirmation and encouragement," and to help the provincial minister and her council as well

as the entire province to continue their journey with greater courage in the spirit of Blessed Mary Angela. Subsequently, Sister Mary Cynthia's report to the sisters included commendations to encourage and animate them:

- I commend the sisters of the province who willingly and joyfully accept the consequences of living and ministering in places where conveniences are lacking. These sisters live the reality of the fact that as Felician Sisters we are called to seek to be poor in fact and in spirit.
- There is a spirit of unselfishness and total dedication to the works of the apostolate of the province. May you truly actualize the mission and vision of Blessed Angela in all your ministerial commitments.
- As members of the larger provincial community, you give evidence of care and concern extended to the sick and elderly sisters, and of the sincere happiness in meeting with all sisters of the province and sharing quality time with them.
- The sisters are to be commended for the dedication with which they serve the people of God in their ministries. Most sisters work tirelessly, regardless of age and health and at great costs. Many pastors have been most positive in regard to the work of the sisters and expressed gratefulness for having the Felician Sisters as part of their parish family.

Yet another reason for the visitation is to help resolve some provincial problems, whenever possible. The visitators urged the provincial minister and council to address issues particularly in the areas of apostolic life, initial and ongoing formation, and government. Recommendations included:

- Focusing on a vision for the future of the sisters working in the elementary schools, with a concentration on staffing the viable schools.
- Encouraging sisters to retire from full-time ministry as they see their abilities decline.
- Renovating and reorganizing the physical environment of the infirmary in the immediate future.
- Appointing a full-time vocation director.
- Seriously analyzing and planning for local leadership for the next several years.[73]

The official closing of the general visitation took place on December 12, 1996, with the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving by Chaplain Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, and the sisters offering prayers of gratitude for the abundant graces experienced by the province. When the sisters renewed their vows at the close of the liturgy, Sister Mary Cynthia received their vows, "in the name of God, the Church, and our Congregation." She prayed that the Lord grant the sisters the grace to remain faithful to these vows. At breakfast, on behalf of the sisters, Sister Mary Laureann once again expressed gratitude to Sister Cynthia and the visitators for their service to the province during the visitation. As a token of gratitude and remembrance, she presented Sister Cynthia with the oil lamp used during the regional meetings.[74]

APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Animated by the charismatic love of their foundress Sophia Truszkowska, the Enfield sisters devoted themselves to the service of the Church through the apostolate of charity by engaging in Christian education in accordance with current needs, by ministering to the sick and the aged, and by serving the needs of the social and cultural milieu in which they found themselves.[75]

Prayer and love of the Eucharist were the very sources of energy for each sister as she endeavored to live her life as a follower of the Gospel in all its fullness, "cooperating with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world." As Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister said so well in her 1995 work, *The Fire in These Ashes: A Spirituality of Contemporary Religious Life*, "It is the God whom she holds in her heart and finds in prayer, in people, and in the transubstantiation of the planet into the reign of God that impels her life."[76]

Two Action-Direction Statements of the 1993 Provincial Chapter directly impacted apostolic life in the province at this time:

> *We will reassess and restructure our ministries, faithful to our charism and in the light of our mission, needs, and human resources . . .* [and] *financial resources.*
>
> *We will maintain and support ministries that fulfill our mission.*[77]

Through interviews and meetings with sisters, principals, pastors, directors, board members, and staff during the annual visitations, the provincial minister and director of ministry reassessed the existing ministries in the province. While they evaluated them as true to the Felician charism and mission, staffing existing ministries each year became more difficult because of aging members and the decrease in the number of new members. In June 1999, the total membership of the province was 135, with sisters ranging in age from thirty-two to 102 and a median age of seventy-eight. During these years, the province withdrew from St. Adalbert School in Staten Island, New York in 1997, and that same year, the ministry to the Marian Fathers in Stockbridge, Massachusetts also came to an end.[78]

St. Adalbert School, Staten Island, New York

The Felician Sisters had served St. Adalbert Parish in Staten Island, New York, for ninety-two years. With only three sisters in the convent—Sister Mary Magdalen Pytelewski, local minister; Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, principal; and Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, in residence—Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, met with them on February 9, 1997, to inform them of the provincial council's decision to withdraw the sisters from the parish school ministry.[79]

In any parochial elementary school, the principal-pastor relationship is critical. At St. Adalbert's, the principal was the only Felician Sister ministering at the school, and her effort to collaborate effectively with the pastor began to take its toll on her health. The provincial council, acknowledging that the struggle made the job even more difficult, stepped in and announced its decision to withdraw the sisters.

On June 8, 1997, twenty-five sisters, including provincial councilors Sister Joan Marie Swierzb and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, marked the end of the dedicated ministry of the Felician Sisters at St. Adalbert Parish. Principal celebrant of the Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving was Father John J. Hynes,

pastor, who was assisted by parochial vicar Father John J. Wroblewski, and native son Father Michael Cichon. Principal Sister Marie JoAnn accepted a plaque commemorating the Felician Sisters' ninety-two years of service which would remain on display in the school entrance alongside a portrait of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela as a memorial. A testimonial dinner followed the Mass. Although this event marked the formal ending of Felician ministry at the parish, parishioners were encouraged to cultivate the seeds of dedication sown by the sisters.[80] The sisters left St. Adalbert Convent on July 2, 1997.[81]

Marian Fathers, Stockbridge, Massachusetts

For the 1995-1996 ministry year, the local community of Mercy of God Convent in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, consisted of Sister Mary Vincent Rutkowski, serving as local minister, alongside Sister Jeanne Marie Akalski and Sister Mary Julia Janas. By that time, the sisters were having difficulty with their very full work schedule and added laundry responsibilities, and they were feeling left out and unappreciated.[82]

Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann communicated with Father Joseph Roesch, MIC, house superior, concerning the responsibilities and just wages for the three Felician Sisters working there. The provincial administration hoped that the Marian Fathers would draft a contract in compliance with the Springfield Diocesan Religious Compensation Plan.[83] On August 22, 1996, Father Roesch, former house superior, and Father Kazimierz Chwalek, house superior and national shrine rector, delegated by their Provincial Superior Father Walter Dziordz, traveled to the provincial house in Enfield where they met with Sister Laureann. At the meeting, Sister Laureann learned that the Marian Fathers would no longer need the services of the Felician Sisters as of June 30, 1997.[84]

Sister Laureann requested an official letter from the Marian provincial superior stating the community's decision as well as reasons. On September 3, Very Rev. Walter M. Dziordz responded. He said he hoped that this action would not be seen "as a weakening of our respect for the Felician Community. Actually, quite the opposite is true! Indeed, we hope to enjoy a continued relationship with the Felicians and we hope that we can continue to support each other in years to come!"[85]

He explained that the Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and the Marian Fathers had "a long-standing relationship with each other," and that the sisters had ministered both on Eden Hill (home to the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy and the Marian Fathers in Stockbridge) and at the novitiate in Brookeville, Maryland. The sisters closed their Stockbridge residence but continued their ministry at the novitiate. However, when the Stockbridge shrine received "national shrine" designation, Father Dziordz explained, "It became increasingly evident that, as we increased our involvement in the spreading of the message of Divine Mercy, our work would be enhanced by the presence of the Oblate Sisters, and particularly by their perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Our experience of the Oblates is that their presence truly enhances Eucharistic devotion, a message which blends very well with our spirituality on Eden Hill."

Father Dziordz closed his letter expressing profound gratitude to the Felician Sisters. "Their presence was gratefully received and endeared them to

us." He continued, "They were and are part of our family! Their actual work was commendable, and this was noted on major feast days and most especially on Divine Mercy Sunday. . . . the Felicians will always remain dear to our hearts."[86]

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL, SMALL ENOUGH TO CARE, LARGE ENOUGH TO SERVE

As the twenty-first century approached, St. Joseph Healthcare in Bangor, Maine, continued Jesus' healing ministry, reflecting a consistent ethic of life and a commitment to preserve, protect, and promote the physical health and well-being of all people. All the while, the hospital forged ahead, preparing for the new era, driven by its vision of a vibrant, dynamic St. Joseph's including the ability to continually evaluate, adapt, and change to meet the healthcare needs of the greater Bangor community.

Situated in an environment that was evolving rapidly because of technological change and institutional forces, healthcare delivery was no longer centered in the freestanding acute-care hospital. Additionally, healthcare was experiencing many external challenges. Changes in the administration of federal entitlements such as Medicare and Medicaid and the concerns of those who purchased healthcare insurance sought to constrain the escalating cost of providing healthcare. These realities precipitated a discussion at the national level about the possibility of systemic reform of the provision and financing of healthcare in the United States.[87]

In the private sector, insurance companies began to take a more active role in managing hospital costs. Health maintenance organizations, which contracted with a network of providers for discounted prices, increased in importance. The focus of care shifted to outpatient services, ambulatory care centers for acute care, and hospices and nursing homes for the chronically ill. Other important changes included the diversification of hospitals into new corporations, and a general "urge to merge" hospitals into larger hospital systems. Then in 1997, the Balanced Budget Act decreased Medicare payments to hospitals by $115 million over five years, including a projected $17 billion reduction in Medicare payments to hospitals.[88]

"Capitation," a system that paid doctors a set fee from which they had to care for all their patients, the sick and the well, slowly replaced fee-for-service. Called "managed care," this system also produced changes in the consumers' role in healthcare as greater emphasis was placed on preventive medicine, consumer choice, and accountability for one's own health and healthcare. Under managed care, doctors and hospitals were paid a fixed amount each month to meet all the health needs of their patients. Communications advancements such as the Internet and the World Wide Web in the 1990s added to the health information available to consumers. Also at this time, consumer interest grew in "alternative medicine," such as acupuncture, herbal preparations, and vitamin therapies. In the meantime, employers tried to find ways to cut back on healthcare costs. In some cases, this meant offering HMOs, which by design, were meant to cost both the insurer and the enrollee less money.[89]

Traditionally, hospitals had been not-for-profit charitable institutions that provided care for the very ill. As science advanced and improved hospitals' quality of care and outcomes, the facilities began to charge for services. Increasingly, the hospital became a business. Several entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to provide similar or better service at a lower cost. The for-profit

chains were able to generate operational savings through economies of scale when purchasing goods and equipment. Thus, what had been a community service transitioned into a corporate enterprise.[90]

Keeping the Care in Managed Care

To continue providing the highest quality medical care to residents of eastern and central Maine, St. Joseph Hospital undertook several initiatives focused on its commitment to the community and to the changing healthcare environment. The most important event of 1995 was the beginning of the building project.[91] Scheduled for completion in 1997, this renovation was the first that SJH had undertaken in more than thirty years. The project included consolidated surgical suites for outpatient and inpatient surgeries, a more efficient emergency department focused on patient comfort and privacy and renovated and private patient rooms. With the conversion of much of the space to private rooms, the hospital's bed capacity went from 130 to 100 beds.[92]

In moving forward with the renovation plan, cost containment continued to be a high priority, second only to ensuring high-quality medical care for patients. Since the original plan was proposed, the hospital worked to change its design by using more of its existing space. As such, the project was downsized from 71,000 to 50,000 square feet. Early in September 1995, the City of Bangor Planning Board approved the change to the expansion plans, which included shaving $5 million off the estimated construction tab, decreasing the cost from $18 million to $13 million.[93]

Collaborative Efforts

As well as adapting its physical structure to changing healthcare technologies, St. Joseph launched an initiative aimed at meeting the challenges of providing healthcare in a managed-care environment. Toward this end, St. Joseph and a group of local primary care physicians united to develop a new healthcare system based on the strengths of managed-care plans. Known as NorthEast Managed Service Organization (MSO), it focused its efforts on providing a high-quality, cost-effective delivery system for patients and residents of eastern and central Maine. NorthEast MSO comprised thirty-five local primary care providers with offices located in Bangor, Brewer, Carmel, East Corinth, Hampden, Old Town, and Winterport.

The foundation of this collaborative effort was based on St. Joseph's history of supporting the area's primary care physicians. SJH's commitment to family medicine dated back to the 1970s when it opened primary care clinics in two local communities that lacked medical care. These communities, Corinth and Old Town, were the cornerstones of St. Joseph's consistent and continual support and sponsorship of primary-care medicine throughout the region.[94]

To further address the community's healthcare needs and fiscal responsibilities, St. Joseph joined the Maine Health Alliance. The Alliance, a collaborative effort with nine other hospitals in eastern and central Maine, negotiated managed-care contracts with insurers and employers. In addition, St. Joseph became part of Synernet, a cooperative grouping of eleven Maine hospitals throughout the state that worked aggressively to enhance operations and reduce the costs associated with workers' compensation losses. Through efforts with Synernet, St. Joseph saved $125,000 in 1995. Consistent with its history, SJH continued to work to develop systems and networks to maximize

quality and efficiency in the delivery of healthcare to the residents of the Greater Bangor-Brewer area.[95]

Quality and compassionate care for patients had always been the top priority at St. Joseph's, and a crucial component of providing high quality care was its commitment to innovative technologies. SJH, Bangor's community hospital, had a long history of "firsts" in implementing innovative technologies that continued in 1995. New technologies included:

- The candela laser, used to break up stones that lodged in the tube running from the kidney to the bladder.
- A cardiac echo Doppler unit, a state-of-the-art diagnostic tool that provided the most advanced images of the heart available at that time.
- The Holmium laser, used in arthroscopic procedures for joint repair.
- Expanded usage of laparoscopic surgery, replacing traditional surgery for procedures such as spleen removal and repair of hiatal hernias.

St. Joseph was also involved in collaborative efforts with healthcare organizations throughout the region that allowed it to bring additional medical technologies to patients. It was because of these cooperative agreements that St. Joseph was able to offer services such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and lithotripsy, a technique for treating stones in the kidney and ureter that does not require surgery.[96]

Reaching out to the community

St. Joseph Healthcare and its affiliates continued to provide a wide range of outreach services. Formerly St. Joseph Ambulatory Care, Occupational Health of St. Joseph, always a leader in maintaining the collective good health of area businesses, evolved into a comprehensive system of direct delivery of health care to industry as it helped businesses to reduce the cost of employee health and worker's compensation. The program provided timely and appropriate treatment to injured workers while both employers and primary care physicians remained a vital part of the healing team. Occupational health also brought rehabilitative services to businesses, including physical and occupational therapy. Routine post-offer/pre-employment physical examinations, immunizations, blood testing, and audiometry screening rounded out the program.[97]

Rapidly coming of age as a unique medical subspecialty, occupational health focused not only on treating workplace injuries, but also on job-site analysis. St. Joseph's industrial-health professionals often recommended changes to the workplace and job procedures to avoid further injury. In 1995, the program served more than 200 business and industrial clients, from small business offices to some of the area's largest paper mills. By late 1997, the company had a new name, HealthWORKS, that provided its services to more than 400 companies.[98]

Home Health

The growth of Home Health of St. Joseph in 1995 reflected an industry trend toward community-based health care. Nearly 600 people received services in forty locales from Greenville in the north to down-east Washington County, and south to the Bucksport and Belfast areas. Home Health of St. Joseph

offered a full spectrum of care, including skilled nursing, and home health aide and social services, along with occupational, physical, and respiratory therapy. Home Health even brought a level of care to the home, including advanced intravenous therapy and chemotherapy.[99]

St. Joseph Hospital also added the Terminal Long Care or "TLC" program in 1995. Through TLC, specialized in-home services such as chemotherapy and symptom management were available to individuals with advanced cancer, AIDS, kidney disease, lung disease, and neuro-muscular diseases. A pre-surgical assessment program for those planning to have major procedures such as total knee or hip replacements was also added in 1995. In consultation with the orthopedic surgeon, Home Health planned for each patient's post-operative recovery, a process that included reviewing the home setting. For example, whether a walker or wheelchair would fit through the bathroom door was best addressed before the patient came home from the hospital.[100]

Integral to Home Health of St. Joseph's program of care was Hospice of St. Joseph. Hospice brought a special blend of caring with respect, dignity, and love to the terminally ill and their loved ones. Hospice care included many of the same services offered by Home Health, such as licensed nurses and home health aides, with the added dimension of physical, emotional, and spiritual support from trained Hospice volunteers and a multidisciplinary team including spiritual, social, and medical components. Initial steps toward establishment of the very first Hospice program in the Millinocket area was a highlight of 1995.[101]

Mission of Service Top Priority

President and CEO Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski set out to explain the changes taking place at St. Joseph Hospital in an article that appeared in the *Bangor Daily News* on November 8, 1995. At the conclusion of the article, she assured the residents of the Greater Bangor area of the ongoing mission of SJH. She wrote:

> Regardless of the future of health care, however, one thing will remain the same. As we prepare to meet the 21st century, we want you to continue to experience the care, compassion, and quality that you have come to expect from St. Joseph Hospital. St. Joseph's mission of service to our patients will always be our top priority. It is a symbol of our organization's long-term commitment to the quality of life for all members of our community. St. Joseph Hospital—we're still small enough to care, large enough to serve. [102]

Sister Norberta reiterated her position in an article entitled "St. Joseph Hospital Success Story," included in the February 17, 1996, edition of the *Bangor Daily News*. As the bulldozers were busy preparing the ground for construction of the new emergency department, she reassured readers that St. Joseph's would continue to "remain true to our unique mission of being an innovative Catholic and community health care provider as well as a vital contributor to the area's health care system." She continued, "Our distinctive vocation in health care is not so much to heal better than anyone else but to bring comfort to people by giving them an experience that will strengthen their confidence in life. . . . It is increasingly important that we not lose the focus of our mission. The bottom line is important, but it cannot be the sole

determination in everything we do. Those who are sick need to be able to find hope and compassion in our service."[103]

Sister Norberta's remarks echo the pastoral letter on healthcare written by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, archbishop of Chicago, entitled "A Sign of Hope," and published on October 18, 1995. Calling health care "an essential ministry" of the Catholic Church, and one especially capable of providing the "sign of hope" so badly needed by the ill, Bernardin urged that Catholic institutions collaborate to survive competitive financial pressures and hark back to their religious mission of providing hope, comfort, and a sense that patients are part of a community. Bernardin wrote, "Catholic healthcare continues Jesus' healing ministry and reflects a consistent ethic of life, which requires of us a commitment to preserve, protect, and promote the physical health and well-being of all people." He acknowledged that the strength of Catholic health ministry was "grounded in the charisms of the many religious communities that have carried on the Lord's healing ministry," while urging adaptation "as needed to current trends in order to ensure our ongoing presence as well as our ability to influence the national culture of healthcare delivery."[104]

Bernardin repeated his endorsement of the creation of a Catholic healthcare network and urged Catholic institutions not to compete or join with for-profit institutions. In his letter, he pleaded with his brother bishops to "take the steps necessary to prepare for the future," telling them, "It would be a tragedy if we did not have the courage to move beyond the past and have the creativity to address the future." Finally, he encouraged implementing standards for evaluating the Catholic character of healthcare institutions and programs, "to ensure that what we proclaim is what we provide."[105]

Sister Norberta was very familiar with this document. In fact, it formed the basis for her presentations to the Knights of Columbus and alumnae nurses in October 1996.[106]

Expanding the scope of health care

When the Northeast Inpatient Medical Service was established on January 2, 1996, it became the first Hospitalist Program in the State of Maine. It was SJH's answer for new ways to provide patient care more efficiently while maintaining the high-quality care and compassion for the patient that has always been an integral part of St. Joseph's. The program comprised three board-certified physicians whose sole responsibility was to manage all aspects of the patient's care while in the hospital, from lab tests to x-rays, specialist consults, social services, and discharge planning. Working together, the hospitalist and the primary-care physician ensured that their patient received the best care possible. Because hospitalists were based at the hospital, they could react immediately to both changes in a patient's condition or to emergencies and arrange the specialized care the patient needed in a shorter time frame. The result was high-quality, efficient, cost-effective patient care.[107]

In March 1996, St. Joseph Healthcare and the NorthEast MSO announced the establishment of the Brewer Walk-In Center of St. Joseph at 399 South Main St. As another part of the integrated health-care model being developed by NorthEast MSO, the Center provided immediate access to and coordination of outstanding, compassionate, affordable medical care for unexpected medical needs, supplementing medical care available in the community.[108]

The Sleep Studies Lab became available through a cooperative agreement with Diagnostic Health Services, Inc. A wide range of sleep disorders could be diagnosed and treated at the Lab, which offered a full polysomnography exam, a comprehensive, technician-monitored overnight sleep study, as well as the "Vitalog" polysomnography, an unmonitored study that could be done at home. In January of 2001, St. Joseph Hospital opened its own two-bed sleep laboratory. The Sleep Laboratory offered sleep studies three nights a week.[109]

Throughout 1997, St. Joseph Healthcare invested in many new medical technologies to provide patients with the highest medical care available. The SJH Radiology Department added new equipment which expanded the hospital's capabilities in real-time medical imaging in the operating room. Known as C-arms because of their shape, which allowed them to be placed around a patient on a surgical table, these portable x-ray machines could image many parts of the human body, including blood vessels. Two of the very latest C-arms, a twelve-inch and a nine-inch model, were added in 1997, greatly enhancing surgical capabilities, particularly in vascular surgery to repair blood vessels. The machines also proved useful in gastrointestinal and orthopedic surgery. Using the C-arm, surgeons could see real-time "live" shots of blood vessels and other internal body parts, aiding them tremendously in visualizing their work. In addition to the live shots during surgery, images selected by the surgeon could also be digitally stored for future reference.[110]

The Problem Wound and Hyperbaric Medicine Center, the first center of its kind in Maine, opened on May 16, 1997, offering patients state-of-the-art care in the treatment of problem wounds and other medical conditions. The most prevalent condition that the Wound Center staff saw were problems related to diabetic neuropathy. Other wounds treated included chronic soft-tissue infections and bone infections, radiation tissue damage, and preservation of skin grafts. An integral aspect of the Wound Center's treatment program centered on hyperbaric medicine. Hyperbaric therapy is a medically prescribed treatment in which patients are placed in a pressurized tube-like system for short periods of time where they breathe 100 percent oxygen. As most wounds consist of areas of low oxygen and blood flow, the delivery of concentrated oxygen to the bloodstream enhances the healing process and stops the spread of potentially crippling infections. Hyperbaric medicine could also be used to treat carbon monoxide poisoning, bone infections, smoke inhalation, bone-crushing injuries, and gas gangrene. SJH was the only site north of Portland to offer this special treatment for problem wounds.[111]

In the fall of 1997, St. Joseph began using a new blood test that improved the speed and precision of diagnosing heart attacks. The test, cleared for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, was important because early diagnosis of heart disease permitted physicians to begin appropriate therapy sooner, thereby saving lives.[112]

Building for a healthy future

Vital outpatient services of St. Joseph Healthcare moved to the newly constructed, four-building complex at 900 Broadway in Bangor, named St. Joseph Healthcare Park, on November 24, 1997. The Diabetes Education Program, HealthWORKS of St. Joseph, Home Health of St. Joseph, Hospice of St. Joseph, Nutrition Therapy of St. Joseph, Occupational and Physical Therapy,

Outpatient Pulmonary Rehab/Asthma Program, and St. Joseph Regional Breast Care Center shared space with offices for finance and materials management. The new buildings offered substantial space for offices, floor-to-ceiling shelves full of files, conference, and exam rooms, waiting areas with new carpet and chairs, and warehouse storage that allowed for more bulk purchasing.[113]

On May 16, 2001, the birthday of Felician Foundress Sophia Truszkowska, Building 4 was dedicated as the "Mother Mary Angela Office Building." Building 4 was chosen because, as the financial and business office, it housed administration of SJH's charity care-funding program. Sister Norberta said that dedicating this building was also a way to honor Mother Angela's spirit by acknowledging and honoring those who worked behind the scenes to help SJH fulfill its healing mission.[114]

The year 1997 was significant for women's healthcare at St. Joseph Hospital. In November, the Women's Center and its Mammography Screening Center were united at the Regional Breast Care Center in the new St. Joseph Healthcare Park. The new name reflected the focus of the Women's Center as a facility dedicated solely to breast health for all women in the area. The Women's Center developed a lymphedema treatment clinic that offered life-changing treatment for individuals suffering with this accumulation of fluid in the arms or legs as well as patients with hard-to-heal wounds. Treatments included compression and manual lymph drainage, a type of European massage to control swelling, individualized exercise, and self-care education. The clinic also offered appropriate therapy, education, and support.[115]

SJH in the forefront of osteoporosis research

At the Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education, St. Joseph Hospital was on the cutting edge of the latest in osteoporosis information. Dr. Clifford J. Rosen, medical director for the center, was recognized worldwide for his work in osteoporosis research and education. The Bangor center was the site for nationally recognized research studies on drugs developed to slow the progression of the brittle-bone disease.[116] To highlight the importance of bone-density testing, in mid-February 1999, U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe scheduled her second-ever bone density test. During her visit, she received a demonstration of a new ultrasound bone scanner under clinical investigation in the U.S. as an option to bone densitometry in predicting osteoporosis risk. Snowe had already introduced the first bill on osteoporosis in Congress in the early 1980s and continued to sponsor and support legislation in the field.[117]

Rosen received numerous awards and honors for his work, including the Maine Medical Association President's Award for Distinguished Service to Maine residents at the association's 147th annual session on September 9, 2000, at the Inn at Sugarloaf. In addition to his role as director of St. Joseph Hospital's Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education, Rosen was the first editor-in-chief of *the Journal of Clinical Densitometry*. Rosen also served on many editorial boards and was a professor of nutrition at the University of Maine and an associate clinical professor at Boston University School of Medicine.[118] The following June, the University of Maine Alumni Association presented Dr. Rosen with the Alumni Career Award at his 30th reunion on June 10, the highest honor awarded by the association.[119]

Moving to affiliation

The 1970s had produced a proliferation of small systems in Catholic health care—usually two or more facilities under the umbrella of a single religious sponsor. In 1984, the Catholic Health Association (CHA) acknowledged the trend by publishing its first profile of Catholic multi-institutional systems. With a caveat that the report was "non-inclusive," it described forty-four systems in twenty states and noted that, although they represented three types of organizational models, all but one were owned or sponsored by a single religious institute. The exception was the prescient Catholic Health Corporation of Omaha, Nebraska, which was cooperatively sponsored by five (later nine) congregations of women religious. The introduction to the report signaled what lay ahead: "The one characteristic common to all Catholic systems described here, and to those not included, is change."[120]

Indeed, the 1990s were marked by a near frenzy of organizational activity aimed at developing both multi-institutional systems and integrated delivery networks, which brought together under common ownership hospitals, long-term care facilities, physicians, suppliers, and other services. By the mid-1990s, many Catholic hospitals considered joining a health system rather than remaining an independent hospital, potentially improving their stability in unsettled times.[121] Reacting to the call for collaboration as well as demographic trends showing fewer women entering the community and fewer members desiring to be involved in health care ministry, the Felician Sisters of Enfield began efforts to consolidate the ministry.

The provincial administration recognized the advantages membership in such a system might have for St. Joseph Hospital. They realized that affiliating with another hospital or health system could help SJH thrive in a new healthcare environment. They learned that the hospital could save significant funds on billing, purchasing, and other back-office costs and that affiliation would provide a better ability to attract patients and help the hospital to standardize operations to save money and improve care. Finally, they hoped it could provide the ability to pursue new opportunities.[122]

No doubt, this move was stirred at least in part by the "New Covenant Initiative," a bold, multiphase initiative by three organizations—the Catholic Health Association, the National Coalition on Catholic Health Care Ministry, and Consolidated Catholic Health Care—that was launched at a national convocation of 170 Catholic healthcare leaders in October 1995 in Chicago. It encouraged collaboration, particularly mergers, among Catholic health care providers.[123]

The New Covenant initiative played a key role in CHA's efforts on behalf of members from the mid-1990s into the next decade. The goal was not only to encourage collaboration among Catholic health-care organizations, but also to seek ways to engage the whole Church in moving health care outside institutional walls. This coincided with a movement in health care generally to focus more on wellness and community health. Strategies included a cross-ministry effort to convene a series of meetings to promote collaborative efforts among all organizations involved in the Church's healing and social service ministries, including parishes, educational institutions, and charitable agencies.[124]

In early October 1996, the Our Lady of the Angels Province Corporate Board met with Felician Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski, president and CEO, and Joseph W. Parrillo, CFO, of Felician Services Health Care, Inc., of Chicago. During that meeting, Sister Clarette shared information about Catholic health systems and possible options for future planning.[125] Early in February 1997, the two representatives of the Felician Health System met with the SJH Board, administrative team, and sisters at St. Joseph Hospital and presented these options for the health-care ministry.[126]

Catholic Health East

Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann, the provincial council, and Sister Mary Norberta met with Sister of Providence Kathleen Popko at Providence Hospital in Holyoke, Massachusetts on August 11, 1997.[127] Sister Kathleen had chaired the Sisters of Providence Health System Board from 1985 to 1996. In September 1994, she was appointed president and CEO of the Sisters of Providence Health System and served in that capacity until the fall of 1997. At that time, the Sisters of Providence joined with twelve other religious congregations to cosponsor a new health system, Catholic Health East (CHE), that spanned the eastern United States from Maine to Florida. Sister Kathleen became the first executive vice president of the Northeast Division that included New York and New England.[128] The religious sponsors formed CHE to strengthen the role and identity of the Catholic health ministry in the eastern United States. Catholic Health East was grounded in the sponsors' historic commitment to the dignity of each individual, the sacredness of life, and special dedication to caring for the poor, the elderly, and the disadvantaged.

Covenant Health Systems

The Sisters of Charity of Montreal, more commonly known as the Grey Nuns of Montreal, also realized a need to create awareness about their health care institutions in the United States and how to ensure that their mission would continue. When the idea of forming a health-care system emerged in 1983, they established the Grey Nuns Health System to guarantee the continuation of the mission and philosophy within the Grey Nuns' sponsored institutions. With the increasing interest of other religious congregations in joining the Grey Nuns Health System, in 1986, the Grey Nuns Health System name changed to Covenant Health Systems.[129]

In 1995, the office of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICSAL) Vatican City, Rome granted a decree to the Covenant Board to become a Public Juridic Person (PJP) and to assume sponsorship and responsibility of Covenant, with several responsibilities (powers) remaining with the Grey Nuns. Being a Public Juridic Person authorized Covenant to provide ministry in the name of the Church.[130] Sister Norberta and the Felician Sisters studied information available about the Covenant System to decide which system could help the Felician Sisters to retain sponsorship of an invaluable mission to the Church.[131]

On November 2, 1998, Daniel T. Russell, president and CEO of Catholic Health East, delivered an excellent presentation on CHE to the combined St. Joseph Hospital and St. Joseph Foundation Boards. The sponsors were pleased with what CHE had to offer and voted to proceed with the due diligence process on November 7. A letter to Russell on that day said the sponsors were

pleased with CHE and, along with the combined boards, voted to proceed with the due diligence process.[132] However, by April 1999, Sister Mary Laureann and the provincial council decided not to join Catholic Health East and authorized Sister Mary Norberta to contact Covenant Health Systems, the Grey Nuns' project, to pursue consideration of possible affiliation.[133] By mid-March of 2001, all parties agreed that St. Joseph Hospital should join Covenant Health Systems as an affiliate. Realizing that by affiliating with Covenant, St. Joseph's could take advantage of services such as compliance, ethics consultation, group purchasing, planning, and benchmarking, St. Joseph Healthcare officially announced its affiliation with Covenant Health Systems of Lexington, Massachusetts.[134]

Cardiac catheterization and angiography lab

Committed to building a $1.5 million cardiac catheterization and angiography lab, St. Joseph Hospital applied to the Maine Department of Human Services (DHS) in 1998. Thomas Baiocchi, a consultant for St. Joseph's, said he believed the application met the state criteria for approval based on patient numbers. According to Sister Norberta, the procedure would complement St. Joseph's mission as a full-service community hospital.[135] At the time, SJH patients who required cardiac catheterization were transferred to Eastern Maine Medical Center, usually by ambulance, which was inconvenient for both patient and family, and costly. Additionally, transfer usually resulted in loss of patients. St. Joseph said it could do the procedure more cheaply and safely using the same doctors who performed it at EMMC.[136] According to the *Bangor Daily News*, St. Joseph's application had the potential "to bring to the forefront the competitive tension between it and EMMC, both of which draw patients from a vast, but lightly populated, geographic area."[137] EMMC had plans to open its third lab and was the only hospital north of Lewiston performing the catheterization and angiography procedures. It strenuously opposed the proposal, fearing it would lose business. Moreover, approval would have ended EMMC's monopoly on performing the procedures.

After failing to receive preliminary approval from DHS' Program and Analysis and Development Unit in April 1999, St. Joseph Hospital suspended its application. While disappointed with the decision, SJH believed that once the state was provided with more data, approval would be forthcoming. According to the state's analysis, St. Joseph's application failed to show that there was a need for the lab. The analysis also determined that the project was not financially feasible and was not "consistent with the orderly and economic development of the health care system." The report said, "With a new lab just online at EMMC and plenty of capacity available it seems unreasonable to approve another lab that may lose money in [its] third year of operation." After reviewing the data sources used for the original application, Baiocchi said that an amended application would be submitted soon.[138]

Over the summer, a consultant studied the statewide need for catheterization services. The consultant, Public Health Resource Group of Portland, reported to the Department of Human Services that more services in Bangor were not needed. But then, in an unexpected reversal, the Certificate of Need Unit of DHS recommended that DHS Commissioner Kevin Concannon approve the

application. Concannon had the last word and in November 2000, officials at St. Joseph's were pleased with the news that the state had recommended that SJH be allowed to add the cardiac catheter laboratory against the wishes of EMMC. The final decision rested with Commissioner Concannon who said he would decide by the end of the year on pending cardiac catheter applications. Sister Norberta quipped, "I'd like it as a Christmas present, with or without the bow."[139]

EMMC requested a public hearing that was convened on February 12, 2001. Their representatives as well as members of the SJH administration, directors, and many employees attended. At the outset, three of the six members of the state advisory committee, who were charged with reviewing the arguments, disclosed significant conflicts of interest, including financial interest with medical device manufacturers and allegiance to EMMC. The disclosures resulted in a lack of quorum and the meeting was postponed to a later date.[140] Frustrated in its attempt to provide cardiac catheterization services to the Greater Bangor community, St. Joseph Hospital asked the local court to intervene. On March 19, the hospital filed a petition with the Kennebec County Superior Court in Augusta, trying to force DHS Commissioner Concannon to issue a decision on its application for a Certificate of Need.[141]

Hospital attorney Joseph Kozak said the hospital had no choice, noting that DHS was supposed to have issued a response almost two months before this. In a news release issued on March 20, 2001, he wrote: "St. Joseph Hospital hopes that through the intervention of the court a final decision will be rendered on this matter so that it can avoid the unnecessary costs associated with further delay and apply its resources more appropriately toward implementation of this important project."[142] When the DHS scheduled a new hearing for April 9, both St. Joseph and EMMC attorneys asked that the hearing be postponed until a decision was reached in court. On April 3, the court canceled the hearing without objection from either hospital's attorney. [143]

Finally, on November 21, both hospitals issued identical joint news releases stating that Maine's Department of Human Services had approved St. Joseph Hospital's catheterization lab application, the result of an agreement reached with Eastern Maine Medical Center.[144] The release stated that "St. Joseph Hospital will begin performing diagnostic catheterizations in the near future. With ever-increasing volume of cardiac catheterizations being performed nationwide, St. Joseph Hospital and Eastern Maine Medical Center believe their agreement will help meet the needs of patients coming to Bangor for cardiovascular procedures."[145]

Mission Effectiveness

In 2011, Ron Skarka, vice president of business development for St. Joseph Hospital, paid tribute to Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, a member of St. Joseph Hospital's founding community, who was stepping down from her position as vice president of mission services after serving St. Joseph Healthcare for 38 years. He wrote:

If the meaning of mission had a name to be called,
It would be none other than Sister Mary Romuald.[146]



From l: SM Norberta Malinowski with SM Romuald Bednarczyk

During the years that she served as mission leader at St. Joseph's, Sister Romuald gained a reputation in helping to define the role of Catholic health ministry. After establishing the role at SJH, she led the organization's mission integration and ethics activities while empowering others to advance the mission, vision, values, and identity of St. Joseph Healthcare.

In 1996, Sister Romuald directed the revision of both the mission and philosophy statements to serve as a guide in organizational behavior and strategic planning. She worked closely with the Ethics Committee to develop an Ethics Manual that served as the basis for orientation for all staff as well as an informational resource in the clinical setting. The group developed an Ethics Program that promulgated ethical and religious directives for Catholic Healthcare. The following year, Sister Romuald initiated another ambitious project of "Values Integration" to ensure the incorporation of mission and values in all aspects of St. Joseph Healthcare activities. The six-member task force explored, developed, and implemented this project. Their systematic planning process served as a powerful tool for designing effective, efficient, relevant, and innovative approaches to change in the organization.[147]

In addition to the more formal Ethics Manual, another way that SJH infused its philosophy came through "Brown Bag Lunches." Held once a month, these discussions, led by spiritual and religious leaders and educators, focused on staff's response to the diversity in the health community and the spiritual needs of SJH's patients and families.[148] The St. Joseph Hospital Interfaith Healthcare Coordinator (Parish Nurse) Project, developed in 1996, helped create connections between St. Joseph Hospital and local churches and synagogues. The program began with a $25,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to start an interfaith group to help address the holistic needs of older adults[149] and to improve the health of each person in the Bangor area. Members of the community were counseled on nutrition, health problems such as high cholesterol and blood pressure, and such targeted issues as women and stress. In addition, the program provided health fairs and free flu clinics.[150]

The results of a 1997 survey helped guide the direction for change in education, clinical practice, leadership, and management. The process involved all employees and served as the catalyst for employees demonstrating their humanity, spirituality, and commitment to St. Joseph Healthcare and the health community-at-large.[151] Outreach endeavors included:

- A very special Christmas program with employees providing 500 gifts for the children of those confined to Penobscot Jail and Charlston Correctional Center.
- In 1999, St. Joseph's Day was celebrated with a project called St. Joseph's Children Care. Pictures of children of SJH employees were displayed, and non-perishable food items were contributed on behalf of each child posted. Four children's agencies in the community received the food donations.
- The plight of Kosovo moved employees to generously contribute $1,159.93 to the Kosovo Relief Fund. St. Joseph Healthcare matched this amount so that $2,320 was presented to the Red Cross for the refugees.[152]
- In 2001, SJH employees generously helped stock a food cupboard in need. Donations to "St. Joseph's Table" filled twenty boxes and thirteen bags, about 1,000 items, delivered to the emergency food cupboard of the Salvation Army's Dorothy Day Kitchen.[153]

Ongoing efforts of the Mission Advisory Committee included establishing the Circle of Excellence Program in May 1999 to provide employees, patients, visitors, physicians, and the community a vehicle to recognize employees who demonstrated the values of St. Joseph Healthcare in their everyday work and who went beyond the call of duty in meeting patients' and other customers' needs.[154] The Mission Services Committee initiated a "Reflections Book" project in 2000. Each department was invited to submit one to three reflections that were compiled, listed, and organized in a format made available for staff for distribution in 2001. Once again, employees rallied at Christmas to donate gifts for infants and children that were given to four local agencies.[155]

Founder's Day activities included a demonstration and display for staff as well as the community, noting the work of Felician Foundress Mother Mary Angela and those who followed her. The banner on the display read, "Ever helping the less fortunate, making for a better community, a better world." Three employees received the Mother Angela Service Award. "Gifts for Babes" encouraged employees to donate Christmas gifts for infants and children, which were given to four local agencies.[156]

End of Life Care

Several attempts to legalize physician-assisted deaths in Maine between 1995 and 2000 did not pass. During that time, Mission Services worked with the Ethics Committee to educate all staff on the impact of Physician-Assisted Suicide legislation. In addition to providing current information for decision making and voting on the subject through video tapes and reading material, Mission Services invited Father Germain Kopaczynski, OFM, Conv., Ph.D, STD, director of education and staff ethicist of the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Boston, Massachusetts. Father Kopaczynski offered instruction on

ethical and religious directives about physician-assisted suicide, emphasizing its fundamental incompatibility with the physician's role as healer, and the physician's right to make decisions for the patient.[157]

Repeatedly, Sister Romuald deflected attention from herself, maintaining that the achievements of Mission Services were the result of many dedicated employees who used their creative abilities to help others and make St. Joseph's a better place in which to provide care and services to those in need.

New options for needy patients

In 1997, Dr. Thomas D. Hayward, president and director of Sunbury Primary Care, helped create the independent Penobscot Community Health Center (PCHC) for people with no insurance or who could not get to see a doctor. Unlike most doctors' offices in Maine that lost money on each Medicare or Medicaid patient seen, PCHC received 100 per cent reimbursement for the cost of its service from the federal government. Sister Mary Norberta said that St. Joseph's contributed financially to the nonprofit because it promoted St. Joseph's mission, serving people in need of care, adding that she expected that the program would work not only to improve the health of those who did not see doctors regularly, but also to have a beneficial impact on area medical costs. The program was still in existence at the end of this period, 2001.[158]

St. Joseph Healthcare 50th Anniversary Celebration

A Year to remember. That's how the St. Joseph Healthcare Annual Report dubbed the year 1997, "a very special year . . . because it marked our 50th year of service to the greater Bangor area."[159] While the year was observed with many joyous and exciting events, St. Joseph Healthcare thought it appropriate to celebrate in yet another way—"by giving thanks to our community, friends, and neighbors for their fifty years of loyal support and friendship."[160] In her "Message from the President," Sister Mary Norberta wrote to SJH's constituents, "We give thanks to God our Father for all the blessings we have enjoyed through the years, and we ask His continued presence as we continue to fulfill our mission. We want to maintain our vision of faith and serve the Lord by caring for all the sick who come to our door. We want to make our world a better place to live by doing our small part."[161]

The year-long celebration consisted of several events that focused on making the Greater Bangor area community a better place in which to work and live. As a kickoff for the 50th Anniversary celebration, the St. Joseph Healthcare staff raised $1000 for the Bangor Public Library's renovation project by holding a bottle drive. Before the feast of St. Joseph on March 19, staff and physicians filled more than sixty large boxes with food for sixty local families. The boxes were then distributed to the families through area churches and synagogues on St. Joseph's Day. For "St. Joe's Day at the Blue Ox" (Bangor's minor league baseball team), St. Joseph Healthcare hosted 100 parents and children who watched Sister Norberta throw out the first pitch with more than 200 St. Joseph staff in attendance at the July game. Five local charities were the recipients of more than 500 Christmas gifts donated by St. Joseph staff, hoping to make the holidays a little brighter for those in need.[162]

The anniversary celebration culminated in the Eucharistic liturgy at St. John's Catholic Church in Bangor on November 2, 1997. Most Rev. Michael

R. Cote, auxiliary bishop of the Portland Diocese, was the principal celebrant assisted by Father Richard Rokos, chaplain; Father Gerard G. Gosselin, pastor of St. John's Church; Father Richard O'Brien, assistant at St. John's; and Father Richard Harvey, SJH Board Member.[163]

Following the entrance procession, Sister Norberta welcomed the gathering. Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz proclaimed the First Reading and Hospitaler Dr. Donald Krause, the second.

Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, Mike McCarty, Sandra Eastman, and Alison McGrath offered the intercessions. Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz and Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis carried candles to accompany the portrait of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, carried by Sister Mary Edmund Dzienkowski. Dr. Angela Gilladoga carried a flask of oil; Sister Mary Florence Pelczynski, flowers; Wayne Woodford, a celebratory Mother Angela candle; and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Darling, water, wine, and hosts. The St. John's Parish Choir led the congregation in singing, accompanied by organist and director of music, Kevin Birch.[164]

Sisters who spent many years as hospital employees also took part in the celebration, including Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, Sister Mary Margaret Perkowski, Sister Mary Pudenciana Kruk, and Sister Mary Bernard Skrocki, who traveled from Enfield, Connecticut. Other sisters who joined in the celebration were Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, provincial vicar, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, provincial council member, Sister Mary Andriette Tomaszewski, and Sister Mary Helene Hadam.[165]

A brunch and awards ceremony followed the Mass at the Bangor Motor Inn. Guest Speaker U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe, who had recently celebrated her own fiftieth birthday, told the gathering she considered herself "a kindred spirit with St. Joseph Hospital . . . and anything else that has lived as long as I have." She commended the hospital for being a health-care leader since its earliest days, when the small group of Felician Sisters from Connecticut traveled to Maine and found a home in the former Paine Private Hospital on Center Street. Senator Snowe pledged her continued support for health-care concerns and thanked hospital leaders for their strong and early commitments to mammography, ambulatory care, wellness programs, and osteoporosis research.[166]

"In the life of any city are defining moments," she said. "It's often only with the benefit of the perspective of history that we're able to see those with clarity." She added, "I'm sure the sisters, when they came in 1947, didn't envision the changes we're getting into. The next 50 years are going to be a challenge, with managed care. . . . There are tough times ahead."[167] In keeping with the mission of the Felician Sisters, Sister Norberta said St. Joseph's would work against a "two-tiered" health-care system, in which the best care goes to a few people while the rest must settle for leftovers. She told her audience, "Our commitment is to keep the 'care' in health care—to keep the compass that St. Joseph's stands for."[168]

Sister Norberta acknowledged many of the people who had helped the hospital along the way, reserving special recognition for board of trustees President Edward O. Darling.[169] Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz made the presentation of the Blessed Mary Angela Service Award to him for his dedicated and unselfish commitment and service to

St. Joseph Healthcare and the community at large. The award had been given annually since 1989.[170] The president and chief executive officer of Down East Toyota-Buick and Down East Auto Body in Brewer, Darling worked on behalf of the hospital since he first joined St. Joseph's finance committee in the 1980s. He was modest about his contributions, saying he "just happened to be in the right place at the right time," and thanked his family and employees for their help and understanding. Chaplain Father Richard V. Rokos offered the Benediction and closing prayer.[171]

'Year to Remember'

To mark this special anniversary, St. Joseph Healthcare prepared a special supplement that was published by the *Bangor Daily News* on Tuesday, November 18, 1997. The special issue highlighted St. Joseph's fifty-year history of providing health care and told the story of how the hospital had grown and changed to meet community needs. The "Year to Remember" included features on the Women's Center, the regional Breast Cancer Center, the Lymphedema Clinic, the Problem Wound and Hyperbaric Medicine Center, the osteoporosis research and education, and the home health and hospice programs, as well as the interfaith healthcare outreach program. As Sister Norberta frequently reminded doctors, staff, board members, and donors, St. Joseph Healthcare was working to remain faithful to its mission of wellness promotion, holistic healing, and health-care services that embody Compassion, Competence, and Community long into the future with God's help.[172]

New Surgical Suite

As well as marking the 50th year of St. Joseph Hospital's service to the community, the year 1997 also saw several components of the $13 million renovation and construction project completed. Six new suites were built to replace existing inpatient and outpatient operating rooms. In addition, three new suites were built specifically for endoscopy procedures. The operating suites officially opened on March 24 with a ceremonial open house and dedication on March 20. Most Rev. Bishop Joseph J. Gerry, OSB, bishop of Portland, blessed and dedicated the new operating room suite and patient tower.[173] Sister Mary Norberta led the ribbon-cutting ceremony and Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister; Dr. Wesley English, chief of surgery; and Edward Darling, chair of the SJH Board of Trustees, delivered addresses. Father Richard V. Rokos, chaplain, offered the invocation and Rev. Robert Carlson, pastor of East Orrington Congregational Church and an SJH board member, delivered the Prayer for Benefactors.[174]

SISTER MARY NORBERTA MALINOWSKI, PASSIONATE LEADER

Every leader has a unique definition of success they believe in. Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, president and CEO of St. Joseph Hospital, defined success as doing work you love and working hard to see that work come to light and fruition. From 1995 to 2001, Sister Norberta was the recipient of numerous awards and honors.

On Monday evening, October 30, 1995, George Tsoulas, founding president of the Bangor Lions Club, told Sister Norberta that she had provided a top-notch accomplishment in running St. Joseph Hospital. He then presented her

the Lions Club pin and officially welcomed her as the recipient of the group's first honorary membership.[175]

On March 19, 1997, Sister Norberta became a Fellow—the top professional achievement—of the American College of Healthcare Executives. This professional society is dedicated to the highest standards of executive performance, community leadership, and the promulgation of continuing education for the betterment of patient care through the efficient management of hospitals and related health facilities and services. In being named a Fellow, Sister Norberta joined an elite group of only 2,800 healthcare executives in the United States who had earned Fellow status, becoming only the eleventh to be so recognized in Maine. When it came time to attend the convocation in Chicago, where she was to be formally presented with her certificate, she became ill, but the hospital surprised her on St. Joseph's Day with its own formal presentation and ceremony, complete with roses and speeches. Chaplain Father Richard V. Rokos presented her with her certificate.[176]

In mid-September 1997, Sister Norberta received an Outstanding Citizens Award from the 118th State of Maine Legislature, relative to receiving advanced Fellow status in the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). The ACHE is the professional home to more than 30,000 healthcare executives who are committed to integrity, lifelong learning, leadership and diversity, and inclusion. Advanced Fellow status considered the prestigious, gold standard FACHE credential, signals board certification in healthcare management. The credential provides recognition as a leader among leaders in healthcare management, demonstrates competency in all areas of healthcare management, and signifies lifelong commitment to change and improvement. [177]

Later in September, the American Red Cross honored Sister Norberta with an Award of Recognition. While the Red Cross recognized that service is its own reward, the organization also commended the importance of taking time to acknowledge and celebrate Sister Norberta's hard work and dedication. In October, Maj. Gen. Nelson E. Durgin, Board Chair for the Maine Hospital Association and a member of the Board of Directors of St. Joseph Hospital, recruited Sister Norberta's expertise and reappointed her to serve another one-year-term on the Health Policy and Legislative Council.[178]

It seemed appropriate that in October 1997 the *Signa Proferre* Society ("Colors to the front"), the Nursing Honor Society at the University of Maine at Orono, would honor Sister Norberta, who began her professional career as a registered nurse and became one of the country's first pediatric nurse practitioners to be certified by the American Nurses Association.[180] As such, she was an example for those who came after her—the consummate caregiver—a model for others to follow, as she carried the signa of courage, sacrifice, and a willingness to share herself on behalf of others, always leading from the front.

Rotary International President Glen Kinross of Brisbane, Australia, presented Sister Mary Norberta with the Jean Harris Award during a banquet at the Black Bear Inn and Event Center in Orono, Maine, on May 1, 1998. Sister Norberta was the first ever to receive the prestigious award, named after the Rotary founder's wife, for her efforts to further the development and progress of women.[181]

As President and CEO of St. Joseph Hospital, Sister Mary Norberta accepted the Margaret Chase Smith Maine State Quality Award, Level I, Commitment for the hospital on January 27, 1999. In evaluating St. Joseph Healthcare, the Margaret Chase Smith Quality Association reported:

- The St. Joseph Healthcare mission . . . serves as the driving force of the organization and is communicated, nurtured, and modeled by senior leadership.
- A patient advocate and pastoral care staff also visit with each patient daily. St. Joseph Healthcare has personal, frequent contact with these customers providing a responsiveness and thus ensuring their satisfaction.
- St. Joseph Healthcare reports a positive financial position for the past decade at a time when competitors are reporting negative bottom lines.

The Award, which recognized a demonstrated commitment to excellence, was presented during an Awards Banquet at the Augusta Civic Center.[182] A native of Maine, Margaret Chase Smith represented the people of Maine for thirty-two years, eight in the House of Representatives and twenty-four in the Senate. The first woman to serve in both houses of Congress, she also was the first to be elected to the United States Senate without prior appointment and the first to have her name placed in nomination for the presidency of the United States at the convention of a major political party. The Republican "Lady of Maine" was known for her independent voting record and for being a tough questioner of administration officials testifying before Senate committees. She frequently went toe-to-toe with government leaders with whom she differed and won widespread respect for her forcefulness and the strength of her convictions. She died in 1995.[183]

St. Joseph Hospital employees held a reception to honor Sister Norberta's election to the American College of Healthcare Executives Council of Regents on Monday, April 10, 2000, in the hospital cafeteria. Sister Norberta represented health-care professionals from the state of Maine and was one of 108 regents representing 30,000 health care executives worldwide.[184]

These honors were a testament to Sister Norberta's wide-ranging achievements, but among the degrees and honors bestowed on her in her service as head of St. Joseph Hospital, one stands out: the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Medal—"For Church and Pope." Nominated by Pope John Paul II for this rare papal honor, Sister Norberta received the medal from Bishop Joseph J. Gerry, OSB, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Portland, Maine, on Friday, December 8, 2000. Bishop Joseph J. Gerry, OSB, presented the award in honor of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, according to Mark R. Mutty, spokesman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland.[185] The *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Medal is bestowed on clergy and laypersons who have given outstanding service to the Church. Sister Norberta was instrumental in mustering the support of the Maine Hospital Association in the effort to defeat legislative bills which deviate from the Christian principles of respect for life at all stages, from conception to death. She fought zealously against great odds at purported anti-Catholicism in the area to maintain a Catholic presence in the health care profession. Finally, she was a member of the Board of Catholic

Charities Maine, the social service arm of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland.[186] At the January 22 director's meeting of the SJH Board, State Senator W. Tom Sawyer, presented Sister Norberta with an honorary legislative proclamation in honor of her recent *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Medal granted by Pope John Paul II. [187]

EXCHANGE PROGRAM WITH RUSSIAN HOSPITAL

As a member of the Rotarians of District 770, Sister Mary Norberta was introduced to Andrei Kalinichenko, trustee of the Hospital of the Community of Sisters of Mercy of St. George in St. Petersburg, Russia, and a member of the International Rotary, who extended personal greetings to her, and a letter from the Chief Physician in Russia, Dr. A. Domashenko.[188] He pleaded with her for medical supplies and proposed establishing an exchange program to obtain better training in medicine and nursing for personnel there. Mr. Kalinichenko also extended an invitation to Sister Norberta as chief administrator of St. Joseph Healthcare, to travel to St. Petersburg with a delegation leaving from Maine in June.[189] Dr. Domashenko had visited St. Joseph's in 1997 and Sister Norberta welcomed the opportunity to meet with him once again to determine whether St. Joseph's could develop a medical exchange program with the St. Petersburg Hospital, similar to other programs developed by several other hospitals in Maine."[190]



SM Norberta Malinowski signing the guest register in the Kremlin.

The hospital's old operating tables, mammography machine, and X-ray viewers got a new home, and Sister Norberta joined a group of twenty-one people from New England and New York on a humanitarian trip to St. Petersburg. The Russian hospital was pleased to receive about $10,000 worth of equipment from St. Joseph's and other items from Eastern Maine Medical Center.[191] The medical supplies were sent to the Hospital of

the Community of Sisters of Mercy of St. George on the *State of Maine*, Maine Maritime Academy's training vessel.[192]

After her flight from Bangor International Airport on June 15 and two days of sightseeing in Moscow, Sister Norberta appreciated the opportunity to spend a day at St. Georges in St. Petersburg with a hospital administrator from Boston, Massachusetts. They learned that despite the name St. Georges and the fact that the hospital was founded as the Hospital of the Community of Sisters of Mercy of St. George in 1870, the hospital was not Catholic,[193] though Dr. Domashenko was quick to point out that St. Georges was "connected with ideas of mercy and charity." He explained that the hospital, a teaching establishment for students and postgraduates, practices "unique diagnostic and treatment methods and uses new medical scientific and technical achievements."[194] However, like much of Russia's infrastructure, hospitals had not made a full transition from Soviet-era protocol, treatment, and equipment, and lacked the necessities that enabled them to provide up-to-date treatment for patients. Dr. Domashenko told Sister Norberta that equipment was antiquated, and, unlike in the United States, where surgical instruments, medical devices, and clothing were discarded after use, in Russia, medical instruments were used again and again. Antibiotics were limited to penicillin and ampicillin, a growing problem in a time when many infections were resistant to these medicines. And yet, operations and other treatments were backed up "because there's no hurry to go home. With healthcare free, patients often stay twenty or thirty days rather than go home to a crowded apartment."[195]



SM Norberta Malinowski with surgical staff at St. Georges Hospital in Moscow.

Dr. Domashenko asked Sister Norberta for her help in obtaining items on his medical equipment list and appealed to her to assist with training programs in surgery, cardiology, orthopedics, traumatology, gynecology, and endoscopy. Sister Norberta immediately realized that it would take time, patience, and money to update hospital care but hoped to be able to send additional equipment to aid the hospital and staff. [196]

Nuns had visited St. Petersburg as tourists, but Sister Norberta was told that she was the first to make an official visit to the city.[197] During a formal reception, Sister Norberta said that many Russian military personnel spoke with her, expressing their joy at being able to meet a religious since she was not a political figure and confiding that they supported what she stood for. She learned that many Russian Orthodox had not practiced their religion for years. They told her, *Życie jest trudno* (Life is hard).[198]

A Russian delegation that arrived in Maine in late September reciprocated the visit made by Sister Norberta in June. The visiting delegation included Vsevold Rudas, chief of surgery at St. Georges Hospital; Vjacheslav Shelukhin, Doctor of Medical Science of the Baltmed clinic in St. Petersburg; and Andrei Kalinichenko, assistant to the deputy chairman of St. Petersburg's Legislative Committee. During their visit, they reached an agreement with St. Joseph Hospital for a doctor exchange program that they hoped would begin soon. They also discussed the possibility of bringing patients to St. Joseph Hospital for treatment. Dr. Shelukhin said that what impressed him most was the spirituality that permeated the care given at St. Joseph's. Religious activity was not overtly a part of hospitals during the Soviet era, but Shelukhin said he believed that healing was more than operations and medications. He said, "I think religious belief is very important in the recovery of patients. The body depends upon the spirit. And where there is good spirit, there will be good health."[199]

By mid-February 1999, a Russian urologist that Sister Norberta had met briefly in St. Petersburg was a guest of St. Joseph Hospital and of Dr. G. Vernon McDonald, urologist. Dr. Sergey Ustinov was in Bangor for four weeks, splitting his time between Eastern Maine Medical Center and St. Joseph's, where he learned a great deal from his observation of urology procedures as well as interaction with patients both in Dr. McDonald's private practice and from urology surgery performed at SJH.[200] Early in June 1999, Dr. Vjacheslav Shelukhin accompanied Vasili Falko from St. Petersburg to St. Joseph Hospital for evaluation and treatment of cancer. Eastern Maine Medical Center also performed several tests. WABI-TV5 in Bangor interviewed Dr. Shelukhin, Mr. Falko, and Sister Norberta for a segment of its evening news program that aired on June 9. Dr. Shelukhin stayed with Mr. Falko for one week until a treatment plan could be developed.[201]

FELICIAN ADULT DAY CARE

The Felician Adult Day Care continued to maintain and expand its services to the aging adults of the greater Enfield area, living up to its motto, "Sharing the Caring," as it provided a break for families caring for infirm relatives at home. Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, director, strongly believed in operating the center "as a family to continue a homelike atmosphere." She said, "We don't want people to feel like they're in an institution."[202] When the center opened in 1990, its focus was on the care of the frail elderly. Consequently, the care-center's objectives were to promote the client's independence and level of functioning, restore and rehabilitate their ability to function, provide support to their families and caregivers, and foster socialization among the clients.

By 1996, Sister Patricia Marie reported that the center was seeing applications from younger clients who had infirmities that made it impossible

for them to remain at home unsupervised.[203] So the center stepped up to the challenge of providing a safe environment while promoting and supporting each client's wellbeing with engagement in meaningful tasks and participation in daily activities designed to involve them in activities to assist in maintaining their self-esteem, social skills, functioning level, and enjoyment. Each day, staff created opportunities for each resident to experience joy, accomplishment, and fulfillment, making it possible for the clients to thrive in the moment as their best selves.

Since the modest fee clients paid for services at the care center did not cover the actual cost, Sister Patricia relied heavily on creative fundraising and donations so that the center could thrive into the future and the care center's work to enable older people to live their lives well would continue. She quickly learned that grants were one of the best possible ways to maintain the adult day care and that resources were also available for services such as meals, transportation, health promotion, and disease prevention as well as caregiver support. Her efforts were rewarded.[204]

Fundraising

In March 1996, the Greater Hartford Jaycees Foundation presented the care center with a check in the amount of $14,453 to support the van program.[205] Early in 1997, Enfield's state representatives helped to secure a $35,000 Department of Social Services grant that helped purchase a new Dodge van. The grant also paid for equipping the van with a handicapped-access ramp and other special gear. When State Representative Frederick Gelsi, Senator John A. Kissel, Mayor Mary Lou Strom, and several town council members visited the center with Governor John Rowland on Wednesday, July 9, 1997, they were treated to breakfast to say thanks. Rowland was on site for the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new van. Sister Patricia Marie said, "This really was an answer to a prayer." The care center's old van was in disrepair and a replacement was badly needed. With a new van, the care center was able to pick up its clients in the morning and deliver them home in the afternoon.[206]

In June 1996, the North Central Area Agency on Aging, Inc., awarded the care center with $35,000 in state funds to support clients with Alzheimer's disease.[207] The Hartford Courant Foundation gave a $3,000 grant for computers and a training program in 1997.[208] That same year, the 1997 Archbishop's Annual Appeal provided $6,500 to aid the care center in its work.[209] Finally, in 1999, the Greater Hartford Jaycees Foundation awarded a $12,000 grant to assist the care center in continuing to provide quality care to the clients and to fund its nutritional lunch and snack program.[210] To the delight of everyone at the care center, on June 11, 1999, state Sen. and Mrs. John A. Kissel sponsored a special event, a Wine and Cheese Buffet, at the center to benefit its clients.[211]

In the fall of 1996, the care center was awarded certification from the State of Connecticut, and in 1999, certification from the Connecticut Association of Adult Day Care.[212]

National Adult Day Care Week

Each year, Sister Patricia Marie celebrated National Adult Day Care Week, raising awareness about the availability and accessibility of the Felician Adult Day Care in Enfield and proudly recognizing and honoring the participants and staff of the care center with events scheduled for each day of this special week.

Over the years, honored guests included State Representative Fred Gelsi; Enfield Mayor Mary Lou Strom; Town Councilman Scott Kaupin; state representatives Peggy Sayer and Kay Tallarita, who also served as longtime director of Enfield's senior center, and Governor John Rowland, who paid tribute to Sister Patricia for her outstanding service to the community. Each year, Sister Patricia Marie celebrated the care center's foundation day as well as its founder, Sister Mary Augustine Kloza. The planting of a forsythia bush marked the sixth anniversary celebration in 1996. This seemed most appropriate since, as one of the first flowers to appear in spring, forsythia is a common symbol of hope, anticipation, and the renewal of fresh growth. Additionally, one of forsythia's alternative common names is Easter Tree, linking the flower to the resurrection story of Jesus, who opens the way for the generation of life for all.[213]

10th Anniversary Celebration

The Felician Adult Day Care celebrated its tenth anniversary on May 21, 2000, with a Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel. Father Francis T. Kerwan, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Enfield and a board member, was the principal celebrant. Concelebrants were Father Joseph E. Vujs, pastor, St. Bernard Parish, Enfield; Msgr. John A. Abucewicz, former pastor, Holy Trinity Parish, Lowell, Massachusetts; and Redemptorist Father Francis J. Browne, pastor of St. Patrick Parish, Enfield, who also delivered the homily. Redemptorist Brother Francis Roberts served as master of ceremonies.[214]

Dinner at La Renaissance in East Windsor followed the Mass, with longtime Connecticut radio host Brad Davis serving as Master of Ceremonies. Father Vujs offered the invocation before the Toast given by Terrance Kuzman, administrator of Parkway Pavilion Healthcare. A. Cynthia Matthews, executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Aging, delivered the keynote address. Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, represented the Felician Sisters, followed by Mayor Mary Lou Strom. Cathy Crouch, caregiver, and Mary Jo Guerriero, staff member, represented the Felician Adult Day Care. Other notables included Connecticut State Representative, District 59, Stephen M. Jarmoc; State Representative John Kissel, District 7; State Representative Kathleen M. Tallarita, District 58; and Peggy Sayers, District 60. Lieutenant Governor M. Jodi Rell presented an award recognizing the FADC for "ten years of outstanding service in bringing to light one's spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs in a supportive environment. Your endless commitment to humanity and enhancing the quality of life is evident in those whose lives that you have touched." Executive Director Sister Patricia Marie offered closing remarks.[215]

Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski also extended congratulations and prayerful wishes "for extraordinary ministry to the elderly and frail adults of Enfield and the neighboring townships." She wrote, "Let us then thank our Heavenly Father for his many blessings during the past ten years and petition him for continued blessings upon you and your staff, upon the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province, upon the caring family members of your clients, and especially upon the clients themselves whose lives have become more meaningful through your ministry."[216] Reflecting on the care center's first decade of service, Sister Patricia Marie expressed

optimism about the future. She said, "I think more and more people will need the program," and projected that additional crucial services would be needed to make a difference in and enhance life for older adult citizens.[217]

FORMATION

In their article entitled "Catholic Religious Vocations: Decline and Revival," Rodney Stark and Roger Finke reported that at the end of Vatican II, there were 181,421 female religious in the United States. By 1995, that number had substantially declined to 92,107. At the same time, women's religious orders in the United States were not generating new vocations.[218]

The National Religious Vocation Council (NRVC) featured numerous articles on the future of religious life as well as vocation ministry in its journal *Horizon: Journal of the National Religious Vocation Conference*. Articles with titles such as "What does it take to attract and sustain new members to religious communities?"[219] and "How we stay in touch with promising high school students"[220] offered vocation ministers strategies for attracting and sustaining new members. Johnson *et al.* gathered data to help identify the young-adult Catholic population and their significance to the Church.[221] As an older member of Generation X, Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, vocation minister for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, Pennsylvania, set out to explain the world view and sensibilities of her peers in "What religious communities should know about Gen X: A young vocation minister speaks out."[222]

School Sister of Notre Dame Catherine Bertrand, executive director of the NRVC, wrote, "Any group or organization that is serious about its future needs to give a considerable amount of time, energy, and resources to attracting and sustaining younger members."[223] This coincided with the Vocation Focus Statement resulting from Enfield's 1993 Provincial Chapter, "We will strengthen and support a Vocation Program that will project a vision and mission worthy of a life commitment."[224]

'Opening Our Hearts and Homes'

To help actualize this statement from the 1993 Provincial Chapter, the provincial assembly that took place on October 30, 1999, devoted a major part of the day to addressing ways to encourage young women to join their lives with the Felician Sisters. In her opening remarks, Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz invited the sisters to reflect on the question, "What can I *do,* who can I *touch* and *encourage* to pass on the charism of Blessed Mary Angela to the next generation of Felician Sisters?"[225]

During the assembly, the sisters viewed the three-part video "Opening Our Hearts and Homes: A Process to Help Religious Congregations Invite New Members." The goal of the program was to raise the sisters' awareness that the art of invitation and hospitable presence were still key needs in vocation ministry. After the sisters viewed the video, they engaged in note writing and reflection as well as small group sharing. The video considered the following aspects of vocation affirmation and promotion:

Part One– Why do we invite?

> Emphasized the essential need to believe in the viability and vitality of one's religious congregation as a pre-condition for inviting new members to join.

Part Two– Whom do we invite?

Helped to understand young adults today, what they were looking for in religious life, and what skills they needed for religious community life and ministry.

Part Three– How do we invite?

Focused on opportunities, strategies, and actions for becoming communities of hospitality that welcomed and invited new members to join one's congregation.[226]

The program, funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, was developed by the National Religious Vocation Council (NRVC) in conjunction with the National Coalition for Church Vocations, through the Media Education Institute for Vocation Ministers. The video and accompanying materials were available to any sister or local house desiring to use them.

In the New England area, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, provincial coordinator of formation, along with the members of the Vocation Team, continued to provide effective ministry for the province around vocation promotion. They organized a variety of days or weekends to let young women come and be a part of the sisters' lives or to spend a day of recollection. Young women, as well as junior and senior high school students, participated in "Come and See" weekends, overnights, and days.[227]

As Director of Vocations, Sister Francis Marion did presentations for students in several parish schools and Confirmation programs and carried on a large correspondence with women requesting information about the Felician Congregation, many of whom became familiar with the Felician Sisters through *Vision* Magazine, an NRVC publication that offered extensive information about the life of a religious sister. In addition, the magazine provided contact information to connect discerners with vocation directors and religious communities. Finally, the Vocation Director collaborated with vocation personnel in other communities, particularly in the Archdiocese of Hartford, but also in tri-diocesan, regional, and national vocation directors' meetings, and programs.[228]

By the end of the millennium, the vocation team recognized the need to use modern media for vocation promotion. This followed from the 1998 Biennial Assembly that recognized the benefits of forming an ad hoc committee comprised of technologically savvy sisters to plan public relations on the Internet for the Felician Congregation. The sisters continued to offer prayer for perseverance and new vocations, but the sad fact was that there were fewer sisters in the field to witness religious life.

"Come and see"

Perhaps because of the Vocation Team's effort as well as the prayer of the Enfield sisters, the province saw some activity in initial formation and new membership. Sister Maryann Papiez returned from her tertianship experience that took place at Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, from June 26 to August 7, 1995, under the direction of Sister Mary Celestine Giertych, general councilor. "Turn to the Lord Your God . . . Accept His Unconditional Love" was the theme for the program. The intense program for the eleven participating sisters included prayer, study, lived community

and recreational experiences, enabling them to grow and be strengthened in appreciation, knowledge, and love of their vocation to the Felician Congregation as well as to bond with their sisters from the North American provinces.[229] The Holy Spirit sent them forth from this six-week program ready, once again, to strive to fulfill God's will as a Felician Sister.

On August 12, 1995, Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak professed her Final Vows during the festive celebration of the Eucharist celebrated by Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford. He was assisted by Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz and Father Herbert Schmidt, chaplains; Father Thomas M. Ginty, secretary to the archbishop; Rev. Msgr. Daniel J. Plocharczyk, chancellor and moderator of the curia; Father Andrew Apostoli, CFR; and Father Richard Rokos, chaplain, St. Joseph Hospital, Bangor, Maine. Passionist Brother Terrence Scanlon was master of ceremonies. Sisters, family members, and friends shared Sister Thomas' joy as they witnessed this public rite of perpetual profession.[230]

Sister Margaret Mary Lecko professed First Vows in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel on Sunday, August 13, 1995. Father John Chwalek, pastor, St. Stanislaus Parish, Adams, Massachusetts, and chaplains Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz and Father Herbert Schmidt, concelebrated the Eucharistic liturgy. Sisters, family, and friends joined Sister Margaret Mary in celebrating this joyous event.[231] She renewed her vows annually, from 1996 until 2000. After spending almost eight years living the life of a Felician Sister and dedicated to her ministry as a teacher, Sister Margaret Mary decided to leave the community at the close of the 2001 school year.[232]

Joan Boyarchok, a native of Waterbury, Connecticut, and an active parishioner of St. Leo the Great Parish there, was accepted as an affiliate by Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann in the presence of the provincial administration on October 7, 1995.[233] On Sunday, May 5, 1996, she was surrounded by the welcoming love of the sisters who promised prayers and sisterly support as she was formally accepted as a postulant in a brief ceremony.[234] She joined Jennifer Berryhill whose formal acceptance to the postulancy took place on December 2, 1995. Jennifer said, "I felt in my heart a sense of peace I know no words to describe. Now, under the direction of Sister Frances Marion, I take each day as an opportunity to pray, work, learn and share to remember the words that I spoke on my acceptance day, 'Yes, I desire to serve Christ in this Congregation.'"[235]

During a simple and prayerful investiture ceremony on August 9, 1997, Sister Mary Laureann presented the Felician habit, blessed earlier in the day, by Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, to the two postulants, Jennifer Berryhill and Joan Boyarchok. The change of dress was accompanied by the change of name. Jennifer received the name Sister Clare Marie and Joan the name Sister Mary Angela.[236] A Mass of Thanksgiving followed on August 10, with sisters, relatives, and friends celebrating this next step on the journey for these two sisters.[237] After two years of further discernment of their vocation in solitude and intimacy with the Lord and in preparation for their life in the Felician Congregation that took place at Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Convent in Livonia, Michigan, the two sisters were admitted to the profession of vows. On August 14, 1999, Sister Clare Marie and Sister Mary Angela gave themselves totally to God in the Congregation of the Felician Sisters, making their first profession of vows during the celebration of the

Eucharistic liturgy.[238] On the anniversary of their first profession, August 14, 2000, both sisters renewed these vows.[239]

Because of the small number of sisters in initial formation, sisters were also meeting interprovincially. Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House served as the setting for an interprovincial formation weekend for sisters in temporary profession of vows. Two sisters from Immaculate Conception Province in Lodi, New Jersey, joined sisters in Enfield from July 28 to 31, 2000. Sister Mary Rita Karvetski and Sister Maryann Agnes Mueller, along with their director Sister Mary Aquinas Szott, met with Sister Clare Marie Berryhill and Sister Mary Angela Boyarchok and their director, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha. In addition to sharing prayer, enjoying common recreation and their lived experiences in community, the sisters traveled to the National Shrine of the Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Nestled in the beautiful Berkshire hills of Western Massachusetts, the shrine was the perfect site for reflection and prayer. A sharing session on Monday morning wrapped up the long weekend, followed by a closing service and devotional renewal of vows.[240]

The Spirit's Creative Presence

Sponsored for provincial ministers and formation personnel from throughout the North American provinces, the Felician Formation Convocation took place at Maryville Center in Holly, Michigan, from October 6 to 10, 1997. Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, formation coordinator, represented the Enfield province at the week-long renewal. They joined the group of forty-seven participants that also included Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski and general councilors Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak and Sister Mary Lee Przybylski.[241]

Together with the Felician coordinators of formation, Vicar General Sister Mary Celestine Giertych organized the program to reinvigorate the flame of Blessed Mary Angela's charism in the formators. Keynote speakers and breakout sessions developed the theme for the convocation, "The Spirit's Creative Presence." Nationally renowned conference speakers included Franciscan scholar Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, who reflected on the "Felician Vision Statement," while Sister Barbara Fiand, SSND, spoke on "Transformative Leadership," and Sister Carole Riley, CDP, addressed "Mid-life Transitions."[242]

Breakout sessions focused on the two sub-themes: "Rebirthing Blessed Angela's Dream in the Third Millennium," and "Living the Felician/Franciscan Vision." Presenters included Felician Sisters, Sister Anne Marie Jablonicky and Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz who spoke on "Initial Formation of Older Candidates;" Sister Rosemarie Goins, "Franciscans Shaping a New World, Justice and Peace Issues;" Sister Paula Mary Palasz, "Dialogue for the Future," and Sister Elaine Marie Frigo, "Modeling and Mentoring in the Formation Journey." Other presenters were Sister of Notre Dame de Namur Barbara Metz, who discussed "Contemporary Approach to the Vows," and Father Bart A. Karwacki, OFM, Conv., who spoke on "New Visions for a Lifelong Journey."[243]

Sister Frances Marion said she found the meeting enriching and appreciated being able to share ideas and programs because they helped to create a sense of unity among the sisters. In their efforts to plan formation programs, formation coordinators from throughout North America met periodically. Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House hosted the meeting that took place from August

14 to 16, 1995, coordinated by Vicar General Sister Mary Celestine Giertych. The group reviewed the formation handbooks to assure their consistency with the Congregational document, *Fundamentals of Formation–The Spirit's Creative Presence*. Sister Frances Marion, director of formation, and Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, director of the sisters in temporary profession, represented the Enfield province.[244]

Sister Frances Marion participated in the interprovincial meeting of coordinators of formation held at Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, Illinois, from May 14 to 16, 1998. The meeting focused on creating a new vocation brochure.[245] The idea of publishing an interprovincial vocation brochure was first discussed at the Formation Convocation in 1997 and then presented to the provincial ministers during their 1998 Biennial Assembly. Publication of the brochure then became a project of the North American coordinators in May 1998. In October 1999, the project was completed with the printing of a four-panel brochure that featured photographs of sisters from each of the eight North American provinces. The back panel listed the addresses of the twelve Felician provinces and included the addresses of the generalate as well as the formation house in Coahuila, Mexico. Each sister also had the opportunity to share projects undertaken in her respective province to promote vocations.[246]

Ongoing Formation

Prior to renewal of their vows each August, planned formative activities for the temporary professed sisters focused on the integration of prayer, community life, and the apostolate. They regularly assessed their own progress in living the evangelical life and integrating their life in the Spirit with their life in community and in ministry. They met frequently with their director, who provided continued guidance for their development in religious life. As they continued to discern their call to live the vowed life in the Felician community, their focus was on *Response to Love* and the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* ("On the consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the world").[247]

Groups of pre- and post-tertians met several times throughout the year to provide for the specific needs of the sisters at these levels of formation. Meetings arranged in various houses of the province gave sisters the opportunity to experience community away from their familiar everyday surroundings. Resources for reading, reflection, and discussion included "Trans-forming Religious Life" and "Turned to the Lord" by noted Franciscan scholars Father Michael Crosby, OFM, Cap., and Father Thaddeus D. Horgan, OFM, respectively. Discussions also focused on the charism of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska and the spirit of the Vision Statement of the Felician Congregation.[248]

The annual renewal for golden jubilarians

Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski continued to facilitate the annual renewal program for golden jubilarians at the provincial house from September 23 to 24, 1995. Sixty sisters participated in the program that had as its theme, "To Be Eucharist to All," derived from the Vision Statement of the 1994 General Chapter. Discussions focused on the charism and life of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela, lover of the Eucharist, as researched by Sister Mary

Amadeus Lewicka, former superior general, and Father Julian Arent, OFM, chaplain at Our Lady of Lourdes Infirmary in Lodi, New Jersey.[249]

Since the 1996 program coincided with the closing of the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia (August 3-4), the words of St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (9:24) especially resonated with the participants, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it." Sixty-seven sisters participated in the discussions led yet again by Sister Mary Landeline, and contributed to deepening their search for what it means to "Be Sister" (Vision Statement) to Jesus, to our own community members, to others.[250]

Immediately following the untimely death of Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski on July 18, 1997, Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski assumed responsibility as director of the Golden Jubilarian Formation Group. At the end of July 1998, she conducted a three-day renewal workshop at the provincial house for this group. The primary intent of the reflections was to reclaim the Eucharistic presence in the community and to renew devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament. Themes for each day, at once inspirational and informational, were "Praying-Eucharist;" "Caring-Sister-Reclaim," and "Nurturing-Servant-Renew." Fifty-three sisters participated in this experience, which also served as an immediate preparation for the celebration of the provincial feast of Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula and as a thanksgiving observance for sisters celebrating their 60th and 70th anniversaries of religious life.[251]

ASSOCIATES, SHARING THE SPIRIT AND MISSION

Christifideles Laici (The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People),[252] a summation of the 1987 World Synod of Bishops, spoke about the phenomenon of lay people associating among themselves. These groups often showed themselves to be diverse from one another, yet they all focused on a common purpose, that is, their complete participation in the Church's mission of carrying forth the Gospel of Christ, the source of hope for humanity, and the renewal of society.

While clear definitions of association were still a bit elusive at this time, the laity continued to come in great numbers. In fact, those who studied the history of religious life in this period noted that the decrease in new vowed membership was accompanied by an unusual growth in lay association.[253]

By 1995, a Franciscan survey reported about 14,500 associates in the United States, representing a greater than 50% increase in the numbers joining lay association. Approximately 1200 lay men and women each year were finding their way to some formal association with a religious order. Mercy Sister Rosemary Jeffries, a sociologist who studied this phenomenon, maintained that associates were being attracted to the order by the charisms alive in the current members of the order they were joining. She wrote, "Associates see something in religious life that many religious communities are unable to see. Associates see communities they want to be a part of; they see communities with whom they want to share their time and talent and they see communities with whom they want to make a commitment that fits their lifestyle."[254]

In 1999, the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) commissioned the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) to produce a study of associate relationship in the United States,

the first study of its kind ever conducted. For this study, CARA contacted all 1,100 major superiors in religious institutes that belonged to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), or the Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) with a questionnaire to be completed by the director/coordinator of associates in their institute. A total of 812 units responded to the survey and 429 (53 percent) reported that they had associates. Another forty-three institutes reported that they planned to have associates in the future. A report of the findings from that study was completed in May 2000.[255]

As the director of Enfield's associate program, Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz paid careful attention to the responsibility placed on her by the province. Her dedication and commitment to the program expressed how convinced she was of the value of walking with the associates to create a closer relationship with the community. She held regular meetings that brought the associates together, provided opportunities for personal growth through days of renewal, retreats, study days, and workshops, as well as newsletters. She invited local clergy and utilized the talents of the sisters, including Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski before her unexpected death, Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski, and Sister Mary Angelora Floryan, who shared on topics such as "The History of the Felician Congregation in the United States," "The Millennium and the Gift of Franciscan Holiness and Joy in the Church," and, "He Calls Us Each by Name."[256]

The associates also had opportunities for ministry in the spirit of Mother Angela, such as assisting at various community functions including the annual Lawn Festival, the Pre-Christmas Sale, the Polish Supper, and tag sales. They became involved in various supportive ministries in the provincial house and infirmary, visiting the sick sisters and assisting them in small ways, helping in the kitchen, whether that involved serving food or washing pots and pans, and substituting for the sisters for Eucharistic adoration or as receptionist in the main office.[257] The associates shared in the life of the sisters through their participation in praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the rosary, spending time in Eucharistic adoration, paying their respects at wakes of the sisters and attending their funerals, and joining the sisters in jubilee celebrations and other community events. They took advantage of retreat days with the sisters and days of recollection, as well as resources in the spiritual library.[258]

A Historic First

Three Enfield associates—Louise and George Archambault and Celine Cote—accompanied by Sister Mary Leontine Burza—participated in the first Interprovincial Meeting of Felician Associates and Directors held in Immaculate Conception Provincial House in Lodi, New Jersey. At the invitation of Sister Mary Antonelle Chunka, provincial minister, ten Felician associates, representing seven provinces, gathered from October 24-26, 1996.[259] Sister Leontine substituted for Sister Mary Seraphine, who remained in Enfield for the formal opening of the general visitation of the Enfield province.

The theme for the meeting, "As it was in the beginning . . . Is now . . . And as the Spirit leads us. . . ," attempted to capture the historical beginning of the Felician associate movement, to enable the sisters and associates to share policies and programs implemented in the various provinces, and to generate

a vision of the future.[260] Buffalo Felician Sister Mary Jolene Jasinski, the guest keynote speaker, shared information from her thesis, "Associate Program of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice."[261] In her address entitled, "Understanding the Associate Movement in the Church," she clarified the concept of associate/association and reviewed the history and development of associations of the laity as well as their role in the ministry of the Church. She credited Vatican II with its emphasis on the "universal call to holiness" for stimulating the emerging role of the laity in the mission of the Church.[262]

Sister Jolene encouraged the associate groups to grow in their "understanding and expression of, and comfort with, the focus of their commitment." Acknowledging that the movement was undoubtedly Spirit-filled, she told the associates, "Our challenge is to remain open to the Spirit leading us into the future, to learn from our experiences and to continue to listen to ourselves, to each other, and to God's grace in our lives."[263] In round table meeting format, directors and associates told their stories about the beginning of the associate program in their respective provinces. During additional sessions, the themes of spirituality, community, and ministry found expression among the associates of each province.[264] Louise Archambault spoke about the humble beginning of the program in Enfield, her husband George talked about the involvement of the associates in the program, and Celine Cote shared the spiritual benefits of membership.[265] Associate directors from three provinces coordinated the rotating sessions: Sister Carole Mary Capoun (Chicago), Spirituality; Sister Mary Andrew Budinski (Coraopolis), Community; and Sister Suzanne Marie Kush (Buffalo), Ministry.[266]

After discussion that focused on the balance of these three elements and the need for growth and new insights, the group shared dreams for the future, concretizing these dreams with practical applications in new program formats. A "quilt-making" prayer session on preserving treasured memories crowned the weekend. This idea was realized in a trip to historic Ellis Island where the history makers of the day celebrated with the history makers of yesterday. The three associates returned to Enfield enthusiastic, pleased, and inspired by their weekend experience.[267]

'Guiding Associate Communities'

After serving as assistant to Sister Mary Seraphine in 1999, Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski was appointed director of the program, ably assisted by Sister Seraphine for the ministry year 2000-2001. On November 11, 2000, along with Felician associates Catherine Chilicki and Joan Harding, Sister Mary Felicita attended the conference sponsored by the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) held at the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse Immaculate Conception Convent in Hamburg, New York. Sister of Charity of New York Ellen Rose O'Donnell, executive co-director of NACAR, explored the theme, "Leadership for the Future: Guiding Associate Communities" as a new and growing reality. Interaction with the directors and associates from diverse communities revealed the challenges for the future. These included the ages of current associates and ways to attract new associates and to move them to decision-making responsibilities.[268]

The following day, Sunday, November 12, directors and associates from six provinces—Livonia, Michigan; Buffalo, New York; Chicago, Illinois; Coraopolis,

Pennsylvania; Mississauga, Ontario, Canada; and Enfield—gathered for a day of inspiration at Immaculate Heart of Mary Provincial House in Buffalo. With a single voice, the associates expressed their deep-seated belief that they were drawn to the Felician Sisters because of their love for the Eucharist and for Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as well as their service to the poor.[269]

The Enfield associate group grew slowly, adding two or three new members each year. At the recommitment ceremony held in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House chapel on May 25, 2000, nineteen associates expressed their desire to share the spirit of Blessed Mary Angela's charism and the seraphic spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. They promised to collaborate with the sisters in fulfilling the Felician mission in the Church as well as their own baptismal call for spiritual growth. Two new members, Pauline Staples and Lorraine Dentamaro, joined the associate members in their commitment to work with the sisters in collaborative ministry projects. Unknown to anyone at the time, Pauline Staples would figure significantly in the province's history in the future.[270]

FELICIAN INTERPROVINCIAL RENEWAL PROGRAM

At both the 1994 General Chapter and the 1996 Biennial Assembly, the members discussed ways to fulfill the directive regarding the generalate, that "The Congregation shall be committed to making the generalate a vibrant center from which our Felician charism radiates to all people." At the 1996 meeting, the participants decided to offer a "Felician Renewal Program" during the summer months, and Sister Mary Celestine Giertych, vicar general, was commissioned to study the feasibility of such a program. The program that she ultimately prepared and directed deepened the participants' awareness of the international dimension of the Felician community as they personally explored their Felician/Franciscan roots.[271]

Once program details were finalized, each province was invited to send at least one or two sisters to participate in the program from July 4 to August 12, 1998. Because the relatively high cost presented a challenge for the Enfield province, the provincial council decided to send one sister, Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, provincial secretary. While Sister Joan was grateful for the opportunity, she said she was unable to participate at this time, and the council agreed that Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, council member, would represent the province.[272] However, Sister Rosalma was recuperating after surgery, so Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, also a council member, accepted the opportunity to take part.[273]

Sister Janice was among the twenty Felician Sisters from the United States, Canada, and Brazil who spent six weeks on pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi, Austria, Prague, and several sites in Poland including Kalisz, Warsaw, and Krakow. This intensive program focused on three dimensions: ecclesial, Franciscan, and Felician. Each of these dimensions was developed through common prayer, Eucharistic liturgies, conferences, and reflection papers written by Felician Sisters, including one by Sister Frances Marion Bonczar.[274]

Each day focused on or incorporated a theme, special quality, or attribute related to the place of pilgrimage. Themes developed in the papers ran from art and spirituality, culture and the Church, suffering and martyrdom, the role of Mary and women in the Church, friendship and the spiritual life to God's created beauty in the Alps. Daily schedules were interspersed with discussions

and pilgrimages to shrines and religious sites as well as tours of churches, with participation in prayer services of other Catholic rites.

The pilgrimage in Rome consisted of walking tours to numerous churches—Saint Peter's Basilica, the Papal Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, and the Capuchin Church of the Immaculate Conception, which houses the remains of St. Felix of Cantalice, as well as top-rated attractions such as the Roman Forum, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, the Vatican Museum, and the Scala Sancta. Sister Janice said, "Rome was hot and humid, and we all appreciated water, our good shoes, and a shower, food, and rest after our long walking tours. . . . The highlight of our pilgrimage in Rome was the audience with the Holy Father at St. Peter's Basilica and our special opportunity to be in a group picture with His Holiness."



S Janice Marie Gaudette (third from right), with Felician Sisters participating in the 1998 Felician Interprovincial Renewal Program, meet Pope John Paul II.

During the four-day pilgrimage to Assisi, the group visited numerous sites associated with St. Francis, including *Poggio Bustone, La Foresta, Greccio*, and *Subiaco*. They prayed at the significant sites in Assisi—the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, the Basilica of *Santa Maria degli Angeli* with the Portiuncula, and the Sanctuary of San Damiano. The sisters reflected in the Hermitage of Carceri and visited Cantalice, the birthplace of St. Felix, as well as Bagnoregio, the birthplace of St. Bonaventure. The pilgrimage continued by train to the magnificent Alps where the sisters meditated on the splendor of the mountains that taught Sophia Truszkowska to pray. In Prague, they reflected on the relationship between St. Clare and St. Agnes before visiting the Convent of St. Agnes there.

The sisters in Kalisz warmly welcomed the pilgrims to the birthplace of Sophia Truszkowska, where they were caught up in the depth of spiritual experiences related to the life of the Felician foundress. The sisters also journeyed to Warsaw and Częstochowa. Sister Janice said, "There were so many highlights in Poland. In Krakow, how special it was to see the altar and tomb of Blessed Angela, to kneel in her bedroom, to touch her bed, and to visit

the garden she loved." Krakow marked the official ending of the pilgrimage, after which the sisters returned to Rome by way of Vienna and Venice.

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

Catholics had been hearing about preparing for the Jubilee Year of 2000 for quite a while since it had become a major theme in the writings of Pope John Paul II. In fact, in his apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, issued on November 10, 1994, he wrote that "preparing for the Year 2000 has become as it were a hermeneutical key of my Pontificate."[275] Regarded by some as one of his most remarkable documents, the Pope called the Church to observe the turn of the millennium not in a secular fashion, but as a spiritual moment.

Addressed to all the faithful, the document outlined a celebration resembling a long spiritual retreat or period of reflection to prepare for the bimillennium of the birth of Jesus Christ. To prepare for the Year of Jubilee, the Pope suggested a more remote period of preparation during which the Church would engage first in a period of reflective thanksgiving for the great gift of God in Jesus Christ and second in a period of self-examination and repentance, not only for present failures and sins, but also for the past sins of Christians, especially during the millennium that was ending.[276]

The Pope proposed a three-year celebration that would culminate in the year 2000, marked by a trinitarian focus. The year 1997 would focus on Christ and on what it means to be a Christian, with the virtue of faith and renewed commitment to Christian unity given special emphasis. The work of the Spirit in the Church and in Christianity and the virtue of hope would characterize the reflections of the year 1998. Finally, the journey of authentic conversion would mark 1999, with the virtue of love and its articulation in a new commitment to peace, justice, and service to the poor, the major concern. In all three stages, the Pope expressed the hope that these moments might become occasions for ecumenical conversation and participation and that the anniversary might become a dramatic moment in the life of the Church.[277]

In his letter, the Pope explained that the custom of Jubilees began in the Old Testament and continued in the history of the Church. "All Jubilees," he said, "refer to the Messianic mission of Christ, who came as the one 'anointed' by the Holy Spirit, the one 'sent by the Father.' It is he who proclaims the good news to the poor. It is he who brings liberty to those deprived of it, who frees the oppressed and gives back sight to the blind (cf. Mt 11:4-5; Lk 7:22). In this way he ushers in 'a year of the Lord's favor,' which he proclaims not only with his words but above all by his actions."[278] The future, the Pope asserted, held remarkable possibilities for those who opened themselves to the Holy Spirit's intentions. He insisted that the year 2000 was a door of divine grace. He said that if people crossed this "threshold of hope" into God's purposes, they could take part in a "new springtime" that would herald the transformation of themselves, the Church, and the entire planet.[279]

The Pope acknowledged that the prescriptions for the jubilee year "largely remained ideals—more a hope than an actual fact," but they were meant "to restore equality among all the children of Israel." The riches of Creation "were to be considered as a common good of the whole of humanity." He said, "Those who possessed these goods as personal property were really only stewards, ministers charged with working in the name of God, who remains the sole

owner in the full sense, since it is God's will that created goods should serve everyone in a just way. *The jubilee year was meant to restore this social justice.*[280]

Congregational Preparation

At the September 1996 Biennial Assembly, the Congregation's leaders made detailed plans for the three-year period of preparation, with a different action taking place across the Congregation in each of those years. The plans for each of the years from 1997 to 1999 were developed around a Marian-centered theme and included a suggested action and activity.[281]

The theme for 1997 was *Mary–Woman of Faith, Mother of the Incarnate Word*. Because it was "a time to deepen our FAITH as we strive to be EUCHARIST," the sisters received an opening prayer, a theological reflection, and a prepared historical note specific to each province. These brief pieces from the North American, Brazilian, and Polish provinces highlighted how Felician Sisters, throughout their history, have responded to the needs of the People of God by being Eucharist–giving ourselves to others as Christ did for us—to bring about justice. The provinces were also encouraged to engage in one activity of social justice, particular to their circumstances.

The theme for 1998 was *Mary–Woman of Hope, a woman docile to the voice of the Spirit, a woman of silence and attentiveness.* The suggested action was that close to the feast of Pentecost, the sisters of each local home would use a theological reflection prepared on the theme of the year. The sisters were encouraged to sign the Jubilee 2000 Petition, which called the leaders of lending nations to forgive the international debts of the most impoverished nations. This petition was to be presented at the G7 Summit in 1999 in Germany.

Mary–Woman of Love, the highly favoured daughter of the Father, the perfect model of love towards God and neighbour. Mary most holy – bringing order to the world was the theme for 1999. The sisters were encouraged to focus on deepening their LOVE while striving to be SERVANT to All. Appropriately, the action decided on was for the sisters to hold an evening with the poor that would include adoration, reflection, discussion, and sharing of food. The suggestion for the year was to write letters to heads of state declaring the non-violence position of the Felician Sisters.

The Enfield sisters contributed suggestions for their preparation during the provincial assembly held in March 1997. After gathering the ideas, an ad hoc committee created a three-year plan that was distributed to the local houses for implementation each year prior to the beginning of the Advent season.[282]

Hartford Archdiocesan Millennium Mass

Meanwhile, Felician principals and teachers from St. Adalbert, St. Bernard, St. Martha, and the Enfield Montessori School, all in Enfield, as well as St. Joseph School in Rockville and SS. Cyril and Methodius in Hartford gathered with more than 2,000 Catholic school principals, administrators, and teachers from the three dioceses in Connecticut at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford for a special Millennium Mass on September 18, 1997. Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford, was the principal celebrant, joined by concelebrants Most Rev. Edward M. Egan, bishop of Norwich, and Hartford auxiliary bishops Peter A. Rosazza and Christie A. Macaluso. In his homily, Father Richard J. Malone, secretary of education for the Archdiocese of Boston, emphasized

the critical role of Catholic educators as the Church began its three-year preparation for the millennium.[283]

Millennium Preparation in Our Lady of the Angels Province

To help the sisters to take part in the Jubilee preparations, each local house received a copy of the book *Celebrate 2000! Reflections on Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father,* a compilation of brief excerpts from the Holy Father's extensive written works that followed his strategy for preparation. The three-year reader provided the sisters with one reading for each week of the three years. In a series of talks, Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski helped to prepare the sister residents of both the provincial house and the infirmary, and each year, sisters from throughout the province gathered at the provincial house for an Advent and Lenten day of reflection that developed a theme related to the Millennium.[284]

At the end of the reflection day held in Enfield on December 4, 1999, Father Joseph M. Cooper, rector of St. Joseph Cathedral in Manchester, New Hampshire, sealed the main chapel door during an evening prayer service. Designating one door in the convent as the Jubilee Year door was to be a visual reminder to each sister to "open wide the doors to Christ."[285] The door was officially opened on Christmas Eve. Father Cooper further developed the theme, "Fasting and Feasting in the New Millennium," for the Lenten Day of Reflection on March 18, 2000, focusing on the concepts in Leviticus 25 for celebration of the Jubilee Year. At the close of this spiritual experience, Father blew the shophar, summoning the sisters to join the festivities of the year of favor of the Lord.[286]

The Holy Year Door at the Cathedral of St. Joseph

The pope's ambassador to the United States, Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, apostolic nuncio, helped Connecticut Catholics begin their celebration of the 2,000th anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. Archbishop Montalvo blessed a "Jubilee Door" frame that was specially built inside the Hartford cathedral.[287] The wooden frame included the coats of arms of the pope and of Hartford Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin and was inscribed, "Open Wide the Doors to Christ." Archbishop Montalvo explained that it would serve as a symbolic portal for pilgrims to pass through to enter the spirit of the Holy Year proclaimed for the year 2000 by Pope John Paul II. In his homily, Archbishop Cronin said the visit of the papal nuncio bound the diocese in a special way to the pope's declared Jubilee Year. He noted that the world was about to celebrate the turn of the century and a new millennium, but that "many will not realize we are celebrating the birth of Christ." He urged Catholics to be conscious of the challenges ahead. "We must open wide the doors to Christ in our hearts."[288]

After the blessing, the doors within the frame were tied shut with a gray cincture, a ceremonial rope, and were not opened again until just before midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. In a ceremony that night at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome, the pope would officially declare the "Great Jubilee of the Year 2000." During the Mass for the blessing, Archbishop Montalvo said, "The blessing of this Holy Door, in preparation for the Jubilee, is an outward sign of our willingness to enter into true and real spiritual renewal. Inasmuch as you dedicate yourselves to true spiritual renewal, you shall come to know a more profound peace and joy, which will abide with you not only at Christmas and throughout the Holy Year, but for all the days of your lives."[289]

The Mass was attended by eight representatives from each of the archdiocese's 219 parishes in Hartford, New Haven, and Litchfield counties. About 150 priests attended, along with religious men and women, seminarians, and deacons. Representatives of many Catholic organizations, agencies, and ministries of the archdiocese, including the Knights of Columbus participated. Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, members of the provincial council, and a group of twenty-five sisters represented the Felician Sisters.[290] Many people brought cameras and took pictures of the door frame and the papal nuncio. People who could not get to Rome were encouraged to visit specially designated pilgrim churches in their own dioceses as an act of repentance for their sins and to renew their spiritual life.[291]

On Christmas Eve, in a ceremony in the Basilica of St. Peter, the Pope took a hammer to bricks that walled in the huge bronze Holy Door to the basilica that was closed at the end of the last Holy Year, in 1985.[292] On the last day of the year, December 31, 1999, throughout the Enfield province, the eve of the Third Millennium was observed prayerfully, with the sisters gathering for a Holy Hour of Thanksgiving for graces received as well as to prepare for the coming Third Millennium.[293]

Jubilee Year Celebration in Bangor, Maine

Eight sisters from St. Joseph Convent in Bangor, Maine, participated in the impressive and heart-warming Jubilee Year 2000 Celebration held at the Bangor Auditorium on Sunday, November 28, 1999. Most Rev. Michael R. Cote, auxiliary bishop of Portland presided at the solemn Eucharistic celebration. Since it was the First Sunday of Advent, the Blessing and Lighting of the Advent Wreath was included in the Introductory Rite, followed by the Solemn Entrance Procession with altar servers, concelebrants, lectors, and Bishop Cote, led by the Knights of Columbus. Sister Mary Alfreda Charzewski, Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, Sister Mary Edmund Dzienkowski, Sister Mary Fabian Cymes, Sister Mary John Fryc, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, and Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak joined the faithful of the Church in Maine to prepare for the Third Millennium. Dinner followed at Pilot's Grill in Bangor.[294]

At a special Mass joining the Church throughout the world and Holy Father John Paul II as he closed the year on the Feast of the Epiphany, parishioners from six cluster parishes in the Bangor Area celebrated the closing of Jubilee Year 2000 on Sunday, January 7, 2001, at St. John's Church in Bangor. Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz, Sister Mary John Fryc, and Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak participated in the celebration. A distinctive aspect of the celebration was the selection of youth ministers, the future leaders of the faith who had already begun their work of leading the Church through the new millennium. A reception in Father Keegan Hall followed the special Eucharistic liturgy where new friendships, developed through the cluster gatherings, continued to be nurtured.[295]

Millennium Mission in Enfield

The five Catholic parishes in Enfield—St. Bernard's, St. Patrick's, St. Martha's, St. Adalbert's, and Holy Family—coordinated an unprecedented series of mission services from Sunday evening, March 26, through Thursday, March 30, 2000. Nearly 1,000 parishioners, including Felician Sisters from the

provincial house campus as well as local convents in Enfield, made the journey together, openly professing their faith during the five-day program. Enfield, a community with a deep Catholic heritage, supported five parishes. Sharing a week of services among the churches was the idea of Redemptorist priest Father Francis Browne, pastor at St. Patrick's in the heart of the town's Thompsonville section. "I'm a Redemptorist, and one of the things Redemptorists do is give missions—a time of extraordinary preachings, time of extraordinary grace, somewhat akin to the Protestant idea of a revival," Father Browne said. "It's a time to try to reach out to people and revive their faith. It's for people who have been away from the Church and need an opportunity to come back, and it's a time to strengthen the faith of people who are close to the Church," he said.[296]

The five parishes invited two Redemptorist missionaries—Father Patrick Woods from Brooklyn, New York, and Father John McGowan from West End, New Jersey—to lead the services. From Sunday through Thursday, they preached at morning Masses at each church, led the evening services, and spoke to students at the town's Catholic schools. The evening series began with daily rosary at 7 p.m. followed by a liturgical service at 7:30. Themes for each evening of the schedule were: "Jesus, The Lord of Time" on Sunday at St. Patrick's; "Forgiveness and Reconciliation" on Monday at St. Martha's; "The Word Becomes Flesh" on Tuesday at St. Bernard's; "The Gift of Grace: The Light in Darkness" on Wednesday at St. Adalbert's; and "Marian Mass: Holy Ground" on Thursday at Holy Family. The mission closed with a service entrusting the town of Enfield to Our Lady of the Millennium. Each parish received a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and an evergreen tree to plant in memory of the blessings received during the mission. One of the mission's organizers said, "I think this will be something we'll all remember. The ultimate aim of a mission is reconciliation. I think it's wonderful that we're getting together this way."[297]

Millennium Pilgrimage

On May 14, 2000, twenty-one Felician Sisters and five Felician associates from throughout New England and eastern New York set out on their Millennium Pilgrimage to St. Joseph Basilica in Webster, Massachusetts. Msgr. Anthony S. Czarnecki, rector, presided at the Marian service in the basilica. Before touring the basilica, the group passed through the Holy Door. A highlight of the tour was the seven-foot mural of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela on the ceiling of the choir.[298] Lou Patricia Rogers, a Boulder, Colorado artist, noted for her paintings depicting religious, mythological, and nature themes, was commissioned to paint the mural on canvas. After completing the painting, Henryk Krzeminski, a specialist in renaissance murals and a well-known decorator of churches in both Europe and the United States, put on the finishing touches.[299]

Through the leadership and outstanding effort of Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa, principal of St. Joseph School, the students raised $5,000 within one year to defray the cost of the mural. Sisters participating in the tour included native daughters Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, Sister Mary Adelia Markiewicz, and Sister Mary Amandine Zdrok. Also attending the event were Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa, Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, Sister Margaret Mary Lecko, Sister Jeanne Marie Akalski, Sister Mary Valenta Akalski, and Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski.[300]



Mural of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela on the ceiling of St. Joseph Basilica in Webster, MA.

In his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium*), written *To my Brother Bishops, to Priests and Deacons, Men and Women Religious and all the Lay Faithful at the Close of the Great Jubilee Year 2000*, Pope John Paul II outlined the priorities for the Church for the third millennium and beyond, what he called "a new stage of the Church's journey." He invited his readers to "remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm, and to look forward to the future with confidence: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever'" (Heb 13:8). Further on, he wrote: "If ours has been a genuine pilgrimage, it will have as it were stretched our legs for the journey still ahead." He reminded his readers that "The risen Jesus accompanies us on our way and enables us to recognize him, as the disciples of Emmaus did, 'in the breaking of the bread' (Lk 24:35). May he find us watchful, ready to recognize his face and run to our brothers and sisters with the good news: 'We have seen the Lord!'" (Jn 20:25)[301]

125th Anniversary, American Foundation

Anniversaries can be moments of great grace. They are times not only to reflect on the event being celebrated, but also to experience something of the inner life of the event and consequently to grasp why it is so important to be remembered. Anniversaries are a time of reflection and remembrance, a time to celebrate incredible growth and the people who made it possible, as well as a time to imagine and explore what lies ahead. The year 1999 marked the quasquicentennial, the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the Felician Sisters in North America. Were it not for the five pioneer Felicians, the Felician Congregation in North America might never have existed. Those five multiplied into almost 5,000 American Felician Sisters. By all accounts, it was an extraordinary 125 years. As Sister Mary Janice Ziolkowski wrote in her historical account of the Felician Sisters Foundation in North America, during those years, the sisters were "gifted with an endless array of untold graces at the hands of Divine Providence in an ever-changing world of shifting territorial boundaries and expanding frontiers in space."[302] In 1999, the sisters celebrated 125 years of what God had done.

The anniversary was an opportunity to remember and give thanks, and a considerable measure of excitement surrounded the planning of the celebration. Congregational planning began at the Biennial Assembly held in Rome from September 15 to 25, 1996. The provincial leaders who gathered for the meeting identified the five most significant reasons for celebrating this historic event.

- To immortalize the memory of the five pioneer sisters: Mother Mary Monica Sybilska, Sister Mary Cajetan Jankiewicz, Sister Mary Wenceslaus Zubrzycka, Sister Mary Vincentine Kalwa, and Sister Mary Raphael Swożeniowska.
- To rediscover the role and contributions made regarding the American Foundation by the following: Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, Mother Mary Magdalena Borowska, Rev. Joseph Dąbrowski, and Blessed Honorat Kożminski.
- To celebrate the gift of the Felician Sisters to the Catholic Church in North America.
- To preserve the spirit of the American founders in sowing the seed of ministry in North America.
- To recommit to the risk-taking and daring of our American founders in living the vision and charism of Blessed Mary Angela.[303]

Enfield's Anniversary Celebrations

On October 11, 1998, the Enfield province opened the year's celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the North American Foundation of the Felician Sisters and the Centenary of the Death of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, foundress of the Felician Sisters. The focal event of the day was the Mass of Thanksgiving at Holy Family Church in Enfield with Most Rev. Michael R. Cote, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Portland, Maine, as the principal celebrant and homilist. Twenty-two priests concelebrated. During the Mass, the sisters renewed their devotion and consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, praying for perseverance as consecrated women, seeking to "cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world" (Mission Statement). The combined choir of Felician Sisters and the St. Bernard Parish Choir of Enfield, under the direction of Beth Surapine, director of music at St. Bernard Parish, augmented the solemnity of the occasion. Following the Mass, 550 people, including sisters, religious of several communities, relatives, benefactors, and friends, enjoyed a catered dinner in the provincial house.[304]

Later that month, during the provincial assembly, Sister Mary Laureann told the sisters that the celebration was "a day to be proud of and grateful for what Felicians have done in the Church and throughout the world." She encouraged the sisters to be mindful that Blessed Mary Angela "accompanies us as we journey to internalize our Vision Statement which challenges us to conversion."[305]

125th Anniversary of the American Foundation Pilgrimage

Four sisters from Our Lady of the Angels Province participated in the 125th anniversary pilgrimage celebrating the Felician Foundation in America from November 19-27, 1999. This historic journey was the culmination of a year-



S Frances Marion Bonczar carries the photo of Blessed Mary Angela in the entrance procession of the Mass celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the North American foundation of the Felician Sisters and the Centenary of the Death of Blessed Mary Angela.



S Joan Marie Swierzb with the picture of Our Lady of Częstochowa, whom Mother Angela named the "Foundress" of the Felician Congregation.

long observance commemorating the arrival of the five pioneer Felician Sisters who came to the United States in 1874 to teach children of Polish immigrants in rural Wisconsin. Two sisters from the provincial administration, Sister Mary Laureann and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, and two sisters from the province, Sister Barbara Theresa Mary Martis and Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, traveled to Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, Illinois, to begin the ten-day pilgrimage that took them through parts of Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and New York as they retraced their earliest beginnings in North America to commemorate the 125th anniversary of their foundation on the North American continent.[306] The group included thirty-three sisters from Poland with sixteen sponsored by the North American provinces.[307] Seven Polish sisters missioned in Rome and at the Museum in Krakow also participated. Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski said that the yearlong celebration was designed to inspire and encourage sisters to deepen their personal and corporate appreciation of the pioneer sisters' contributions to the American foundation.[308]

The sisters assembled in Chicago on November 19 where they received a brief historical orientation to the roots of the congregation in Polonia.[309] The participants were encouraged to ponder "the great things God has done for us through our pioneer Felician Sisters" as well as to remember "the Providence of God in the events, circumstances, and persons that had made history and that have directly touched our lives." The participants understood that, unlike the journey of the five pioneer sisters, there would be "no procession to greet us, nor music to welcome us. . . . Rather, we ourselves will form that procession, and make music in honor of those five sisters who received none."[310]

The official beginning of the pilgrimage took place in Polonia, Wisconsin, in the evening hours of Saturday, November 20, 1999, 125 years to the day from the arrival of the first five pioneer sisters. An extraordinary prayer service took place outside, near the monuments dedicated to Father Joseph Dąbrowski and the pioneer sisters. After the service, the pilgrims joined in a candlelight procession to Sacred Heart Church. The following day, the pilgrims participated in walking and bus tours of historic Polonia and the surrounding areas.[311] Highlighting the anniversary pilgrimage, the Most Rev. Raymond L. Burke, bishop of the diocese of LaCrosse, celebrated a solemn Eucharistic liturgy on November 21 in Sacred Heart Church in Polonia where the Felician Sisters began their North American foundation 125 years earlier and where the Felician Sisters of the Chicago province ministered. The liturgy was the culmination of the initial portion of the pilgrimage.[312]

From Polonia, the pilgrims returned to Chicago, where they participated in a special graveside service in honor of Sister Mary Vincentine Kalwa. A handful of sisters from the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth joined the pilgrims since this was the community that received Sister Vincentine as a transfer from the Felician Sisters. The provincial minister of the Nazareth Sisters presented a token gift to Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia and the Felician Congregation for sharing the gift of Sister Mary Vincentine with their community. To honor the many years of service by Felician Sisters at the second mission home in North America, the parishioners of St. Hyacinth's in Lasalle, Illinois, hosted a beautiful Eucharistic liturgy and dinner. Wrapping up the Chicago portion of the pilgrimage, the pilgrims proceeded to Presentation





SM Simplicia Wytrwal (Buffalo), SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, and SM Rosalma Fish in Polonia, WI, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Felician Foundation in America.



The gravesite of SM Wenceslaus (Wacława) Zubrzycka, at Old St. Stanislaus Cemetery was the last stop of the ten-day pilgrimage.



SM Ann Therese Kelly with the logo design she created for the 1999 anniversary pilgrimage.

of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province in Livonia, Michigan. Graveside services at two Detroit cemeteries honored the memories of Mother Mary Monica Sybilska, Father Joseph Dąbrowski, and Sister Mary Raphael Swożeniowska.[313]

The pilgrims participated in guided tours of many other historically significant sites, including St. Albertus Church, the first Polish American church in Michigan; the site of the original Detroit provincial house and Felician Academy, and finally, Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary and the Orchard Lake Schools, founded in 1885 by Father Joseph Dąbrowski, at whose invitation the Felician Sisters had come to America.[314] His Eminence Adam Cardinal Maida, archbishop of Detroit, celebrated Mass in St. Josaphat Church in Detroit on November 24, the first of a three-day visit to the archdiocese where the Felician Sisters began ministry in 1879 before transferring their provincialate to Detroit in 1882.[315] The international group of Felician pilgrims observed Thanksgiving Day, U.S. style, in prayer and celebration on the campus of the Orchard Lake Schools and Centers. Msgr. Stanley Milewski, rector of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Seminary, hosted Thanksgiving dinner for the pilgrims before they ventured on guided tours of the campus.[316]

The 125th anniversary year-long observance officially closed on November 26 during the evening liturgy. Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell, bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo, New York, celebrated the magnificent Eucharistic liturgy in the chapel of Immaculate Heart of Mary Provincial House in Buffalo. Sister Mary Cynthia shared closing remarks with the group and the pilgrims recommitted themselves to the same courage and daring as their pioneer sisters. While in Buffalo, the pilgrims took part in a graveside service to honor Sister Mary Wenceslaus Zubrzycka. During the cemetery service, the pilgrims faced east, and prayed for Mother Mary Cajetan Jankiewicz, who was laid to rest in Poland.[317]

Retrospections

To further honor this special 125th anniversary, the Congregation published three issues of *Retrospections,* a news magazine covering the celebration of the 125th Anniversary, with articles on three themes, "In-Migration," "Inculturation," and "Integration." The first issue, published in September 1998, explained that this quasquicentennial of the North American Foundation provided "the opportunity to engage in moments of recollection and to nurture the connection between the past and the future, so that what we and the Community are now and what we will be in the future will not be incomplete but whole." Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general, who was the publisher and executive editor of this interprovincial project, said, "Since remembering is a creative, instructive, and formative undertaking, the issues . . . will recall the people, places, times, events, signs, symbols, and images that have shaped the Community's present and continue to create its future."[318]

The first issue, which spanned the period from 1874 to 1882, portrayed the lives of the main characters who were directly and indirectly instrumental in the establishment of the American foundation. It included an article by Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko entitled "Mother Mary Angela's Charism and the American Foundation."[319] The theme of the second issue, "Inculturation," covered the travails ensuing from the rapidly growing community and the ingenious creative ways the sisters employed to deal with problems. In her

article, "A Mother Shares Her Pride," Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski recalled the pride of Superior General Mother Mary Magdalen Borowska in the new American mission, particularly about the five pioneer sisters who "parted with us to spread, through their personal sacrifice, the glory of God in America."[320] The third issue of *Retrospections* recounted the challenges that faced the Felician community after the Detroit province attained autonomy as a full-fledged province and included interesting biographical sketches of the five Felician pioneer sisters. Though still united to the Krakow province, the Community was left to its own resources in implementing the Felician Constitutions on American soil.[321] Throughout the year, the North American provinces, including Enfield, also scheduled anniversary celebrations and Masses of thanksgiving for their members and other persons in their ministry areas.

Memorial Service at St. Adalbert Cemetery, Enfield

As early as April 1998, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, realized that only thirty more burial plots were available in the Felician Sisters site at St. Adalbert's Cemetery. Concerned about keeping the sisters together, she initiated inquiries about extending the boundaries of the lot.[322] By early 1999, the deed for additional cemetery plots had been purchased and, once landscaping had been completed, the date for the Memorial Service was set as May 22, with May 23 designated as the rain date.[323] To commemorate both the 125th Anniversary of the Founding of the North American provinces and the 100th Anniversary of the death of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, a memorial prayer service took place at the Felician gravesite in St. Adalbert Cemetery, Enfield, on May 22, 1999, to remember the deceased sisters who gave their talents, energies, and lives, as well as to perpetuate the Felician-Franciscan legacy.[324] The service honored the special lives of the sisters with the reading of each name. After the names of each group of sisters were read, the sisters responded, "For all who have gone before us—We remember and give thanks." At the conclusion of the reading, the sisters prayed,

> *You are precious beyond words, my sisters,*
> *Sleeping like seeds in the Lord's brown bank . . .*
> *And though I may follow your climbing*
> *to horizons you did not conceive,*
> *Still, the same Dream draws us, links us like a lifeline in the mist.*[325]

Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, blessed the newly purchased plot.[326] The blessing of the beautiful white marble statue of the Good Shepherd that overlooked the new section followed. The statue was a gift of Father Brian W. Monnerat and the parishioners of St. Bernard Parish in Enfield. The sisters gathered, fondly remembering their heritage—the vitality of the past—and meeting the challenges of the present, while envisioning a future yet unknown. To conclude the celebration, the sisters enjoyed an ice cream social at the provincial house.[327]

Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the Death of Blessed Mary Angela

On October 1, 1999, six sisters from the Enfield province left the United States bound for Poland, where they joined more than 300 Felician Sisters from North and South America, Europe, and Africa, to observe the Centenary of the





The Felician Sisters' plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery, Enfield, CT.

Death of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, foundress of the Felician Sisters. Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister; Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, Sister Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz, and Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak represented the Enfield province for the Centenary celebration in Poland from October 2-15.[328]

To the Congregational leadership, it seemed fitting that the highlight of the Centenary celebrations be observed, on the Congregational level, in the country of Blessed Mary Angela's birth and death—the country in which she was baptized and responded to God's call to found a religious community, the country in which she ministered to the needs of her contemporaries and suffered, the country from which she was called to eternal life. The observance was designed to celebrate Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska and her life as gift to the Felician Congregation and to the Church, to give thanks for all the blessings received by her Congregation in the first hundred years after her death, and to make Blessed Mary Angela better known in the Church and in the world.[329]

On October 3, the eve of the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, Felician Sisters from Brazil, Canada, and the United States, together with Felicians from the Polish provinces, gathered in the provincial house chapel in Warsaw to participate in the evening *Transitus* service that marked the passage of St. Francis through death to eternal life. The following morning, October 4, ninety English-speaking sisters, together with 220 sisters from the Polish provinces, celebrated the Opening of the Centenary Pilgrimage at St. Felix Church with a Eucharistic liturgy honoring St. Francis. Later that day, the pilgrims began their trek—"In the Footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela"—with a grave site service at the Powązki Cemetery, honoring Josephine (Rudzinska) and Joseph Truszkowski, the parents, and Waleria, the sister of Blessed Mary Angela. The pilgrims also visited the gravesites of the first Felician Sisters.[330]

On October 5, the pilgrims departed for Kalisz, the birthplace of Sophia Camille Truszkowska, where they participated in the solemn Eucharistic liturgy celebrated in the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, together with a ceremonial procession to the baptistery where the infant Sophia Camille was baptized as well as to the altar where the icon of St. Joseph, in the company of Mary and Jesus, is venerated. As a child, Sophia often prayed before this image. Before departing for Warsaw, the pilgrims took a bus tour through the city that was home for Sophia Camille during the first thirteen years of her life.[331]

The pilgrims spent October 6 in Warsaw, walking in the footsteps of Mother Angela and reliving the next twenty-seven years of her life. They visited important sites and listened to accounts of her life as an adolescent, as a young woman searching to know God's plan for her future, and as a Franciscan Tertiary serving the needs of children and the elderly poor. As they made their way through the streets of Warsaw, they encountered the original attic site where Blessed Mary Angela and her cousin Clothilde gathered the women and children of the street. The journey continued to other sites, to where the new community lived and where Mother Angela served as spiritual mother to the sisters, as the first superior general of both the active and contemplative sisters of the Congregation, and as the loving mother of a Congregation that was forcibly dispersed by the Order of Suppression that the Russian government served.



S Marie JoAnn Lewko reverences the relic of Blessed Mary Angela in her room at Immaculate Heart of Mary Provincial House on Smolensk Street in Krakow.



At the shrine of St. Felix in the Capuchin church in Warsaw.
From l: S Christine Marie Stankiewicz, S Joan Marie Swierzb, SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister; SM Thomas Lesniak, S Marie JoAnn Lewko.



At the altar of Blessed Mary Angela in the Felician Sisters' Chapel in Krakow.
From l, seated: S Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor, S Marie JoAnn Lewko;
standing: SM Thomas Lesniak, S Joan Marie Swierzb, SM Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general;
SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister; S Christine Marie Stankiewicz.



SM Terezja Głowacka, provincial councilor in Warsaw, guiding a group of sisters "In the Footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela." From l: S Sophia Wanda M Stapor, S Christine Marie Stankiewicz, SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, SM Camille Bet (Canada) and S Joan Marie Swierzb.

They also saw the Żałuski Library, which served as the Felician headquarters from 1857-1864, and where Blessed Mary Angela was handed the edict of the Zarist government disbanding her community. A visit to the Royal Castle and the historic *Stare Miasto* (Old Town) completed the day.[332]

Side trips offered on October 7 took the pilgrims to Łowicz where Blessed Mary Angela lived with the cloistered sisters for a period of about two years, then to *Nowe Miasto* (New Town) to visit the grave sites of Mother Mary Cajetan Jankiewicz and Sister Mary Elizabeth Stummer. At the friary of Blessed Honorat Koźminski, they saw the relics preserved under the altar, and the museum. Each of these locations was of historic significance in the life of Mother Angela and the first Felician Sisters.[333]

Krakow was the next stop, but on the way, the pilgrims spent a memorable day in prayer at the shrine of the miraculous icon of Our Lady at Jasna Góra. Mother Angela had participated in a pilgrimage to Częstochowa as early as 1857. In subsequent years, she made six more visits to the icon of Our Lady of Częstochowa. Her last visit was in 1869. Before gathering in the inner court for a prayer service in front of the sgraffito of Blessed Angela, 350 Centenary Pilgrimage participants celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy in the chapel of Our Lady of Częstochowa. A period of reflection before the icon of Our Lady followed, and the day ended with the pilgrims offering Evening Praise in the Basilica at Jasna Góra. That evening, the pilgrims arrived at the Smoleńsk Street motherhouse to spend the eve of the 100th anniversary of the death of Mother Mary Angela in the very place where she spent her last thirty years, walking in her footsteps in the chapel, in her cell, and in the garden. They gathered for Evening Prayer at the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.[334]

October 10 dawned as a memorable day for the pilgrims, who spent the morning in reliving the life and death of Mother Angela in Krakow; in visiting the convent building in which she spent the last twenty-nine years of her life; and in praying before her relics in the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The sisters participated in a solemn Eucharistic liturgy at St. Anne Church, celebrated in thanksgiving for the gift of Blessed Mary Angela and marking the centenary of her death. That evening, approximately 375 sisters, carrying lighted candles, walked in a memorable procession that wound its way from the Foundress' cell through the halls of the convent building, through the garden and into the church to the altar of her relics. There they prayed the Act of Consecration of the Congregation led by Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general.[335]

Blessing and Dedication of the Museum and Archives

The Ceremony of the Blessing and Dedication of the Museum and Archives of Mary Angela Truszkowska, Blessed Foundress of the Felician Sisters, began at the majestic *Kościół Mariacki* (St. Mary's Basilica) on the morning of October 11. A light rain fell as the pilgrims followed the icon of the *Fundatorka* (Foundress) as it processed down the street before coming to a halt at 18 Mikołajska Street. It was in this fourteenth century building that Mother Angela lived for a little more than three and a half years, following her departure from the cloistered sisters in Lowicz in 1866. Three hundred pilgrims watched as Archbishop of Krakow Józef Kowalczyk blessed and dedicated the new Blessed Mary Angela

Museum and Archives. Throughout the day, the sisters viewed the imposing museum that was also open to others who could join guided tours.[336]

The following day, October 12, the pilgrims departed for Przemyśl, where they participated in the Eucharistic liturgy at the majestic Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist as well as the dedication of a memorial plaque in the convent at 12 Waygarta Street. Mother Angela visited here in 1876 when the blessing of the cornerstone was conducted for a day care center for children at this site. Participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist at the Cathedral in Lwów and the visit to the city by the 290 pilgrims on October 13 was a momentous occasion. The Province of Our Lady of Częstochowa was originally established in Lwów in 1910 and continued until 1946 when the sisters were expelled by the Russian government and relocated to Przemyśl. The Mass was a celebration of praise and thanksgiving for the dedication and compassionate service of the hundreds of Felician Sisters who, in the spirit of Mother Angela, labored in the Lwów Province for eighty years. On October 14, the Centenary Pilgrimage solemnly closed with the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy at the provincial house chapel in Przemyśl.[337]

Sister Mary Laureann described the experience to the Enfield sisters as a "powerful witness" for the participants. When sharing her thoughts during the provincial assembly on October 30, 1999, she urged the sisters to "do all we can to promote, encourage and invite others to our Felician way of life." Finally, she noted that a tree that Mother Angela planted in Krakow is still growing and the sisters there use the seeds to make rosaries. Sister Laureann told the sisters she had arranged for each sister in the province to receive a decade of the rosary, crafted from the seeds of this tree.[338] Doubtless, the pilgrimage was an unforgettable, moving experience for each sister who walked and prayed in the footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela.

The Local Celebration

Together with thousands of Felician Sisters on four continents, the sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province of Enfield commemorated the centenary of the death of Felician Foundress, Blessed Mary Angela on October 10, 1999. At the provincial house, a Procession of Tribute preceded the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, memorializing Blessed Mary Angela. Several symbolic gifts were presented at the altar.

- *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis,* embraced and lived by Blessed Mary Angela.
- *Response to Love,* the *vade mecum* (handbook or guide) for living the Felician way of life and for an ever-deeper commitment to the consecrated life.
- A relic of Blessed Mary Angela, who, in expending herself, became a model of love.
- A bouquet of wheat, a symbol of hope and direction as daughters of Blessed Mary Angela, women transformed in the breaking of the Bread through their lives as Felician-Franciscans.

Father Pasquale A. Toscano, the celebrant for the Eucharistic celebration, wore the chasuble worked in needlepoint by Blessed Mary Angela, a gift to

the North American Felicians.[339] While Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, provincial councilor, offered each intercessory prayer, a sister placed a rose before the statue of Blessed Mary Angela.[340]

In preparation for the 100th anniversary of the Felician Foundress' death, the North American Provincial Coordinators for the Cause of Blessed Mary Angela prepared a *Novena of Reflections for the Centenary* for the sisters of the North American Provinces. For nine weeks, from August 8 to October 3, the sisters prayed the novena, consisting of short reflections on selected invocations from the Litany of Blessed Mary Angela, to commemorate Blessed Mary Angela's death and celebrate her entrance into eternity. Blessed Mary Angela's unbounded resourcefulness and heroic courage are celebrated in her spiritual daughters who, a century later, continue to live out her charism as they move into the third millennium.[341]

BEATIFICATION BANNER

While planning for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the death of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela, Sister Mary Laureann contacted Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general, to request the loan of the banner depicting Blessed Mary Angela that was unfurled during the beatification ceremony. While Sister Cynthia initially agreed to allow the Enfield province to have it,[342] she later decided it should remain in Rome.[343] Sister Laureann said she was really disturbed that the banner, "a precious relic," was rolled up and stored in the generalate somewhere. She explained that the generalate didn't have a wall big enough to display it, so she approached Sister Cynthia and said, "We have a place for it." At the time, she envisioned it hanging in the Congregational Heritage Center in Enfield.[344]

Almost two years later, Sister Laureann once again petitioned Sister Mary Cynthia, who cautioned her about getting her hopes up. By this time, the canvas had been rolled up for seven years. "There's probably nothing left to it," Sister Cynthia said.[345] Finally, in early October 2000, after attending the funeral of former Congregational archivist Sister Mary Simplicia Wytrwal in Buffalo, New York, Sister Laureann spoke with Sister Mary Camille Bet, Congregational archivist, to arrange for transporting the banner from Rome to Enfield.[346]

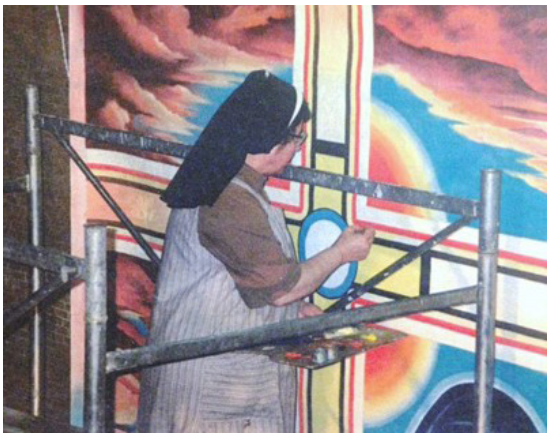
Overcome with joy at the good news, Sister Mary Laureann announced to her council that the Blessed Mary Angela banner designed by Sister Mary Colette Michniewicz and displayed in Rome during Mother's beatification on April 18, 1993, would arrive in Enfield on Tuesday, November 14, 2000, and would be hung in the Congregational Heritage Center. The province assumed responsibility for the cost of shipment.[347] Sister Mary Laureann's dream of housing the original beatification banner of Blessed Mary Angela in the Felician Central Archives became a reality on November 17, the feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a member of the Franciscan Secular Order, when the painting arrived intact from Rome. When the sisters cautiously unrolled the banner at the Heritage Center, Sister Laureann said, "There was absolutely nothing wrong with the canvas." The 15 x 12-foot masterpiece, painted by Sister Mary Colette Michniewicz of Holy Name of Mary Province, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, was hung in the foyer of the Congregational Heritage Center on November 20, so that Blessed Mary Angela looked upon her community, portrayed in

the large photos of the generalate and the twelve provincial houses that hung around the foyer.[348]



SM Laureann Alexandrowicz unrolls the beatification banner in the Felician Heritage Center after its arrival from Rome.

Sister Mary Colette, the artist, recalled she had many thoughts, ideas, and images as she prayerfully prepared to compose the painting for the beatification. A month before leaving for Rome to work on it, she presented to Mother Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general, a draft of her work which incorporated the symbol of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Felician motto, *Omnia per Cor Mariae ad Honorem Sanctissimi Sacramenti (All through the heart of Mary in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament).* She said that after what seemed an eternity, Mother Cynthia simply said, "Mother is not only for the Felicians but for the world." Sister Colette readily agreed, noting that Blessed Mary Angela's desire confirms this: "I wish I could multiply myself a thousand times and travel to all parts of the world, live God's love and teach this merciful love to all people."[349]



SM Colette Michniewicz painting in the chapel at the generalate.

After benches were moved and spotlights installed, the generalate chapel became Sister Colette's new art studio. The chapel's high vaulted ceiling and walls proved beneficial to the task. Sister Colette worked using a high stepladder with a small platform for materials. Standing as she worked meant she was on her feet for many hours. In her memoir about the beatification, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, who lived in the generalate at the time, wrote, "This labor of love was not without its physical cost to the artist."[350]

At regular intervals, Sister Colette came down from the ladder, viewed the imagery from a distance and then continued working. In the end, she produced a symbolic image of Blessed Mary Angela. Not everyone appreciated her depiction of Mother Angela's hands which seemed to overpower the image and were disproportionate to her body. But as Sister Raymond noted, "those hands were so symbolic of Angela's life that they almost had to be bigger than life!"[351]



SM Colette Michniewicz (Canada), who designed and executed the tapestry that was unfurled at St. Peter's Basilica during the beatification service.

Over and over, Sister Colette had asked herself, "How does one depict a *Woman* in total union with God? A Woman of faith, hope, love, and great courage. One captivated by Jesus, who devotes her life to loving God without limits, chooses to permit God to realize His dream and moves out to others with generous heart and ready hand. [352]

> "A *Woman* who longs to be with God, one in spirit, takes time to rest a while in the splendor of God's creation and delights in the sun of his providence. One who sees His harmony, His beauty in nature and

reaches out to enfold, to draw all humanity to God, so that all respond to God's melody and dream in each moment, no matter how delightful or difficult.

"A *Woman* who from early childhood is impelled to help the poor and the abandoned. One who realizes that hand-outs are not enough. One who in great compassion, selflessness, searches out a garret apartment so that the needy may receive care and education to help themselves and in turn go out and assist others. One who seeks to build cathedrals deep within the hearts of all – so that Love would be loved.

"A *Woman* who embraces the Cross and the Eucharist, comes forward with the legacy to all generations, not just for Felicians. One who is gift not to just one time in history but for all time. One who continues what was begun by her Beloved Suffering Christ – to do the Will of the Father so that all grow and live in God's light and love.

"A *Woman* who has a great influence on the social conditions of Poland in her time, fearlessly sends her sisters to the people of God to support and educate, provides 14 years of sound leadership, and then is set aside due to deafness. One who 30 years in isolation, endures interior trials, self-stripping, interior turmoil, self-condemnation, physical pain, interior self-immolation, and purification. One who offers herself as a victim to God for her Congregation and atones for the sins of the world. One who undergoes a faith crisis and patiently waits for God. One who believes that nothing is too difficult if done and accepted out of love for God.

"A *Woman* of love, silence and pain who longs to cast a spark of heaven into the darkness of our lives. One who gently, lovingly, draws us forward and invites us to embrace the Cross of suffering together with Christ and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

"Only God alone could help me depict such a *Woman*. As I worked on this monumental task, I, too, was silent, loved, prayed, waited, worked, and trusted that the painting would truly be His Will. I believe the finished work is God's will—completed with His grace and the prayerful support of the Communion of Saints in heaven and on earth. I admit I was very disappointed at the silent reception of the work. It was Christ speaking to Sister Faustina that brought me the grace of 'letting go' and the peace I needed—when she complained to Christ how poorly the artist depicted Him, Christ answered: 'The greatness of the image lies not in the beauty of the color or the strength of the brush but in the grace that comes with it.' *Deo Gratias!*"

The Enfield sisters said they felt honored to host the long-awaited beatification banner.[353]

STEWARDSHIP

Leadership in a religious institute is elected for one purpose only and that is to lead the membership in responding to the mission of the Gospel. Mission is supported by careful attention to the material possessions of the Congregation.[354] The Gospel itself abounds in management lessons, perhaps

the clearest of which is the parable of the talents, in which we are told to manage our gifts wisely so that they are increased and not just maintained.

As provincial minister, Sister Mary Laureann understood that the Enfield province had been abundantly blessed, and had been entrusted with considerable resources, especially property and finances. But she also understood that the province did not own these things but held them in trust and that, as the province's leader, she had been entrusted with the care and development of the province's resources. A key aspect of this responsibility was accountability, and when the sisters gathered in provincial assemblies and the provincial chapter, she seized the opportunity to put good stewardship to work by clearly reporting on appropriate spending as well as being financially transparent.

Edward J. Kulik

Recognizing that an experienced financial advisor could offer peace of mind, valuable guidance and support in stewarding the province's complex financial resources, Sister Laureann welcomed Edward J. Kulik when he offered his services to the Enfield Felician Sisters. After a career that included serving with the Navy in the Pacific in World War II, earning a degree in business administration from the University of Connecticut, and leading a dramatic $23-million rejuvenation of the landmark Chrysler Building in New York City as an executive at Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, Edward J. Kulik retired in 1988 and set his sights on how he might use his talents to help others.[355]

Kulik not only offered his financial expertise to the sisters, but he also understood the mission, values, and operating philosophy of a religious community. In 1991, he became a very special and concerned friend as well as a consultant and advisor to the provincial administration of the Felician Sisters in Enfield. In that capacity, he faithfully attended all quarterly meetings with the Fleet Bank Investment team, monitoring the province's financial data, and advised the province in realizing its healthcare and retirement plans. He regularly consulted and met with Hoffman Architects and Engineers as well as the F. J. Dahill Company, Inc., both of which were instrumental in the structural restoration of the provincial house.

The provincial house

By 1995, a major concern facing the province was the exterior masonry distress of the provincial house. As early as October 1995, the province engaged Hoffman Architects and Engineers of New Haven, Connecticut, specialists in the rehabilitation of building exteriors who helped restore the Chrysler Building, to propose a solution to the water seepage in the provincial house.[356] Hoffman's recommendations and estimated probable cost for the work to reverse the effects of deterioration initially came in at above $1 million.[357] But the building was crumbling, and the work was essential, so after consulting with Fleet Bank on the financial aspect of the project, and receiving permission from Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, the brick renovation project, expected to be completed in two to two and a half years, was scheduled to begin in May 1996.

About midway through the project, two representatives from Hoffman, Russell M. Sanders, who oversaw the technical staff company-wide, and Paul

Lanteri, senior architect, began their presentation to the sisters at the provincial assembly held on October 25, 1997, by reviewing the history of the problems that had plagued the building for years. They shared slides that graphically demonstrated the extensive limestone deterioration and showed the detailed process involved with replacing and restoring the bricks. They plugged holes, stripped sealant, removed mortar, and repaired stone. In all, some 50,000 bricks had been used.[358]

Years of wear and tear had taken their toll on the building. Other issues in the provincial house that demanded attention and were addressed included replacing the entire roof as well as the telephone and fire alarm systems; installing handicap-accessible showers in the provincial house and infirmary; computerizing the heating system; and cleaning and replacing drywells and pipes. A security system was installed on the back garages, and washers and dryers were installed on the second and third floors of the east wing. Renovations of the dormitories were completed, [359] and, in preparation for the millennium, the chapel walls were repaired, painting was retouched, handrails were added, and carpeting installed.[360]

Food service

After the brick-and-mortar issues, food service became the provincial administration's next focus. Food was prepared by the sisters daily in the main convent but as Sister Mary Regina Chwalek, local minister of Holy Family Infirmary, reported, the dietary plans were not "always geared to special needs."[361] As a result, in late August 1997, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial house local minister, and Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, plant manager, along with members of the provincial administration, met with Hospital Dietary Services (HDS), a company that already served St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, and the provincial house in Livonia, Michigan, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Convent. The council approved hiring HDS to manage the provincial house kitchen under the direction of a chef/manager.[362]

During the October 1997 provincial assembly, Sister Laureann announced to the sisters that, after months of study, budget balancing, and analyzing personnel resources, the provincial administration decided to hire Hospital Dietary Services. She explained that HDS's responsibilities would include ordering and preparing food, planning menus, balancing and preparing the budget, managing billing and payments, training and evaluating staff, as well as managing food services for community meetings, celebrations, and fundraising events, tasks which had previously been performed solely by the sisters. The chronicler for the provincial house noted that Thanksgiving Dinner on November 29 "was a sumptuous affair prepared by our newly employed kitchen staff who did their best to please."[363]

Holy Family Infirmary

Sister Laureann and the council also wished to address concerns around the physical structure of Holy Family Infirmary, and they invited Felician Sister Noel Marie Gabriel, director of Felician-sponsored St. Mary's Home for the Aged in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, to visit. They asked her to define current living-environment needs for the sister residents and to recommend ideas to improve their quality of life. In mid-April 1996, she submitted her comprehensive

report. Entitled "Infirmary Space Study," it considered each area of the three floors of the south wing of the provincial house and each aspect of improving the quality of life for the elderly sisters within their living environment, from housekeeping supplies to durable medical equipment to fluorescent lighting. Sister Noel considered the "big picture," including the plan for the entire building as well as alternate nursing home placement.[364] The provincial council acknowledged the pressing issues, studied the recommendations, and planned the renovations so that, in just over a year, the sister residents of Holy Family Infirmary were enjoying their meals in a carefully remodeled dining room The recreation room, located in the former dining room, proved comfortable, and easily accessible.[365]

St. Felix Center

During the provincial assembly held on March 4, 1995, Sister Mary Laureann reported that a study to use the former Mother Angela Residence building—now vacant—as a site for affordable housing for independent living for the elderly and/or family members was in progress.[366] She explained that the study was an initial step in addressing two chapter directives of the 1993 Provincial Chapter, to provide independent living accommodations for the elderly and/or family members, and to use the former Mother Angela Residence for a given ministry. An architect had determined that the building was structurally sound, and that the interior was capable of being repurposed into senior housing units. Projected renovation costs were initially estimated at $2 to 2.5 million but grew to $3 million by 1999. During the meeting, the sisters looked at the basic floor plan showing a possible configuration representing twelve units. At that time, the provincial administration was awaiting feedback from the town planner concerning zoning ordinances.

After visiting and studying several other residences for independent living for the elderly, the provincial administration developed a plan for resident suites and common areas, which they presented to Attorney Robert B. Berger, who was impressed with the project and agreed to approach the town planner. However, he was concerned with the project's capital cost and advised the sisters about planning to raise the funds.[367] By late fall, the first phase of the feasibility study had been completed by McManus Architects, a reputable architectural firm located in Glastonbury, Connecticut. At an estimated cost of $1,397,000, the firm could renovate the building to include interior demolition, nineteen apartments and an elevator, window replacements, electrical services, plumbing, fire protection, structural reinforcements, and a parking area.[368]

Sister Laureann explained that the second phase of the feasibility study would deal with specific needs of the project, including formulating a mission statement and details of the project to ensure that it would coincide with the mission. She added that David Vail had been enlisted to formulate a plan encompassing the province's financial and personnel resources. Other items needing consideration included contract, application, transition, rates, funding, and grants. Vail had helped launch assisted living for seniors in the state and, as a member of a three-person advisory board, worked with representatives from the state Department of Health and others in the field to develop industry regulations. Ultimately, this project was delayed because it evolved at the same

time as the provincial house's masonry problem that required a significant financial investment as well as time and energy.[369]

By March 2000, plans were underway to renovate and upgrade St. Felix Center, the former Mother Angela Residence. To provide better comfort and energy efficiency, the heating system was converted from oil to gas. New walls were constructed in parts of the basement. While the boiler was being replaced, proposals for updating the electrical wiring, renovating the bathrooms and kitchen, and repairing/replacing the plumbing fixtures were being prepared. Plans were also being made for asbestos abatement and removal. The renovation took longer than anticipated, but by October 2001, the work was completed.[370]

THE ENFIELD CHILDREN'S DAY CARE CENTER

In its new home in the former Longview Catholic High School building, the Enfield Day Care Center provided a comfortable, positive, and family-supportive environment where children felt safe and secure while their parents were working or going to school. The program encouraged children's development of self-esteem and respect for others while nurturing and fostering their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, educational, and nutritional needs. Each child's diverse background and life experiences were recognized and appreciated. The children enjoyed breakfast each morning and a snack after school. Lunch was served to those who were there in the afternoon. School-age children who returned to the center in the afternoon were placed in adult-supervised classrooms with others in their grade where they enjoyed a variety of activities. Children did their homework in the grade room or in the Homework Room where staffers helped when necessary. Various outside activities, such as field trips, were added bonuses for children and parents.[371]

A parent praised center staffers for encouraging her son and spoke about his joy from playing football with the rest of the kids. "He thought it was the greatest thing going" she said, "He was playing with his friends," adding, "My son loves to be there." The staff consisted of about thirty-four people, including several Felician Sisters, employed by the town. Most were degreed teachers or child development associates, and the center was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.[372]

In early August 1995, Director Joan Colon informed Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz that a $46,000 grant would be available for removing lead and encapsulating the stained-glass windows in the former chapel, provided that the town negotiate an additional ten-year lease with the Felician Sisters. When Sister Laureann brought this issue to the provincial council, they expressed disappointment at the neglected condition of the building and the poor maintenance. Additionally, after considering that according to Canon Law, the lease could not extend beyond nine years, the provincial council unanimously voted not to renew the lease, and Sister Laureann informed Attorney Robert B. Berger, corporate counsel for the Felician Sisters, as well as Director Colon.[373]

Over the years, the center had maintained an excellent relationship with the Felician Sisters, so Sister Laureann was surprised to learn through an article in the *Hartford Courant* of the need and cost for removing asbestos from the building.[374] The article stated that, according to a report issued by

the town's facilities study committee in 1996, lead and asbestos abatement work in the building would cost $400,000.[375] At the time, the committee recommended moving several town programs and departments out of older town buildings to avoid spending millions on fire- and building-code repairs. This recommendation to relocate extended to the town day-care center on the Felician Sisters' campus, as well as the senior center on High Street and departments in the town hall annex, to a different, perhaps new, building.

On January 8, 1998, Sister Laureann and Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, council member, visited the children's day care center and were appalled by the deteriorating condition of the building. They found the basement and third floor, as well as the staircases leading to these floors, sorely neglected. The walls of the rooms on the first and second floors, which were currently being used, were partially painted and the window frames were in poor condition. Sister Laureann resolved to meet with Director Colon to discuss their findings and concerns.[376]

Just over a year later, on February 9, 1999, the entire provincial council did a walk-through inspection of the Enfield Day Care Center. As a result of their review, during the provincial assembly held on February 13, 1999, Sister Laureann announced to the sisters that the Felician Sisters did not intend to lease the building beyond an additional two years and would inform Town Manager Scott Shanley of this when they met on February 26.[377] During that meeting, he presented issues regarding renovations/changes and Sister Laureann left the meeting feeling that the town would probably not desire use of the building much longer.[378]

Later that spring, since the date for expiration of the lease with the Town of Enfield for the former Longview Catholic High School building was drawing near, February 28, 2000, Sister Mary Laureann and the province's Financial Consultant Edward Kulik met again with Enfield Town Manager Scott Shanley in early May, and they attended three additional meetings with other personnel regarding the Enfield Day Care Center.[379] In a letter dated September 22, 1999, the Felician Sisters provided official notification of the February 28, 2000, expiration date of the lease to the Town of Enfield. During the October provincial assembly that year, Sister Laureann told the sisters that while the Town of Enfield would prefer a "long-term" relationship, the province was committing to short-term.[380]

The expiration date of the lease, February 28, 2000, came and went, with no agreement reached between the Town of Enfield and the Felician Sisters.[381] At the time of the expiration, the sisters were negotiating a lease with a clause for one-year notice of expiration. A temporary agreement set the rental of the building at $3,000 a month. Representatives negotiating for the Town of Enfield voiced concerns about renovations to the interior of the building, including installing an elevator and air conditioning. At the time, the Felician Sisters felt that the Town did not intend to use the building on a long-term basis, so there was no follow-up on requests regarding installation of an elevator and air conditioning.[382]

Meetings between the Felician Sisters and the Town of Enfield were ongoing, and during the August 2000 Provincial Assembly, Sister Laureann reported that the lease issue for the Enfield Day Care Center was difficult to handle but was being extended monthly. She added that the provincial

administration had considered the possible advantage of a ten-year lease. Additional considerations included upgrading the electrical system, installation of an elevator as well as a wheelchair ramp, and adding a parking lot.[383] Prior to the assembly, Kulik had met with Attorney Robert Berger to discuss these requests. After reviewing the terms of the new lease agreement, Berger, who had done his utmost to communicate with the Town of Enfield, felt he could not agree with the stipulations made by the town officials and said he would continue to pursue a fair and just lease that the Felician Sisters could approve.[384]

At its October 2000 meeting, the provincial council voted to approve the lease of the former Longview Catholic High School building to the Town of Enfield for a period of ten years with the condition that the lease meet the final approval of Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann and the provincial council. On October 23, Sister Laureann gave the plans for three possible parking lot sites, a response to the need for more parking space, to Marla Hauslaib, deputy director of social services for the Town of Enfield but had yet to receive a response.[385] By the November 12 council meeting, a letter of approval to extend the lease had arrived from Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford. However, Minister General Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak wrote that she and the general councilors would not meet until mid-December and requested that renewal of the lease be continued monthly until December 2000 or January 2001.[386]

Attorney Berger had sent a letter by certified mail to Town Manager Scott Shanley notifying him that as of January 2001, the current monthly rent of $3,000 would increase to $4,000 if a new lease, satisfactory to both parties, was not executed by the end of December 2000. The sisters made it known that they were not interested in continuing negotiations indefinitely.[387] Following a lengthy discussion at the council meeting of December 18, the provincial council unanimously voted not to consider a ten-year lease with the Town of Enfield for the Enfield Day Care Center. Shortly after, Attorney Berger and Mr. Kulik drafted a letter to inform the Town of Enfield of this decision.[388] Sister Laureann shared the letter with the councilors during their meeting on January 22, 2001.[389]

An article in the *Journal-Inquirer* on January 4, 2001, was headlined, "Parking lot disagreement halts day-care negotiations." The article maintained that the town wanted to build a parking lot on the Felician Sisters property nearer the day-care center to improve the children's safety. However, Manager Scott A. Shanley told the Town Council, "The sisters thought the effect the parking lot would have on their grounds would be too great." The article also noted that the sisters agreed to allow the town to continue renting monthly while town officials sought a new site. Speaking for the Town Council, Mayor Mary Lou Strom said, "Definitely we're disappointed that we're not going to go through with a long-term lease, because for the town it is an ideal location." She continued, "It is a program that is very important to the town of Enfield. There are many people who are dependent on it," and added, "We felt we were very close to negotiating a long-term lease so we did not expect the message from the Felicians that they would prefer to break off negotiations."[390]

Not two weeks later, the *Journal-Inquirer* (JI) ran an article that captured the parents' point of view. Headlined "Enfield parents pray for new day care site," the article presented the perspective of the parents, who said "the quality

of the staff, the daily activities for their children and the price are unmatched."[391] A few days later, Sister Laureann told a reporter for the *Hartford Courant*, "We're not going to put them out until they find a place to go. We have not set a particular date," adding, "We respect the need to wait. We will work with them – it may take a year; it may take two."[392] There was still the matter of the condition of the building to be dealt with and following a visit to the building in late January 2001, Sister Laureann shared her concerns with the Enfield Day Care administration.[393] Several months later, reports of inspection of the building were submitted to Town Manager Scott Shanley. During the provincial assembly of October 13, 2001, Sister Laureann informed the sisters that administrators for the Enfield Day Care Center were seeking a town-owned facility that could serve as the center's future site.[394]

CENTENARIANS: A NATIONAL TREASURE

According to Dr. Leo R. Sandy, professor emeritus of counselor education and a consulting school psychologist, centenarians should be considered a national treasure.[395] In 1990, the U.S. Census Bureau reported an estimated 37,306 centenarians in the United States. By 2000, the Bureau estimated that 72,000 centenarians were alive.[396] During the period 1995-2001, the Enfield province could count five "national treasures": Sister Mary Hermetta Jurusz, Sister Mary Cantalicia Filip, Sister Mary Vincentine Chamot, Sister Mary Lucy Maciorakowska, and Sister Mary Vivian Kuszewska.

To put their extraordinarily long lives into historical perspective, consider that Leo XIII was pope and either Grover Cleveland or William McKinley was sitting in the White House when they were born. People of this cohort were too young to participate in World War I and reached adulthood as the world was gripped by the 1918 influenza epidemic. This group was forming its families as the Great Depression started but the advent of World War II found many of them too old to be called into service. They reached retirement age as the United States entered the Vietnam War and experienced the social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s but witnessed remarkable and unprecedented technological and medical advances in their lifetimes.[397]

Sister Mary Hermetta Jurusz

Nine popes and eighteen presidents later, Sister Mary Hermetta was defying the aging process. Born in Rydzewczyzna, Poland, on March 19, 1896, Michalina Helen Jurusz came to America on April 24, 1913, and was raised in South Boston, Massachusetts. Along with her family, she became a member of Our Lady of Częstochowa Parish in South Boston. At the age of twenty, in 1916, she entered the Felician Congregation's Immaculate Conception Province in Lodi, New Jersey. She received the name Sister Mary Hermetta during the Investiture ceremony in Lodi and professed First Vows the following year and Final Vows on July 20, 1924. In 1932, she was transferred to the newly-established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut.[398]

When Sister Hermetta celebrated her 75th Jubilee, Sister Mary Doloria Jaracz wrote,

> After completing her spiritual and educational training, she encompassed the prophetic role of teacher with youthful enthusiasm in numerous classrooms. Sister's former superiors and school

> principals attest to her excellent performance. She enjoyed the teaching profession immensely and treated with affection and tenderness every pupil. Sister was ever present to her "Little Ones" in her assigned classes which happened to be the kindergarten, first, second, or third grade. With them she sang daily the old folk songs and related to them many folk tales—all a carryover from Poland. And in Sister's presence and with her guidance, the children 'grew in wisdom, age, and grace' (Luke 2:52).[399]

Sister Hermetta served the Church as an educator and taught children for fifty-two years before retiring in 1988. She also ministered as a teacher of religious education for several years in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Further on, Sister Doloria noted that the theme of Sister Hermetta's Diamond Jubilee celebration was the joyful response echoed in the invitational preface of the Mass: "Let us give thanks to the Lord; It is right to give him thanks and praise!"

Sister Doloria closed her remarks, writing, "Sister may be advanced in age, weak, and infirm, but she is spiritually alive—she is a woman of prayer." Prayer helped Sister Hermetta navigate the ups and downs of religious life, and she became an example, in an expanding body of research, that demonstrated the importance of spirituality as a resource in providing a buffer of support when dealing with hardships. Like other centenarians in her cohort, and even more so as a religious, she found that spirituality not only served as a tool for coping and adapting in later life but was also a critical pathway to quality of life, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being. While a resident of Holy Family Infirmary, her daily devotion to Our Lady through the rosary was her source of joy and strength.

When Sister Hermetta celebrated 100 years of living and loving on March 19, 1996, her day began with a Mass of Thanksgiving and included a festive dinner. The celebration culminated with a gala afternoon birthday party complete with a "Happy 100th" birthday cake and singing. She rejoiced in the grace of the day.[400] Ten days later, on March 29, Sister Hermetta walked into the waiting arms of her Lord to begin her eternal celebration. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, was the celebrant and homilist for the Mass of Christian Burial on April 1, 1996. Sister Mary Hermetta was laid to rest in the Felician Sisters' plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery.[401]

Sister Mary Cantalicia Filip

The remarkable life of Mary Filip began on December 29, 1896, in Adams, Massachusetts, one of seven children born to Joseph and Catherine Filip. Impressed by the lay teachers at the public school who modeled Christian behavior, she was encouraged by the pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish, Father Francis Kolodziej, to listen to the stirrings of her heart, and on May 24, 1913, was accepted to Immaculate Heart of Mary Aspirancy in Buffalo, New York. Later that year, she was transferred to the newly organized Immaculate Conception Province in Lodi, New Jersey. Following her period of initial formation as a postulant and novice, she professed first vows in 1917 and final vows in 1923.[402]

From 1930 to 1940, Sister Cantalicia assumed responsibility for Immaculate Conception Home in Lodi, a 200-resident institution devoted to the care of orphans and children who, for various reasons, could not be cared

for by their biological families. Along with the sisters who bore the brunt of twenty-four-hour care, she was teacher and mother to the boys and girls ranging in age from two to eighteen years, an experience she described as one of her greatest challenges and joys. Many of the young residents of the home kept in touch with her well into her later years. In 1940, after transferring from Lodi, Sister Cantalicia served as superior of Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield. Other ministries included directress of the aspirancy and coordinator of Holy Family Infirmary. From 1974 until 1988, she ministered at St. Adalbert Parish in Providence, Rhode Island, tutoring Polish immigrants.[403]

In 1988, Sister Cantalicia marked her 75th anniversary of religious life. On this occasion, her friend, Father Seraphim Michalenko, MIC, wrote,

> So the Lord now manifests, somewhat, the beauty of your seemingly humble and hidden substance by this rare gift of a DIAMOND JUBILEE celebration – only as a token, though, of the great festival He's preparing for you when you will go to stand before Him face-to-face to receive from His very Heart the promised 'Thank you, good and faithful Servant;' and when, by that mutual, loving gaze, you will become transformed into that light in the presence of which the dazzle of all the diamonds in the world is dull darkness.[404]

When physical complications began to take their toll on Sister Cantalicia, she became a patient in Holy Family Infirmary in Enfield, where she continued to age graciously. She lived prayerfully, always trusting in God's will and maintaining her warm and maternal disposition. Throughout her life, she had as her goal to bring people closer to God and with a gentle smile she would assure them, saying, "I pray for you, I love you." On October 14, 2002, at the age of 105, a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for eighty-nine years, Sister Mary Cantalicia was welcomed by Jesus to the great festival, with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated by Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, assisted by Father Frederick V. Slota, pastor, St. Adalbert Parish in Providence, Rhode Island, and Rev. Msgr. John A. Abucewicz, pastor, Holy Trinity Parish, Lowell, Massachusetts. Sister Mary Cantalicia was laid to rest in the Felician Sisters' plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery.[405]

Sister Mary Vincentine Chamot

The Scripture quote from the prophet Micah 6:8 that reads: "Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God" that was appended to Sister Mary Vincentine Chamot's obituary, aptly describes a sister who, in gentleness and joy, spent her lifetime in the Felician community primarily as a seamstress who also performed domestic service.

Born in Jeżowe, Poland, Zofja (Sophie) Chamot was the daughter of Jacob and Catherine Chamot. When she was just six years old, on the day after Christmas, her father died, leaving her mother alone to raise their seven children. In March 1913, Zofja left problem-ridden Poland and fled to America. From her records, it appears that she and her sister Catherine made the trip together in the hope of finding a better life. She entered the Felician Community in the newly established Immaculate Conception Province (1913) in Lodi, New Jersey, from Lewiston, Maine, on August 30, 1914.[406]

Zofja said she felt an interior desire for the religious life and wanted to follow God's call. She was formally accepted to the community on September 21, 1914, and attended Immaculate Conception High School in Lodi for two years. After spending almost four and a half years as a postulant, Zofja was invested with the Felician habit along with twenty-six young women and received the name Sister Mary Vincentine on January 5, 1919. In 1920, she professed First Vows, and on July 20, 1925, she made final profession in the presence of Provincial Superior Mother Mary Hortulane Kaminski. In 1932, she was transferred to the newly-established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut.[407]

For nearly thirty years, Sister Vincentine's work as a seamstress and sacristan as well as her life of prayer gave meaning to her life. Declining health as well as advanced age resulted in her admission to Holy Family Infirmary in 1990 where she accepted her suffering while emanating peace and gratitude through her beautiful smile. On May 4, 1998, at the age of 101, as a faithful member of the Felician Congregation for eighty-four years, she slipped peacefully into heaven. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on May 7 in Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel. Interment followed in the Felician Sisters' plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery.[408]

Sister Mary Lucy Maciorakowska

When Sister Mary Lucy Maciorakowska died on February 23, 2000, the *Hartford Courant* article about her was headlined "Sr. Mary Lucy, Cooking Nun With Heavenly Angel Food Cake." For more than sixty-five of her 102 years, Sister Mary Lucy graced Our Lady of the Angels Convent with her beautiful smile and her wonderful cooking.[409]

Born in Poland on December 2, 1897, she came to the United States on the *SS. Bremen* with her parents Stanislaus and Julia Maciorakowska in 1912. After living in New Britain, Connecticut, and South Boston, Massachusetts, Stephania felt called to religious life and was accepted to the Felician Congregation at Immaculate Conception Convent in Lodi, New Jersey, in April 1918. After her period of initial formation, she professed Final Vows. In 1934, she became a member of the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield.[410]

Sister Lucy's ministry was preparing and serving the sisters' meals while promoting a warm environment of hospitality. The sisters remembered her as a gentle woman who loved to cook and bake for them. Sister Lucy loved life, she loved people, she loved the sisters, and this was evident in her desire to make everyone happy. She shared her personal recipes and always had time to make a little more for someone in need. After her life of service spanning nearly seventy years, she became a resident of Holy Family Infirmary where she helped in any way she could. In her last years, arthritis crippled her joints but never crippled her joy or gratitude. At the age of 102, God called Sister Lucy, a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for eighty-two years, to her eternal home. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on February 25, 2000, in Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel. Interment followed in the Felician Sisters' plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery.[411]

Sister Mary Vivian Kuszewska

Rosalie Kuszewska was the oldest of nine children born to Adalbert and Victoria Kuszewski. The couple made their home in Webster, Massachusetts,

and welcomed their daughter on November 5, 1900. After graduating from St. Joseph School in Webster where she was taught by the Felician Sisters, Rosalie attended Immaculate Conception High School in Lodi, New Jersey, and, after graduation, was accepted as a postulant in the Felician community on June 28, 1915. Following her investiture, when she received the name Sister Mary Vivian, and profession of first vows, she served as a principal and teacher primarily for students at the junior-high level in schools staffed by the Lodi province as well as the Enfield province where she was transferred in 1934.[412]

Along with five members of her group—four of whom were also from Webster—Sister Mary Vivian marked her golden jubilee on Sunday, May 3, 1970. Concelebrants for the Eucharistic liturgy of Thanksgiving were Father Frederick V. Slota, pastor, St. Adalbert Parish, Providence, Rhode Island; Father Anthony D. Iwuc, pastor, Our Lady of Czenstochowa Parish, Coventry, Rhode Island, and Father Richard W. Dybas, assistant pastor, St. Stanislaus Parish, Amsterdam, New York, who was also the homilist.[413]

In 1992, when her health declined, Sister Mary Vivian became a resident of Holy Family Infirmary and spent many hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, petitioning for all those who requested prayer, for the needs of the Church, and issues of global concern. She went peacefully to her eternal home on January 16, 2001, at the age of 100, a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for eighty-one years. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on January 18, 2001, in Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel. Interment followed in the Felician Sisters' plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery.[414]

SISTER MARY FRANCES POLOWNIAK, ENFIELD'S FIRST POSTULANT

On June 12, 1934, Most Rev. Maurice F. McAuliffe, bishop of Hartford, formally authorized the opening of the provincialate and novitiate of Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut. Almost immediately, new members began increasing the size of the community as candidates applied for admission to the Congregation. On the vigil of the feast of Christ the King, October 28, 1934, the first candidate, Genevieve Polowniak, from St. Stanislaus Parish, Pine Island, New York, entered the novitiate.[415] Later, Sister Mary Frances, the name she received at her Investiture ceremony, wrote that her mother—a deeply religious and holy person—was an influential factor in her decision: "She wanted to become a Felician and was discouraged because she could not write."[416]

Genevieve grew up in Pine Island, New York, a farming community, famous for its onion production. Once she felt called to become a sister, she desperately wanted to go to the aspirancy to begin her initial formation. But she was heartbroken when Mother Mary Angelica Pilarska, provincial superior of the Lodi, New Jersey province, advised her "to go back to the farm and marry a farmer." Dejected by this rejection, she said, "I cried a lot and prayed a lot and waited until Enfield was ready. . . . Contacts were made with Mother Mary Annunciata, and I was admitted as the first postulant to Enfield."[417]

After her novitiate and first profession of vows, like most Enfield Felicians, Sister Frances taught in the parish elementary schools staffed by the Felician Sisters in Massachusetts and Rhode Island for thirteen years before becoming a student at the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in Springfield, Massachusetts, the beginning of her lengthy career in healthcare.[418]

Sister Frances served at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, from 1953-1956, returning in 1964 when she helped organize the new operating rooms. From 1956 to 1963, Sister Frances assumed total responsibility for Holy Family Infirmary, the twenty-five-bed chronic and convalescent facility for the sisters of the Enfield province. She was also actively engaged with the aged, retired sisters in the provincial house. She had a great love for people, especially the sick and was gifted with good organizational skills.[419]

After earning her degree in health-care administration at George Washington University in the nation's capital in 1967, Sister Frances was appointed as the first resident in administration at the Hebrew Rehabilitation Center for Aged (HRCA) in Roslindale, Massachusetts. Enfield's provincial administration, led by Sister Mary Viterbia Dyka, had selected her to study health-care administration and to establish and supervise a long-term care facility in Ludlow, Massachusetts, which would be a sponsored ministry of the Enfield Felicians (See Ludlow Property, Chapter 3). Sister Frances said she found her work at the Hebrew Center absorbing and fascinating. Regarded as one of the nation's most progressive institutions for geriatrics, HRCA was a teaching unit for Harvard Medical School and Northeastern University College of Nursing as well as for other institutions concerned with problems and needs of the aged.[420]

Enfield's provincial administration desired to maintain an openness to service in the Church within the realm of traditional Felician ministries. Attempting to expand its health-care service, the province received approval from the Town of Enfield for the construction of a nursing home with outpatient rehabilitation facilities. The new building would be located on the south end of the Enfield campus. Ground was broken for this new project on July 19, 1969[421] and Sister Mary Francis was appointed administrator. But from the outset, financing was problematic. The province had just completed the construction of Longview Library-Learning Center in the spring. Most Rev. Christopher J. Weldon, bishop of Springfield, would not approve of fund-raising for the nursing home through the parishes of his diocese. The sisters held fundraisers at the various convent sites and sought assistance from relatives, friends and benefactors, hoping they would respond generously. However, spiraling construction costs and the total cost of building and equipping the new center exceeded previous estimates. By the fall of 1970, the contractors halted all work on the facility while the provincial administration studied the feasibility of assuming an additional loan.[422]

Meanwhile, a new provincial administration assumed leadership of the province, led by Mother Mary Landeline Ptasienski. In January 1971, a contract suit and other charges encumbering the provincial property threatened the province. With the assistance of Father Charles W. Daly, assistant chancellor for the Archdiocese of Hartford, the provincial administration agreed to transfer ownership rights of the Longview Health Care Center to the Little Sisters of the Poor, who staffed St. Andrew's Home for the Elderly in New Haven, Connecticut. St. Andrew's Home for the Elderly had been built for another era and deemed "out of conformity" when Medicare/Medicaid/Fire and Safety regulations came into the health-care scene, and so the Little Sisters were faced with closing it in 1971. However, Providence intervened on their behalf, with the availability of the almost completed facility in Enfield.[423]

In a letter to Provincial Treasurer Sister Mary Regis Waszak, Little Sister of the Poor Sister Mary Vincent, the home's first administrator, wrote, "Each day we are appreciating more all the labor and time she [Sister Mary Frances] put into the building. I hope that our prayers and the good work we hope to do there, will repay her for the time, intelligence and love she put into it as well as all the Felician Sisters. We are so deeply grateful to all of you."[424]

Not long after, Sister Frances wrote about the tremendous toll that losing the health-care center took on her which she termed "tragic," and she asked for time to renew herself physically, spiritually and mentally, as well as to recapture her ideals.[425] She next directed her energies to Blue Cross/Blue Shield as a utilization reviewer and administrator of a facility for children with disabilities. After planning the new Holy Family Infirmary in the south wing of the provincial house, she became an ESL teacher in the Providence, Rhode Island School System. [426]

Sister Frances continued to generously share her God-given gifts in loving service with all those with whom she collaborated in the care of the elderly. For four years, from 1980-1984, she was the director of the John Paul II Friendship Center (see Chapter 1). Upon her retirement from full-time employment, the Office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan City of New York issued a proclamation, acknowledging her "great warmth, compassion and determination to make the Lower East Side a better place."[427] In October 1985, the Archdiocese of New York recognized her contributions with its Good Samaritan Award.[428]



The Office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan City of New York acknowledged SM Frances Polowniak for her "great warmth, compassion and determination to make the Lower East Side a better place."

Still not ready to retire, Sister Frances returned to St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor as an assistant planner where she assessed community and hospital services for the elderly to determine the hospital's role in dealing with unmet needs of the area's elderly population.[429] At the age of seventy-four, diagnosed with kidney failure, she was back at the Enfield infirmary caring for those older and sicker than she was, helping to dress and feed the patients who were unable to care for themselves.[430] In 1991, she became a patient herself. As she lay dying, Little Sister of the Poor Mother Genevieve Nugent, administrator of

St. Joseph's Residence, came to visit her. She looked tenderly at Sister Frances and then knelt at her bedside. Realizing how deeply the loss of the building had affected her, Mother Genevieve said, "I want to thank you for the gift you have given to us. The building will be used as planned, continued through the Little Sisters of the Poor." After kissing Sister Frances on the forehead, Mother Genevieve left.[431]

On August 3, 1996, the Lord gently called Sister Frances home. In death, she was united with the Lord she so faithfully served for seventy-eight years, sixty-two as a beloved member of the Felician Congregation.[432]

PROVINCIAL CHAPTER 1999

Preparation

The provincial assemblies held in Our Lady of the Angels Province were a vital means of promoting, strengthening, and encouraging communal and individual participation of the sisters. Designed for the express purpose of discussion, consultation, and collaboration, these meetings became the venue for informing and sharing provincial concerns, plans, and accomplishments with the sisters. Preparation for the 1999 Provincial Chapter also began here. As early as April 18, 1998, during the spring provincial assembly, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, shared information from the 1998 Biennial Assembly (March 1-14, 1998) regarding methods of election of delegates to the provincial chapter. After reviewing each of the three methods included in *Response to Love,* the sisters unanimously chose Method 3, which allowed the province to design a process for choosing delegates. The assembly offered suggestions for the proposed method and unanimously approved the horizontal arrangement of the listing of sisters for balloting.[433]

At the fall assembly held on October 31, 1998, the sisters welcomed Sister of Divine Providence Carole Riley, who had been selected as facilitator for both the Provincial Chapter 1999 and General Chapter 2000. In her opening remarks, Sister Carole explained her style of facilitation and her hope to empower each sister to fully participate in creating the future of the community through rootedness in the Gospel and the Felician charism. She reminded the sisters that chapter is a process with the goal of being life-serving and explained that the process that would be used throughout the chapter was that of theological reflection and communal discernment. She said, "Discernment requires that each of us is praying every day about the way God wishes us to move into the future. The movement toward conversion takes place when each sister asks, 'What needs to change?'"[434]

After outlining the schedule for the chapter, Sister Carole moved the group into Session 2, during which they responded to the question, "What challenges surfaced today?" The sisters identified five areas, all related to the area of "Be sister" in the Congregational Vision Statement. They were:

Personal	Health
Social	All aspects of relationship
Ministry	Reevaluation of traditional ministry commitments so ministry will be challenging. Expanding of focus to address changing needs of the Church
Spirituality	Balancing lifestyle, ministry, community, prayer

Community Dwindling number of members; making efforts to sustain life-giving communities. Deciding about utilizing facilities/ properties.

During Session 3, Sister Carole defined "temptations" as those things that steer us away from acting, such as defensiveness and apathy. Finally, she presented the key principle in decision-making by discernment: "Seeking to arrive at decisions that all can accept gracefully and support wholeheartedly, knowing the group honestly searched for the spirit of God in and for the life of the community."[435]

Preparation for the provincial chapter continued at the provincial assemblies of February 13, and April 17, 1999. Since the overall goal of both the provincial and general chapters was "To work toward the internalization of the Vision Statement that will translate cross culturally and internationally for a change of heart," in February, the sisters worked in small groups to formulate summary statements. Working in small groups during the April meeting, the sisters turned their attention to the theme, "Choosing Viable Means for the Life of the Mission of the Felician-Franciscan Sisters." After the assembly's conclusion, Sister Mary Laureann commissioned the delegates for the provincial chapter.[436]

The Provincial Chapter

"It is the year, the month, the day, the hour—The Chapter is now!" With these words, Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, formally convoked the opening of the 11th Provincial Chapter of Our Lady of the Angels Province on July 22, 1999, in the Provincial Heritage Center. After welcoming the fifty-six elected delegates, she reminded them that a chapter is "a sacred, blessed happening," and urged them to "embrace this opportunity to realize what a singular grace our Felician vocation is, and how very grateful, faithful, and loyal we must be to God." She concluded her remarks, exhorting the sisters to, "Humbly proceed in the name of all the sisters, and remain steadfast and hope-filled in realizing our vision and mission."[437]

The retreat day on the theme of transformation/conversion initiated the first of many conversion days. In two conferences, Father Claude Jarmak, OFM, Cap., led the delegates in prayerful participation for the chapter. In his first conference entitled "Women Transformed in the Breaking of the Bread," he spoke about the dignity of women, particularly Mary as the model of all women, and the gift of the charism of Blessed Mary Angela. In his second presentation, "Transformed in the Breaking of the Bread," Father Claude discussed continued conversion and the evangelical life of love. During the Eucharistic celebration, the sisters carried seeds in the entrance procession and placed them before the altar. Following Evening Praise and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Sister Laureann presented each delegate with a seed, a symbol of new hope and new life, an element of transformation.[438]

During the week, the provincial administration presented reports of their stewardship of the province. The delegates listened to Sister Laureann discuss the North American Collaborative Project, drafted proposals for the general chapter, and embraced the succession planning recommended by Felician Services, Inc. Open Space topics included budget/summer vacations; retreats; Christmas and Easter visits; sabbaticals; house meetings; initial

formation; use of credit cards; mission statement; process for selecting local ministers; St. Joseph Hospital joining a healthcare system; and the expansion of the Felician Adult Day Care. After addressing the issues in the small groups, the delegates drew from the ideas generated during the sessions to formulate policies and initiatives. Another weighty matter taken up at this chapter included discussion of the habit. The General Chapter of 1994 had already established norms regarding the wearing of religious garb as well as the alternate habit but left implementation of these norms to the provincial level. As a province, the Enfield sisters had chosen to retain the distinctive habit, that is, the simple style of the modified Felician habit in brown, beige, or white, with a veil, Felician wooden crucifix, and the simple metal ring received at final profession.[439]

At this provincial chapter, the habit issue arose again and was hotly debated by those sisters who felt retaining the wearing of the habit, particularly the veil, was an unequivocal sign of dedication and identity, a "way that their consecration was recognizable" (*Vita Consecrata* §25). They asked, "Without the veil, how will people recognize us as religious?" Poverty entered the decision as well, since relinquishing the habit meant acquiring a new wardrobe. On the other hand, a small number of sisters desired having an option for the sake of comfort, or because they felt clothes ought not to be the measure of a person. Some felt the habit created too much separation, that it inhibited their ability to engage in meaningful, mutual relationships with those they served because it brought with it not just comfort, purity, and Godliness, but also power, authority, and for some, an expectation of false piety. Those who felt it was a sign of prominent status wanted to remove and replace it with something lowly and less costly. They wished to be seen as no longer above others leading down, but instead among others, leading together. The group struggled with this diversity of opinion but through prayer, Sister Carole carefully guided the group to gracefully accept and wholeheartedly support the decision of the general chapter for the Enfield province—that sisters could choose to wear the alternate habit—knowing that the group had honestly searched for the spirit of God in and for the life of the community.[440]

The delegates also finalized the "Policy of Serious Personal Misconduct." Sister Laureann began this session explaining that several years ago, Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski had recognized the need to develop congregational and provincial policies addressing the problem of serious personal misconduct with the sisters. A group of American provincial ministers and representative council members attended a workshop in Chicago directed by Mayer, Brown and Platt International Legal Consultants, Inc., from January 5-6, 1996. Topics presented included pastoral, legal, canonical and mental health perspectives on member conduct, tips for public statements and interviews, and psychological intervention.[441] Sister Laureann explained that while personal misconduct included sexual misconduct, it also referred to substance abuse, financial mismanagement, physical abuse and psychological abuse. Moreover, liability could come with a decades-old abuse claim. The policy Sister Laureann presented provided direction for the provincial minister regarding intervention with the religious, pastoral response to the alleged victim, and communication strategies. The delegates affirmed the new policy.[442]

At the conclusion of the chapter, Sister Carole, facilitator, wrote, "God the Passionate Lover helped in the struggle to meaningfully be inclusive and celebrate giftedness" as the sisters signed the Proclamation Manifesto 2000 uniting Our Lady of Angels Province with Franciscans International.[443] Finally, the delegates reaffirmed the Provincial Mission Statement and crafted the following Focus/Action-Direction Statement for the province for the Ongoing Provincial Implementation Committee (OPIC) to put into action from 1999-2005.

Women Transformed
In the breaking of the bread

We live the Gospel as Franciscan/Felicians by:

Strengthening faith sharing
Embracing the challenges of change
Affirming unity in diversity
Celebrating giftedness[444]

General Chapter Delegates

The 21st General Chapter would take place from June 10 to 30, 2000, at Our Lady Mediatrix of All Graces Generalate in Rome, Italy. The statute which dealt with apportionment of delegates to the general chapter in *Response to Love* stated that, according to its membership, the Enfield province would elect two delegates plus one additional delegate at the provincial chapter. Delegates elected to the general chapter were Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish. Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha and Sister Mary Edith St. Jean were elected alternates.[445]

To conclude the provincial chapter, Sister Mary Laureann, as president of the chapter, expressed her deepest gratitude to Sister Carole in her role as facilitator and to Sister Frances Marion who served as chapter coordinator, as well as the delegates, the committee members, and all who helped to fulfill "the tremendous task we were called to do." She continued, "We face the new millennium in hope and expectation because we confidently accept and firmly embrace our call to be '**Women transformed in the breaking of the bread.'"**[446] Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy of gratitude, offering the final blessing of Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann, the general chapter delegates and alternates, and the chapter banner. The commissioning of the Ongoing Provincial Implementation Committee followed. The final act of the chapter was the enthronement of the Manifesto 2000 Proclamation at the altar. [447]

GENERAL CHAPTER 2000

When Holy Father John Paul II addressed the delegates to the Twenty-First General Chapter of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Felix of Cantalice on June 16, 2000, he provided the context for this meeting, taking place in the year of the Great Jubilee, which celebrated "the Incarnation . . . as the mode of God's love in every time and place." He told the sisters that among them, too, "the Word has come to dwell in deep and powerful ways." He recalled that at a troubled time in Poland, God raised up Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, "who proposed a radically different answer to the question of how freedom might be found, drawing her inspiration from Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint

Felix of Cantalice." He noted that for Blessed Mary Angela, the logic of the Incarnation meant "immersing herself in the suffering of the time, embracing 'the little ones' in a life of action intensely rooted in contemplation."[448]

"In obeying the logic of the Incarnation," he said, "Blessed Mary Angela became a victim of love," who "ascended the hill of Calvary in a journey of suffering both physical and spiritual, until her life was ablaze with the mystery of the Cross." The Holy Father quoted from Angela's own writings: "Love means giving, giving everything that love asks for; giving immediately, without regrets, with joy, and wanting even more to be asked of us." He reminded the sisters that it was Angela's journey into Calvary's darkness that led her to fiercely believe that "at the heart of the Congregation's life there should be devotion above all to the Holy Eucharist and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary." Thus, the Congregation's motto, "All through the heart of Mary in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament." He explained that the long hours of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament called the sisters to "become the Eucharist." The Holy Father concluded his remarks urging the sisters to "a more radical love of the charism of your Foundress. Embrace the Lord's Cross as Blessed Angela did! Then you will become the Eucharist; your whole life will sing Magnificat; your poverty will be filled with 'the unsearchable riches of Christ'" (Eph 3:8).[449]

General Chapter preparation

Planning for the 21st General Chapter began well before 2000, as the members of the General Chapter Task Force gathered at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield from December 12 to 14, 1996, for their first meeting. Sister Mary Angelika Spychalska, provincial minister, Warsaw; Sister Mary Colette Michniewicz, provincial minister, Canada; Sister Rosemarie Goins, provincial minister, New Mexico; and Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, provincial minister, Buffalo, along with Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, minister general, Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak, general councilor, and Sister Carole Riley, CDP, chapter facilitator, comprised the committee. The group compiled the first draft of the provincial and general chapter processes and scheduled chapter planning meetings in North America, Poland, and Brazil. The purpose of these meetings was to offer sisters the opportunity to provide input regarding their hopes and dreams prior to finalizing the process at the 1998 Biennial Assembly in Rome.[450]

In the fall of 1999, Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski appointed two sisters from the Enfield province to assist in various capacities at the general chapter, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko as secretary and Sister Mary Stella Motyl in food service.[451] During the provincial assembly held on April 8, 2000, Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, called forth the delegates as well as sisters offering supportive services, summoning them to the Congregation's 21st General Chapter. Since the delegates would address serious matters during the chapter, Sister Laureann requested a special remembrance in prayer, noting that the primary responsibilities of the delegates were to promote renewal in the spirit of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela and to protect the Felician patrimony.[452] Each member of the province chose one day to pray and sacrifice for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit upon the delegates.

Since the 21st General Chapter took place in Rome from June 10-30, the Enfield delegates, Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister

Mary Rosalma Fish, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz departed for Rome on June 2. Sister Mary Stella and Sister Marie JoAnn left on June 5.[453] They joined fifty-five delegates from throughout the Congregation and thirty-six secretarial/ancillary staff members.[454] The chapter began with a review of the *Observance of Our Felician Heritage, A Report on the State of the Congregation, 1994-1999.* Chapter delegates had the opportunity to reflect on and discuss the report at three "open space" sessions in which the three sisters elected by the chapter body to review the report were present and facilitated the discussions: Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak (Buffalo), Sister Mary Amadeus Pacławska (Przemyśl), and Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio (Coraopolis). Mindful of the fact that Sister Mary Seraphica Pienciak, (Lodi), a general councilor, died suddenly while in office (September 29, 1998), the delegates paused for a moment of silent prayer in thanksgiving for her life of service. The loss of her person, her presence, and her insight was felt not only by the members of the general administration but also by the sisters of the Congregation.[455]

The report focused on every aspect of Felician religious life. The reviewers noted that while the Vision Statement formulated at the 1994 General Chapter was the catalyst for much prayer and activity both in the provinces and in the Congregation, it was also fertile ground for much struggle. The report highlighted the following signs of hope:

- Renewed efforts to know, live, and spread the charism of Blessed Mary Angela.
- Increased efforts on all levels to be advocates for justice and peace in serving the poor and needy.
- Personal and collaborative efforts of the sisters to spread God's message of salvation despite, in some instances, decreasing membership and increasing infirmity.
- Just stewardship of our resources and the accountability for temporal goods.[456]

The delegates spent their days in reflection and discussion as well as on the task of setting direction for the future of the life and mission of the Congregation. In the end, major directives of the general chapter included:

- Restating the Congregational Mission Statement to read: *As Felician-Franciscans called by God, we cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world.*
- Modifying the Congregational Vision Statement to include a reference to Mary:
- Be Servant . . .
- Faithful daughter ***of Mary*** and Blessed Mary Angela . . .
- Retaining the generalate as a vibrant center of spiritual renewal for the Felician Congregation.
- When possible, scheduling the Interprovincial Program of Felician Renewal.
- Establishing a Congregational Justice Commission.
- Forming a Cultural Diversity Subcommittee under the auspices of the Congregational Justice Commission, one of whose major purposes

was to sensitize the Congregation to the richness of culture and races inside and outside the Congregation.[457]

A significant Resolution of the General Chapter empowered the general administration to approve the plans for the potential restructuring of the North American provinces, according to these guidelines:

- That the plan is to be developed by the North American Provinces Group (NAP).
- That the ratification of the plan is to occur without the convocation of a subsequent general chapter.
- That Felician Services, Inc., orientate the newly elected general and provincial administrations relative to the history and development of the plan.
- That Felician Services, Inc., be retained as consultants to the NAP group for as long as the group deems necessary so that opportunities for synergies that become evident in each provincial study may be maximized.
- That a progress report be given at the Biennial Assemblies of 2002 and 2004.[458]

Sister Sharon Holland, a member of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Monroe, Michigan, and a canon lawyer who served for twenty-one years at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, shared her wisdom with the delegates regarding constitutional revision.[459] Following "open space" and general session discussions on revising the Constitutions, the delegates agreed to retain the current *Response to Love* with appropriate changes in specific articles and statutes. A notable Initiative was the effort to introduce an international volunteer program, Felician Volunteers in Mission, VIM, by which young adults, associates, and Felician Sisters would mutually join a short-term experience of prayer, community, and ministry to the poor as a means of extending the Felician charism.[460] The general chapter concluded on June 30, 2000, as officially and solemnly as it was opened. All returned to the place of their community and mission, having experienced "a new and deeper manifestation of God,"[461] ready to live "As Felician Franciscans called by God," to "cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world" (Mission Statement adopted by the 21st General Chapter).

The Second Session of the Provincial Chapter

Provincial Chapter Coordinator Sister Frances Marion Bonczar and delegates to the 21st General Chapter convened the Second Session of the Provincial Chapter at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House on Saturday, August 12, 2000. After welcoming the sisters, Sister Mary Laureann said, "Sisters, we now share the outcome of the general chapter and pass on to you the responsibility and accountability for the acceptance and observance of the Promulgation of Acts in accordance with our Constitutions, *Response to Love."* Sister Laureann commended the members of the general administration for preparing the *Observance of Our Felician Heritage, A Report on the State of the Congregation, 1994-1999* and for being inspiritors and energizers for various congregational observances and projects. She also reviewed revisions to

Response to Love. Sister Francis Marion Bonczar presented the restatements/ modifications of the Directives; Sister Mary Rosalma Fish reviewed "Recommendations and Resolutions." Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz described the Initiatives. The sisters left the meeting accepting and firmly embracing their call to be **"*Women transformed in the breaking of the bread.*"**[462]



Chapter 5
Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, 2001 – 2007
Women transformed in the breaking of the bread

In her presidential address to the 2006 Leadership Conference of Women Religious assembly, conference president Franciscan Sister Beatrice Eichten spoke of the many questions confronting those in religious life such as, "Who are we? Why are we? Who will we be? What if?"[1] The Felician Sisters of North America were asking those same questions as they moved ahead in their interprovincial collaboration, shaping themselves into a different way of being. Even as their numbers were becoming smaller, the sisters were coming together, engaging in conversations to plan for their future. They had just celebrated the 125th anniversary of the American foundation and were now moving into the third millennium, committed to a new vision they felt God was inviting them to pursue. As *Women transformed in the breaking of the bread,* they were indeed living the profound experience of the Paschal mystery.

With Mission at Heart

For the first time in the history of Our Lady of the Angels Province, the sisters voted for candidates for provincial leadership using an elective-confirmative method that they had chosen during the Provincial Assembly of October 14, 2000.[2] Approved at the 21st General Chapter in 2000, the method allowed sisters of a province to design a process for their provincial elections with the understanding that it be endorsed by the minister general and her council.[3] This process, used at the 21st General Chapter, allowed the sisters to nominate themselves and encouraged the sisters to call forth potential candidates.

The sisters participated in the first session of the election process for provincial minister on February 17, 2001. Following prayer and discernment, three sisters who were nominated accepted the nomination for provincial minister: Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar.[4] During the second session of the election process on March 17, Sister Mary Laureann was reelected provincial minister.[5]

Her reelection acknowledged Sister Laureann as an accomplished, thoughtful, and faithful leader. For six years, from 1995-2001, she guided the province through a critical period of transition as the sisters began to let go of being members of a small New England province and to move through the reconfiguration process, where everything seemed uncertain. She faced the challenges of a diminishing number of sisters as well as the growing number of retired and infirm sisters, all the while ensuring that the sisters remained open, attentive, and receptive to the Spirit moving in them as daughters of Mother Angela and challenging them to be "co-creators of the future of the Congregation."[6]

The importance of mission was evident and beautifully expressed in her desire to have the banner that was created for the beatification of Blessed Mary Angela transported from Rome to the Felician Heritage Center in Enfield. If there was one thing that motivated her more than others, it was looking to the Felician Foundress, Mary Angela Truszkowska, as a model and radically embracing her charism.

At the opening of the Provincial Assembly held on April 18, 1998, the fifth anniversary of the Beatification of Blessed Mary Angela, she told the sisters:

> We must embrace each other in our communal efforts, loyalty, and support. We have a wonderful province and with the grace of God, direction of the Holy Spirit, and under the loving care of our Blessed Mary Angela, we will be led into the new millennium with real confidence and deep conviction in our resolve to *Be Eucharist, Sister, Servant to all*. And this is possible on our part by our strong commitment for personal and communal conversion.[7]

Sister Laureann was deeply committed to the care and development of the province's resources and was proud of Enfield's beautiful campus. She led major facility and campus improvements, attending to renovations for the original infirmary building, the Orrin Thompson Mansion, and the provincial house, and she vigorously pursued negotiating the lease with the Town of Enfield for the Day Care as well as providing overview of the province's sponsored ministries.

The second phase of the election process, nominations for provincial council members, took place at the provincial house on March 31, 2001, when forty-seven sisters were nominated to serve in provincial leadership with fifteen accepting nominations.[8] During the final phase of the election process on April 28, also held at the provincial house, the following sisters were chosen to serve in provincial leadership:

Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Vicar, first councilor
Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Second councilor
Sister Francine Mary Sousa, Third councilor
Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, Fourth councilor[9]



The provincial council, 2001-2007.
Seated: Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin; standing (from l): S Frances Marion Bonczar, SM Bernardine Mucha, SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister; SM Rosalma Fish, S Francine Mary Sousa

Installation of new leadership team

The installation of the provincial minister and council took place on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, June 29, 2001, in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel. Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford, was the principal celebrant of the Eucharistic liturgy. Concelebrants included Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain; Rev. Msgr. Daniel Plocharczyk, rector of St. Joseph Cathedral, Hartford; Father William Baldyga, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Suffield; and Father Joseph M. Cooper, director of the Office of Worship, Manchester, New Hampshire. Msgr. Thomas Ginty, secretary to the archbishop, was the Master of Ceremonies.[10]

Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, called Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish to leadership in the Felician Community for the sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province, inviting them to dedicate themselves to the service of God in the spirit of openness and availability. The sisters extended their hands in blessing over their provincial minister and new council who, in turn, extended a blessing over the sisters. Sister Laureann and each council member received a candle, symbolic of the indwelling light and life of the Holy Spirit, as well as a fervent prayer for the grace necessary for fulfillment of their commitment to serve the sisters of the province. Joining in the celebration were Vicar Sister Mary Celestine Giertych; and general councilors Sister Mary Rosita Brennan and Sister Mary Inga Borko. Following the Mass, the sisters enjoyed a festive dinner in the social room.[11]

SEPTEMBER 11

The morning of September 11, 2001, began like any other Tuesday in early September. The sky was unbelievably clear and blue. Vacations were over, and the business of the province was in full swing. The new council was still clarifying its role of providing leadership and direction for the life of the province, and for those involved in education, the school year was just ramping up.

The world was still largely without smartphones or social media, and news about the events of the day spread slowly by today's standards. On September 12, 2001, the front page of the *New York Times,* screamed:

U.S. ATTACKED
HIJACKED JETS DESTROY TWIN TOWERS AND HIT PENTAGON
IN DAY OF TERROR

The day before, September 11, a day that came to be known as 9/11, nineteen terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners scheduled to travel from the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions of the East Coast to California. The hijackers rammed two jetliners into each of New York's World Trade Center Towers, toppling both in a hellish storm of ash, glass, smoke, and leaping victims. A third jetliner crashed into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense in Virginia, near the national capital of Washington, D.C. Finally, a plane flying from Newark to San Francisco was diverted from striking a federal building in D.C., either the United States Capitol or the White House, but crashed near Pittsburgh following a revolt by brave passengers.[12]

In New York City, the first impact was that of American Airlines Flight 11, which crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center complex in Lower Manhattan at 8:46 a.m. Seventeen minutes later, at 9:03, the World Trade Center's South Tower was hit by United Airlines Flight 175. Both 110-story skyscrapers collapsed within an hour and forty-one minutes, bringing about the destruction of the remaining five structures in the WTC complex, as well as damaging or destroying various other buildings surrounding the towers.[13]

In all, there were 2, 977 killed, and thousands more were injured. At the World Trade Center in New York City, 2,753 people died, of whom 343 were firefighters and 71 law enforcement officers. The attack on the Pentagon took an additional 125 lives, and the diverted plane that crashed near Pittsburgh claimed an additional forty passengers and crew.[14]

After the terror attacks, patriotic sentiment surged. People put aside their differences for a time. American flags flew in cities and towns across the country. Memorials sprouted up around the city. Prayer and candlelight vigils were held regularly. The country grieved collectively.[15] In Enfield, the sisters joined mourners around the world as they prayed for those who lost their lives and those who lost their loved ones. A memorial shrine in the chapel sanctuary commemorated the tragedy.[16] On that day, Sister Rosemary Zawada, a resident of the provincial house, learned that her nephew, Brian E. Bilcher, 37, a devoted husband, doting father, and ten-year veteran of the New York Fire Department, was missing at the World Trade Center. The following Sunday, September 16, the sisters offered a Holy Hour for divine protection and for the intentions of the deceased victims of the attacks, their loved ones, first responders, and volunteers.[17]

On September 14, 2001, strains of "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful" echoed throughout St. Joseph School in Rockville, Connecticut, as students, teachers, and administrators responded to President George Bush's plea for a Day of Prayer. Each student received a United States flag and the parish church quickly filled with worshippers as Father Joseph Olczak, OSPPE, pastor, celebrated the Mass at noon interceding for peace.[18]

Sean Piasecki, who worked for Country Music Television, delivered the "Prayer, Peace and Unity" banner to St. Stanislaus School in Amsterdam, New York, on September 27, 2001. Faculty and students wrote messages to the New Yorkers affected by the September 11 attack. Mr. Piasecki said he was surprised at the depth of feeling and understanding of the tragedy depicted by the drawing and messages written by the students. The banner made its way throughout the Midwest and was eventually presented to New York State Assemblyman Paul Tomko, an alumnus of the school, who delivered it to New York City for display.[19]

Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, who was the director of school guidance at LaSalle Academy, a Christian Brothers school on Manhattan's Lower East Side, kept a journal of events as they unfolded on that day and the days that followed.[20]

> I was speaking with a parent in my office about arranging for an educational evaluation for her son when I heard what sounded like the rumble of thunder. Shortly after the conference, the assistant principal announced that there had been an accident at the World Trade Center, that two planes had crashed into the buildings, and that any student

who had a family member who worked there should come to the main office. He then led the entire school in praying the "Our Father."

Meanwhile, the counselor in the office adjoining mine was on the phone with his father and I heard him say, "Hijacked?" "Terrorists?" At that point, I went downstairs and opened the door onto Second Avenue which had become a thoroughfare for police, fire, and emergency vehicles going downtown, and the sound of sirens blaring predominated.

Standing outside LaSalle, I could see smoke pouring from the World Trade Center, about a mile and a half away as the crow flies. People were gathered in groups on the street, listening to radio reports while others walked along hurriedly with cell phones glued to their ears. A man who passed me said, "You should see the hole in the building." Tears started to run down my face, and I could hardly respond to the parent who drove up, parked her car by a fire hydrant, and ran up to me asking where she could go to pick up her son. All day long, LaSalle's main office resembled Grand Central Station as parents arrived to take their sons home.

By the end of the day, the brothers were prepared to have students who were unable to get home or to the home of a relative or friend stay the night, but somehow students and faculty managed to get home safely. Public transportation was not running below 14th Street, so everyone had to walk from Second Street to at least 14th Street to access transportation. On my way home, I saw signs posted everywhere urging people to donate blood, and on 17th Street where I live, the line wound down the block as people waited at Beth Israel Hospital only to be turned away because the turnout was so overwhelming and, in the end, their blood was not needed for the victims of the 9/11 attack.

School was closed for the rest of the week because LaSalle was in the "frozen zone"–everything located below 14th Street was closed. I sat in front of the TV mesmerized by the news broadcasts, trying to grasp the unimaginable facts of what had happened. I couldn't seem to get enough information. And I noticed that the lights on the Empire State Building were red, white, and blue. As I watched, I wondered how our school counseling department would be able to deal with the aftermath of a tragedy of this magnitude. I felt that nothing in our training had prepared us for this. But the kids seemed better adjusted than I thought they would be. As one writer noted in *The New York Times*, perhaps even for kids, "It is as simple as this: dailiness is central to the deep-rooted human illusion of control." Getting back to their routine and being with their friends was therapeutic.

On Thursday morning, September 13, at breakfast with the Good Shepherd Sisters with whom I lived, we talked about how difficult it was to listen to the readings at Mass, but how appropriate they were: "Love your enemies . . . Do good to those who hate you . . . bless those who curse you . . . pray for those who maltreat you . . . turn the other

cheek when you get slapped . . . give the mugger your shirt along with your coat . . . and don't ask for anything back."

Junior class students who were invited to participate in a research project on trauma and grief-related symptoms by the chief of child and adolescent psychiatry at Saint Vincent's Catholic Medical Center had the opportunity to write about their experience of the World Trade Center. One student wrote: "I couldn't believe such a landmark would be destroyed and gone in a couple of hours." Another said, "It's like they took a piece of peoples' hearts." "I wished it all was just a bad dream," said another student, "and I would wake up and everything would be okay, but it wasn't." A junior who lived outside of Manhattan wrote, "I wanted to be in the city. I wanted to help, do something, not just stay home."

LaSalle received notes of support and encouragement from students in schools across the country. In mid-October, the mail brought a note from students at Columbus Catholic High School in Waterloo, Iowa. They wrote: "We are sorry for anyone who lost someone they knew in this tragic event. We want you to know that our thoughts are with you during this time. We are praying for you." A note attached from the director of guidance at the school brought tears to my eyes. She wrote: "Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers as you work with your students to attempt to make sense of the tragic events that have befallen our country, and closer to home, New York City. As a fellow counselor I am aware of the work that you must be doing to assist those at your high school. Our students wanted to share their support with your students and let them know that people in Waterloo, Iowa, are sharing their pain."

September 11 marked the definitive transition from the 20th century to the 21st, swinging society into a world where terror attacks didn't happen only on distant shores; where heightened security at airports, government buildings, and, eventually, schools and offices became a fact of life; and where conspiracy theories were no longer the purview of disturbed loners, to be joked about and forgotten.

NORTH AMERICAN INTERPROVINCIAL COLLABORATION

In a letter to the sisters of the Congregation, Minister General Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak recalled that in 1996, the North American provinces began a new journey, "A journey of the heart . . . a journey of love so that each Felician Sister in North America will be enabled and strengthened in her personal and communal 'response to love.'"[21] The North American Provinces (NAP) Group worked diligently to move the provinces along this journey, ardently pursuing the means to assure the life of the Felician Charism in North America.

Because of the events of 9/11, the meeting originally scheduled for Friday and Saturday, September 14-15, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois, was rescheduled for December 5 and 6, 2001.[22] By that time, Felician Services, Inc., had completed its study of each province and shared information from its report, including the sister population for each province grouped by age; the number of local homes and dispersion of sisters in them; statistics on initial formation, and

sisters engaged in general categories of ministry. The report included baseline conclusions, identified issues, and offered recommendations. FSI developed its projections based on several critical assumptions:[23]

- All existing provinces in North America would continue without changes in strategies and without redirecting resources.
- All sponsored institutional ministries of each province were projected to continue to operate indefinitely, even if there were no Felician Sisters projected to be available to provide services to manage.
- All education, healthcare, parish, and other ministries conducted by the provinces as entities not controlled by the provinces were projected to be discontinued for the purpose of baseline projections when Felician Sisters were projected to be no longer available to such ministries.

FSI made the following assumptions regarding membership:

- All sisters would be expected to work full-time until age 75, and part-time until age 80.
- Upon completing their working years, sisters would be accommodated in a community facility.
- Salary income was projected to increase at a 3% rate of inflation.

Regarding finances, FSI found that financial resources projected by the NAP Group were more than adequate to ensure the financial viability of the mission of the North American provinces individually and as a group and recommended that efforts and resources be directed to minimize financial risks. FSI also identified eight Issues and Recommendations to ensure the viability of the Felician Mission in North America through collaborative action. These included the projected decline of Felician Sisters in North America and mission viability, organizational and support structure of the NAP Group as well as the provinces, mission and ministry, and succession planning. After receiving statistics on the Enfield province, Sister Laureann shared these with the sisters during the Provincial Assembly of October 13, 2001, assuring them that the Congregation was moving with care and deliberation.[24]

North American Provinces Steering Committee

As early as 1998, the Chapter Planning Task Force, meeting in Canada at the end of January, noted that many of the concerns of the North American provinces were not necessarily unique to them. As such, the chapter planning group felt that the issue of the vitality of the mission of the Congregation and the means of collaboration and resolution should be open for input from all the provinces. As a result, the group decided that some theological reflections used during the 1998 Biennial Assembly that focused on the vitality of the mission of the Felician Congregation would address these immediate concerns of the provinces.[25]

Early in 2002, with the consultative vote of the general councilors, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, appointed five of the North American provincial ministers to serve on the Steering Committee:

Sister Mary Renetta Rumpz, Livonia, Michigan

Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, Chicago, Illinois

Sister Mary Ambrose Wozniak, Buffalo, New York
Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, Coraopolis, Pennsylvania
Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, Enfield, Connecticut[26]

This group became the consultative body to the general administration for the North American Interprovincial Collaboration.[27] At the same time, Sister Raymond appointed Sister Mary Alina Płoszczyca, a provincial council member in the Krakow province who spoke and understood English, to attend the NAP Steering Committee meetings whenever possible as an observer and liaison to the provincial ministers in the Polish provinces.[28] Sister Raymond clarified Sister Alina's responsibility as keeping the sisters in Poland apprised of the progress of the NAP group and addressing any concerns they might have.[29] Likewise, Sister Mary Aparecida Pinto, provincial minister in Brazil, received the minutes and other materials from the Steering Committee to keep her informed of the progress.

During the first meeting of the North American Provinces Group Steering Committee, held in Buffalo, New York, on March 15 and 16, 2002, the group made several important decisions. One such decision was to add to the original five North American provincial ministers' representatives from the remaining North American provinces. To that end, the Steering Committee welcomed Sister Mary Aquinas Szott, Lodi, New Jersey; Sister Mary Jean Romanowicz, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, and Sister Mary Seraphine Moynier, Rio Rancho, New Mexico. Sister Mary Renetta Rumpz, Livonia, Michigan, and Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, Chicago, agreed to serve as chairpersons.[30] Sister Mary Rosita Brennan, general councilor, was appointed as liaison from the general administration.[31]

The group also decided to create two Task Forces, the Vocations Initiative Task Force to research vocation recruitment programs to utilize for the entire North American Provinces (NAP) Group and the Investments Task Force, to research opportunities to increase the return on investments through collaboration among all the provinces.[32] Several other task forces were eventually established as the need arose, allowing sisters to participate in the process, as well as ensuring ownership and commitment to the outcomes.[33]

Researching a facilitator who could help the NAP Group to advance the process of defining viability for the Felician provinces in North America was the most significant decision made during the Steering Committee Meeting held from June 7-8, 2002. While enjoying the beauty of the Claremount Felician/Franciscan Retreat Center in Mount Arlington, New Jersey, the group established an ad hoc committee to investigate potential facilitators.[34] Following initial screening interviews of several potential facilitator candidates, Ruby Cribbin, a seasoned facilitator, was invited to assist the group in the initial phase of the strategic study in early 2003.[35]

When provincial councilors were added to the NAP Group to represent their respective provinces, Sister Mary Rosalma Fish became Enfield's representative. When the NAP Group determined the need to develop a discussion tool that could be used by the sisters across the provinces as a way of discussing NAP initiatives and topics, Sister Rosalma volunteered to serve on the committee. The tool, approved for use by the NAP Group during the spring of 2003, established the overall context for the process of journeying

together into the future as Felician Sisters in North America. It was designed as a springboard for reflection and discussion, to assist the sisters in exploring broad directions. The tool defined the motivation, vision, and values to support the process, and outlined directions.[36]

Leadership a key component of viability

The North American Provinces Group identified effective leadership as paramount to the future of the Congregation, but especially in the process of conversion and transformation in the movement toward a new configuration of the North American provinces. At its meeting of January 12-13, 2003, in Buffalo, New York, Sister Anne Marie Jablonicky (Buffalo) facilitated an in-depth discussion on leadership for the full NAP Group. She developed themes derived from "Transformative Leadership: Key to Viability," in *Critical Juncture: Assessing the Viability of Religious Institutes,* a publication of LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious), NATRI (National Association for Treasurers of Religious Institutes), and NRRO (National Religious Retirement Office).[37] The document explored issues related to ongoing viability among religious institutes and detailed impediments to mission, ministry, and membership that could impact the long-term ability of a religious institute to sustain itself. LCWR's research found that "the quality of leadership is an essential factor of/in an institute's viability."[38] Key concepts of Sister Anne Marie's presentation included support of current leaders, a future leadership pool, and the preparation of new leaders. It seemed clear that the leader's tasks must be:

- To dedicate genuine attention to the core identity of the institute.
- To keep diverse energies connected, unified, and moving in the same direction, with the spirit of momentum coming from the entire group.
- To provide opportunities to engage all members in decision-making.
- To be enthusiastic about the ministry of leadership during this time of transformation to encourage others to become leaders.[39]

Felician Leadership Program

Looking to the future, the NAP Steering Committee acknowledged the need to assist in the preparation of Felician Sisters in North America for future positions in leadership within the Congregation at all levels as well as the Church. To implement this initiative, the group proposed the formation of a "Think Tank," comprised of Felician Sisters from the North American provinces with varied backgrounds in leadership on both the congregational and ministerial levels. This group was responsible for researching and developing an interprovincial leadership program to assist in the preparation of Felician Sisters in North America for future positions in leadership.[40] As president and CEO of St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski was invited to serve as a member.[41]

After several meetings, the Leadership Think Tank decided to offer forty Felician Sisters in the North American provinces the opportunity to participate in the Felician Leadership Program from July 11-31, 2004. The program, planned to take place in Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, was designed to provide useful and practical information as well as tools to enhance the participants' personal and professional leadership capabilities.[42]

Enfield's six participants were Sister Francine Mary Sousa, Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Joanne Marian Kaminski, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, and Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett. Following the opening retreat day, the sisters participated in the four segments of the program. The "Spiritual Dimension" developed the fundamental significance of prayer, charism, discernment, mission, and vision as related to leadership. In the "Self-Awareness Dimension," participants learned how personality type affects the functioning of one's family dynamics, prayer, communication style, and problem solving. The "Relational Dimension" of the program explored cultural ramifications of race and ethnicity that would impact future Felician Sisters. The final portion of the program, the "Organizational Dimension," focused on financial operations. While most of the presenters were Felician Sisters, Sister Kim Marie Mis brought in her team from United Stand in Chicago, and Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski, president and CEO of FSI, shared the stage with Joseph Parrillo, FSI's director of finance, who spoke on the vital topics of finance, sponsorship and strategic planning.[43]



Enfield's participants in the 2004 NAP Leadership Program, from l: S Janice Marie Gaudette, S Nancy Marie Piecewicz, S Joanne Marian Kaminski, S Marie JoAnn Lewko, S Francine Mary Sousa, S Susan Adele Marie Tippett.

Vocation Initiative

At its meeting in late March 2003, the Steering Committee made significant strides with respect to its vocation initiative. The group created a North American Vocation Team consisting of two coordinators and eight members and established the North American Vocation Center in Livonia, Michigan. By means of a discernment process, Sister Marilyn Marie Minter (Lodi) and Sister Paula Mary Palasz (Chicago) were selected as full-time coordinators of the team.[44]

During the Felician Formation Convocation held in Holly, Michigan, which began on October 10, 2003, the day marking the anniversary of Blessed Mary

Angela's death, the entire assembly participated in Night Prayer and the Rite of Commissioning of the Felician North American Vocation Team. Each participant held a lighted candle decorated to symbolize the theme, "With Hearts on Fire." Together with Sister Marilyn and Sister Paula, Sister Mary John Fryc, director of vocations for the Enfield province, was commissioned to create a vocation culture through pastoral activity, especially the pastoral care of youth and young adults that would focus on five actions: to pray, evangelize, experience, mentor, and invite.[45]

On October 12, 2003, the sisters participated in the Blessing of the Felician North American Vocation Center on the campus of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Provincial House in Livonia, Michigan. Each Felician Sister was challenged anew to rekindle the fervor of her own vocation as the prayer service unfolded and the words "Christ, be our Light" resounded throughout the halls of the newly dedicated space. Representing the Enfield province were Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, director of ongoing formation.[46]

Journey in Hope – A New Tomorrow

By the end of 2003, the NAP Steering Committee had consulted with other religious congregations that had undergone some type of congregational reconfiguration, hoping to glean from the wisdom they gained from their experience. The Felicians asked the leaders of seven congregations what worked, what did not work, what they would do again, and what they would do differently.[47]

The group had also developed a theme reflecting the spirit of the North American Provinces initiative: *Journey in Hope – A New Tomorrow*. Sister Mary Francis Lewandowski (Livonia) designed the logo to depict the theme of Felician Sisters journeying together to a new future in North America.[48] Sisters throughout the province responded, including three sisters from Enfield, and shared their poetry and reflections which the Communications Task Force eventually compiled into a booklet. In her poem entitled, "The Ripple," Sister Mary Rosalma Fish caught the pervasive effect of the theme and pondered, "change begins to swell . . . ordinary gone forever." Sister Janice Marie Gaudette reflected on "Hope" as "elusive . . . vital . . . gift." Sister Francine Mary Sousa's acrostic poem of "JOURNEY IN HOPE A NEW TOMORROW" identified many elements common to journeying and the Felician heritage. [49]

As the work of the NAP Steering Committee moved along, additional task forces were established: Initial Formation, Liturgy/Rituals, Assessment of Buildings and Properties, and Mission Effectiveness. Sister Mary Ann Papiez served on the Initial Formation Task Force, and Sister Constance Marie Tomyl on Liturgy/Rituals.

Video Recounts NAP Process

In yet another effort to help the sisters of the North American provinces accept the challenge of conversion and transformation, risk taking and change of heart as they journeyed together toward the future, the North American provincial ministers prepared a video presentation for them that shared background information about NAP, its history, evolution, and call to begin the process of readying their hearts for whatever collaborative efforts would be necessary. Sisters in local homes (convents) received the video in

late November 2003, coinciding with the beginning of the Advent season, and were invited to watch and discuss it either with the sisters in their convent or gathered in small area groups.[50]

After watching the video, the sisters of St. Bernard Convent in Enfield said, "We were reminded of similar challenges experienced by the first Felician Sisters who came to America." They also noted that it was "a very good tool" to enable all sisters in North America "to hear the same message regarding NAP." In their evaluation, the sisters in Adams, Massachusetts, wrote, "It is good that we are looking at 'reality' together, planning together, inviting input from the sisters, and beginning to support common endeavors." Additionally, they said, the video "convinced us that the planning process has been seriously undertaken both spiritually and professionally."[51]

Advent Reflection Booklet

Recognizing the value of every sister's participation, the Steering Committee had begun planning for increased involvement in the process by all the sisters in North America. Efforts in this regard included a reflection booklet on Advent's invitation to ongoing conversion and transformation. The beautiful booklet, entitled *Journey in Hope*: *Advent Reflections, A New Tomorrow,* included scriptural reflections by sisters from each North American province, including three from Enfield: Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, and Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko.[52]

Reaction to the Advent booklet was positive. Sister Joan Marie Swierzb said she found the reflections "helpful in providing daily material to ponder and renew initial enthusiasm and commitment as a Felician Sister." Perhaps the sisters who minister at St. Joseph's Hospital in Bangor, Maine, summed up the feelings of most of the sisters when they wrote: "The tying in of Mother Angela's spirit to the spirit of Advent and the acculturation of the different gifts of the sisters of various provinces . . . will help us to accept the diversity found in our world today." Reflecting on the *Journey in Hope* Advent Reflections booklet and the NAP video, Sister Mary Laureann said, "The Advent season of this past year was a historical moment in time for the sisters of the North American Provinces."[53]

In January 2004, the North American provincial ministers and members of their administrations gathered with Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, and Sister Mary Rosita Brennan, general councilor. In their meeting facilitated by Ruby Cribbin, they developed the cycles for the *Journey in Hope: A New Tomorrow.* The chart reflected the steps on the NAP *Journey in Hope.* The graphic was designed to help the sisters visualize each step and understand the "flow" of the process. An overview of the cycles follows.[54]

CYCLE 1

Spring 2004 Provincial Gathering

Each sister in North America was involved in the next history-making step in the process of creating a reality to ensure the viability of the Felician Mission in North America as provincial and interprovincial gatherings were planned for 2004. Sister Mary Laureann hosted Enfield's spring meeting along with guest provincial minister Sister Mary Seraphine Moynier, from Rio Rancho, New Mexico, on Saturday, April 17.[55]

In a video address prepared for the occasion, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, reminded the sisters that two questions had been the guiding force of the process since 1996:

- What can be done now to ensure the viability of the Felician Mission in North America?
- What can we do better together than we can do alone?

Sister Raymond also urged the sisters to center their lives on Jesus, to be in touch with God in charting a future as yet unclear, and finally, to "believe that we are Eucharist alive."

The PowerPoint presentation, "Journey of Hope," presented the historical development of the NAP process from 1996 to the present. It also reviewed the most recent efforts made by the NAP Group through the implementation of the Overall Context for Process—our motivation, vision, values to support the process, and direction—as well as the formation of several task forces. By this time, four additional task forces had been created: Ongoing Formation Events, Provincial Policy Handbook, Communications, and North American Provinces Donations. Sister Mary Laureann served as liaison for Ongoing Formation Events. Sisters serving on these Task Forces included Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Provincial Policy Handbook, and Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Communications.[56]

The third part of the presentation shared projections for the future, including the Fall 2004 Interprovincial Meetings, Fall 2005 Interprovincial Assemblies, and Spring 2006 Interprovincial Convocation. During the afternoon session, the sisters gathered in small groups to reflect on Preferred Future, Membership, and Leadership.[57] Their discussion focused on questions including,

- ***Preferred Future:*** What are your fears/hopes for community at this time?
- ***Leadership:*** What qualities are needed for transformative community leadership? How can we encourage/prepare future leaders?
- ***Membership:*** Qualities that attract contemporary women to religious life are common prayer, life in community, and working for the poor. **These are part of our heritage.** How are these elements recognizable in us today?[58]

After the sharing with the large group, Sister Seraphine remarked, "You could really feel the Spirit working. I get so energized. . . . Blessed Angela is saying 'Yes!'"

Following the explanation of Modes of Participation in the NAP Process, each sister had the opportunity to respond to the question, "Will you be a companion with us on our JOURNEY IN HOPE – A New Tomorrow?" During the closing ritual of commitment held in the chapel, each sister made an individual written commitment to the process, as collaborative member, supportive member, or prayer member. The ritual was prepared by the Liturgy/Rituals Task Force, chaired by Sister Constance Marie Tomyl.[59]

The Journey of Hope *continues*

Meanwhile, the NAP Steering Committee continued to meet, setting goals, planning, reporting, and assessing the overall process as well as the effectiveness of the task forces. The group reminded the sisters to pray daily, privately and in common, "so that the 21st century will witness a rebirth of Blessed Mary Angela's charism in new and exciting ways among the North American Felician Sisters."[60]

Based on the overwhelmingly positive response to the Advent 2003 reflection booklet, the Steering Committee decided to create a similar prayer/reflection guide for Lent 2005. "The *Journey in Hope* Lenten Reflections: A New Tomorrow" included writings of Felician Sisters as well as associates. In the letter that prefaced the Lenten booklet, the Steering Committee wrote: "As we begin the season of Lent, we enter into a time for nurturing our inner lives. We are aware that we not only prepare ourselves to celebrate the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, but also the death and resurrection that constantly takes place within us."[61] Enfield sisters whose writings developed this theme included Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, Sister Clare Marie Berryhill, Sister Mary Florence Pelczynski, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz.[62]

CYCLE 2

Fall 2004 Interprovincial Assemblies

To enable Felician Sisters in the North American provinces to enter more fully into the process of creating a hope-filled future and to reflect together on the implications for the "Journey of Hope," the NAP Steering Committee planned interprovincial assemblies for the fall of 2004 in Buffalo, New York; Lodi, New Jersey; Rio Rancho, New Mexico; and Chicago, Illinois. In their letter of invitation encouraging the sisters to take advantage of the opportunity to meet sisters of other provinces and to experience the culture of another province, as well as to become more familiar with the NAP process, the eight North American provincials wrote: "Travel the journey to a future filled with hope and with new ways of giving expression to Blessed Mary Angela's Charism in this new millennium."[63]

In her letter welcoming sisters to the interprovincial assembly, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, wrote, "Today is a time for sharing stories and for listening to them with the ears of the heart." Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, who participated in the assembly in Buffalo, New York, from September 17-19, said, "For me, the video celebrating our stories and our diversity was one of the highlights of the weekend. I was moved to tears by the stories of our pioneer sisters—their faith and commitment, their living out of the charism of Blessed Mary Angela and their equally wholehearted commitment to Christ's members in need."[64]

Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, who was in Lodi, New Jersey, for the assembly held from October 1-3, said,

> Our sisters in Lodi take pride in their ministry of hospitality, and no one was [a] stranger. Each was a sister, a daughter of Blessed Mary Angela. Provincial boundaries were set aside for the duration of the weekend as together we shared our fears, our hopes, our dreams, and

> our vision. We are the new pioneers for a new age. We are women of faith. In a world filled with ethnic violence and hatred, what better witness can we give than our ability to come from diverse areas of the country with one common purpose, willing to set aside differences, willing to work together. . . . I left the meeting with a feeling of connectedness knowing that I am not alone. I left renewed in faith, knowing that there are many other women on fire with the vision of Blessed Angela.[65]

Speaking about her experience with nearly 100 Felician Sisters who came together for the Interprovincial Assembly in Rio Rancho from November 5-7, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko said, "The opportunity to meet with our sisters from all parts of the country and exchange ideas about our heritage as well as our future, made us proud to be part of this dynamic congregation seeking to meet the needs of the Church in such diverse ways. We came away from this experience no longer as strangers to each other, but as friends and sisters who eagerly look forward to meeting each other again on our 'Journey of Hope' to 'A New Tomorrow.'"[66]

Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, who traveled to the Chicago Assembly that took place from November 12-14, spoke about the energy that could be felt throughout the weekend. She said it "was as alive as are these women with whom I am privileged to journey. I recall a poster I saw many years ago, depicting a snow-covered landscape. It said, 'A single snowflake is beautiful and unique, but is one of the smallest, most delicate structures on earth, yet look at what happens when snowflakes come together.' I believe that as individuals we are like snowflakes. Each of us has unique gifts and talents—just imagine what we can all do together. Together in spirit we walk the 'Journey in Hope' to 'A New Tomorrow.'"[67]

CYCLE 3

'A Journey in Hope'

By 2005, the North American provinces' *Journey in Hope* was well underway when Sister Margaret Marie Padilla began "thinking that we could use a song to carry the theme of 'journeying together' and that would help unite us." She said that as she, Sister Veronica Marie Lucero and Sister Marilyn Marie Minter were "simply chatting, laughing and singing, the song was being created." Sister Margaret said she remembers that when she and Sister Veronica were riding along in their truck, returning to their ministry in the *Ejido Santa Maria* in Coahuila, Mexico, they continued to compose the song. A strong believer in the power of music to move hearts and minds, Sister Veronica said that at the time, she and Sister Margaret were studying at the Franciscan Institute on the campus of St. Bonaventure University, and she was mindful of the saint's efforts at preserving a spirit of unity within the order.[68]

The three musicians used their musical talents to bring unity and joy to the community. Eventually, Sister Margaret and Sister Veronica wrote the refrain and Sister Marilyn contributed the verses. Sister Veronica said that the three sang it at a NAP meeting and the sisters enjoyed both the message and the melody.[69] The rest was history. The song gained popularity among the sisters, becoming the theme song for every assembly and convocation after that.

The song recognized that circumstances of the 21st century demanded a different role for the eight provinces of Felician Sisters in North America and that the needs of the times were summoning the sisters to explore new horizons. The words of the refrain reached out expansively:

A journey in hope, a new tomorrow,
takes us beyond the roads we have known.
A journey in hope, a new tomorrow,
promises a mission for the world.

Each time the sisters sang it, they became increasingly aware that they were becoming "the collective yes to God's call to go beyond the comfort of security and face tomorrow filled with hope."[70] The song was eventually recorded on the CD *One Voice* (see Chapter 6).

Spring 2005 Mission/Ministry Gatherings

By mid-June 2004, the NAP Steering Committee was planning for two interprovincial meetings based on mission and ministry. The purpose of these gatherings was to address the viability of the mission of the Felician Sisters in North America, to envision possibilities for future collaborative efforts in ministry, to see the role of the NAP process in relation to specific ministries, and to connect the Felician-Franciscan charism with the needs of today.[71]

Felician Sisters representing all eight North American provinces assembled at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Provincial House in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, for the first "Mission/Ministry Gathering," held the weekend of February 25-27, 2005. Attendees included sisters engaged in all levels of education ministry: college, secondary, elementary, and CCD/religious education. Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, and Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko represented the Enfield province.[72]

Keynote presenter Sister Margaret Carney, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God and president of St. Bonaventure University, focused the sisters on the task before them. Drawing on the writings of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela, she reminded the sisters of two related truths: that Angela found that doing good for others helped to draw her more strongly toward God and that her desolations were the most profound when she was cut off from seeing Christ in the face of the poor.[73] Sister Margaret urged the sisters to look at their statistics, their diminishment. "There's a story in there that you really must grapple with," adding, "It's not an easy task." She suggested that perhaps they were being called to be immigrants again and to move out of their comfort zone. She concluded, "We have some tremendous new opportunities to make sure in our way that no child is left behind, and no adult is left behind, either."

The weekend formally concluded with a ceremony of recommitment when each sister received a packet of seeds to remind her that, following the example of Blessed Mary Angela, she, too, might plant seeds—literally and figuratively—and, with the greatest love, water them and await their first sprouts.[74]

Mission/Ministry Gathering, Enfield, Connecticut

Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield, Connecticut, hosted the second Mission/Ministry gathering the weekend of April 8-10, 2005. More

than seventy sisters from the North American provinces reflected on, shared, and discussed ministries within the various provinces and possible future collaboration in ministry. This assembly included sisters in healthcare, social services, pastoral ministry, and the organizational structure of the Church. Nine sisters represented the Enfield province: Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz, Sister Clare Marie Berryhill, Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, and Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak.[75]

Bernardine Franciscan Sister Roberta McKelvie reminded the sister participants that their contemplative lifestyle must be the foundation of their lives for without it, ministry would not be effective. Speaking of the Gospel message as being independent of and transcending all cultures, she said, "We should be willing to let go of our boundaries so that the Gospel and culture can be integrated. Boundaries need not necessarily be broken," but she noted, "they should be permeable."[76]

Sisters reflected on the questions, "What tools/resources do I use to understand the culture of those to whom I minister? And, "Am I willing to become an immigrant to cross boundaries I know to achieve a new incarnation of Felician ministry?" The sisters met in small groups to discuss their reflections and later shared their thoughts with the larger group.[77] The presentations, discussions, and sharings during the weekend moved the sisters to identify ministries that would respond to the critical needs of the times. After the NAP Steering Committee reviewed the proposed collaborative interprovincial ministries and identified the areas of similarity among them, they accepted three for future study:

- Multi-faceted Ministry Center
- Creation of a Felician Spirituality Center among the Poor
- Hispanic Pilot Program

Accordingly, the Steering Committee established ad hoc committees to research the collaborative interprovincial ministries. Sister Mary Laureann was named the liaison for the Multi-Faceted Ministry Center Committee. The members' task was to investigate the establishment of a multi-faceted ministry center, a center that would address the physical, educational, emotional, and spiritual needs of the people of God with a preferential option for the poor. She was assisted in this task by eight sisters, including two from Enfield: Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa and Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso.[78]

An eight-member ad hoc committee worked with Sister Mary Jean Romanowicz (Canada) as members of the Creation of a Felician Spirituality Center among Poor People. Their task was to respond to the hunger for spirituality among persons living in poverty with programs/opportunities that would accommodate their spiritual needs.

The task of the Hispanic Pilot Program Committee was to develop a trial project that would educate sisters in the Hispanic language and culture and to provide for an immersion experience. The ultimate purpose of this group, headed by Sister Mary Seraphine Moynier (Rio Rancho) was to prepare sisters for service to the expanding Hispanic population in North America. Sister Mary Rosalma Fish served on this small group of five sisters.

Noting the emergence of a fourth area, Lay Leadership and Campus Ministry in Higher Education, the Steering Committee affirmed this direction and entrusted the provincial ministers in whose provinces the Felician-sponsored university/colleges were located with the task of assuring the presidents of the higher education institutions of NAP's support for their concerns about lay leadership and campus ministry.[79]

The NAP Steering Committee continued to monitor the work of the task forces with each group providing quarterly reports. In the end, the group established a total of twelve committees. By this time, the list included Assessment of Buildings and Properties; Donations; Governance, (Sister Joan Marie Swierzb served as secretary); Ministry (Sister Mary Rosalma); Mission Integration; Spiritual Preparation/ Transitions (Sister Constance Marie Tomyl); and Treasurers (Sister Mary Florentine Myjak).[80]

CYCLE 4

Provincial Chapters

In Cycle 4 (2005), each province held its provincial chapter. Prior to, or at the completion of the chapter, the sisters throughout the province brainstormed to elicit elements of the reconfiguration. Sister Mary Rosita Brennan, general councilor, was present for each of these sessions as a liaison from the general administration. Her role was to be attentive to the atmosphere and mood of the participants as well as to their ideas and thoughts. She later synthesized the data and prepared a report for the NAP Steering Committee and the newly formed Governance Task Force. These groups used the information to develop the proposed models of governance prepared for presentation at the March 2006 Convocation in Buffalo, New York.[81]

In Enfield, on the morning of July 18, 2005, immediately following the conclusion of Enfield's 12th Provincial Chapter, Father Richard Conboy, who facilitated that chapter, led a special post-provincial chapter session. The question posed to the sisters was: *What are the elements of reconfiguration that we desire by 2012?* The sisters shared their visions of the future for the North American provinces regarding community life, apostolic mission, religious formation, governance, and administration of temporal goods.[82] Overall, the sisters affirmed their support for the ongoing NAP process. Issues that figured significantly during the small group conversations included supporting the centralized interprovincial novitiate, and ongoing interprovincial formation programs, as well as interprovincial sharing of sisters/collaboration. The sisters also indicated strong support for having representation from each province on the central leadership team and establishing the central government at a neutral site but were concerned about maintaining the infirmary within each province.[83]

CYCLE 5

Fall 2005 Interprovincial Assemblies

A series of three fall assemblies in 2005 gave collaborative members of the NAP process an opportunity to meet new sisters and to reflect on the topic of diversity. In Livonia, Michigan, and Lodi, New Jersey, in October, and in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, in November, the sisters met to participate in the next cycle of the reconfiguration process, ready to "take the next step on the journey."

The focus of the fall interprovincial assemblies was "Celebrating Diversity." While the programs, presentations, prayers and rituals were similar, each assembly was different because the interaction of the participants created very diverse experiences that strengthened relationships and boosted innovation and creativity.

Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, who participated in the assembly in Livonia, Michigan, said that when she arrived after a safe and smooth flight, and saw "a bright sunny blue sky after so many days of rain in the northeast," she knew that "[t]his was going to be another wonderful experience of togetherness with sisters from throughout North America. I felt warmed, sunny, and excited. As we gathered for the first session that evening, the joy of meeting old friends and getting to know new friends reverberated through the assembly room."[84]

In her video message, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, recalled words used frequently by Pope John Paul II, "Be not afraid." She said, "Our God is the God of surprises," and urged the sisters to be open to this work of God in their lives. "It is not only we who are writing these pages of history," she said, "God is writing them with us." In her remarks, Sister Raymond focused on the word HOPE, and concluded her message, saying, "Angela has already gone ahead. Like her, we are women on a journey of hope to a new tomorrow."[85]

Mercy Sister Maria Elena Gonzalez and Humility of Mary Sister Toby Lardie of the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC), in San Antonio, Texas, explored the nature of culture and diversity, as well as some of the dynamics involved in embracing and honoring diversity in the current living and ministry situations. They encouraged the sisters to ask, "How is it that God is challenging us?"[86]

Sister Mary Julie Weckwerth (Chicago) presented the work of the Mission Integration Task Force culminating in the Mission Integration Manual, which provided a comprehensive view of mission, its role in all sponsored institutions, and included a plan of action for mission integration as well as resources. The sisters learned about the "Personal Inventory," which was designed to ascertain their former and current ministerial involvements as well as their attitudes about engaging in future ministries both current and new. They listened to presentations on the Hispanic Pilot Program and North American Felician Higher Education. Members of the North American Felician Vocation Team offered reflections on various aspects of their ministry including the difficulties the prevailing culture presented in helping women to discern a religious vocation.[87]

Reflecting on the weekend, Sister Rosalma said, "The rituals and liturgies planned for the weekend lifted my soul to God while stressing the diversity of culture in our Congregation. Each sister was called to reflect on the conscious and unconscious cultures that shape perceptions and personal responses and to embrace the reality of cultural diversity." She continued, "I was deeply touched as the 'Proclamation of the Motivation and Vision of the North American Provinces Reconfiguration Process' was read in English, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish. Each language called to mind a new beginning met with faith and confidence in God. The international aspect of our Congregation and our desire to bring the Good News to all were spoken in clear, vibrant voices filled with passion and deep respect. The diversity of our culture as Felicians was very evident and celebrated by all."[88]

Sister Clare Marie Berryhill, who was part of the "Under 55" group said, "In looking back over the weekend, I realize that I am very much excited and hopeful for the future. No, I don't know what the future will be, but I realized that when I looked around the room and saw, laughed, and cried with, listened and shared with, the women who will journey with me into the future and, knowing that if I keep my heart focused on the One who leads the way, the future holds much promise ."[89]

After analyzing the feedback received from the Fall 2005 Interprovincial Assemblies, members of the NAP Steering Committee summarized their learnings. They said:

- The NAP process is working. The experiences of personal interactions and visits to other provinces have heightened the awareness of the sisters and served to lessen their fears. It is leading them on the way to change and though painful and challenging, it allows each sister the opportunity to participate and claim ownership.
- Generally speaking, sisters are willing to "come to the plate," want to be involved in the process, are willing to go deeper, say how they feel, and know that they have been heard. The sisters have a passion for the Felician Mission—the spiritual renewal of the world.
- The sisters are learning to appreciate the similarities and differences among the provinces as they continue to live out Blessed Mary Angela's charism, mission, and spirit. They are becoming more aware of the big picture, are thinking congregationally, and are willing to be bridge builders as they journey in hope toward a new tomorrow.[90]

NAP process proceeds collaboratively

As the NAP process developed, the Steering Committee realized its call to *cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world.* This cooperation demanded proceeding collaboratively, which resulted in creating task forces, and the sisters appointed to them by the minister general and her council worked to achieve the purposes for which they were created.[91]

The Governance Task Force was charged with developing a model for restructuring the North American provinces that would address Congregational, canonical, civil, and financial considerations. The members devised models for consideration by all collaborative members who participated in the Convocation held in Buffalo, New York, from March 15-17, 2006. Sister Joan Marie Swierzb served on this task force.

The Transitions Task Force was created to assist the sisters in meeting their spiritual, psychological, and emotional needs during this period of reconfiguration. The members, including Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, planned and implemented NAP and provincial programs to meet the needs of the sisters and collaborated with the Spiritual Preparation, Liturgy/Rituals, and Governance Task Forces in implementing programs or developing resources.

Sister Mary Florentine Myjak served on the Treasurers Task Force that developed plans to finance designated NAP activities and to investigate and make recommendations about a fund for the upkeep of the infirm and retired sisters, as well as the feasibility of establishing centralized finances. The NAP group established a central fund comprising contributions from each province to support NAP-related expenses.

Common Interprovincial Novitiate

The Felician Congregation had made several attempts to establish an interprovincial novitiate in the North American provinces. As early as 1988, the 19th General Chapter directed the general administration to appoint an ad hoc committee to study its feasibility. The minutes of this chapter's proceedings stated that the discussion on this topic emphasized that the interprovincial novitiate be located on "neutral grounds," away from a provincial house.[92] The committee immediately proceeded with its task and presented its findings to the Interprovincial Commission of Formation Coordinators in 1990. Their work included a review of the history of interprovincial novitiates in the Congregation. At the end of a lengthy discussion, the formation coordinators supported the concept of an interprovincial novitiate house on "neutral grounds," agreeing that this type of novitiate would be best for the novices.[93] At their annual meeting in June 1990, the ad hoc committee shared feedback received from the provinces. Included among the pros and cons was the indication that there was no facility available apart from the provincialate in any of the eight North American provinces for an interprovincial novitiate house. Moreover, some provinces wished to maintain autonomy in determining their novitiate program."[94]

Once the Initial Formation Task Force made progress in its attempts to unify the provinces regarding initial formation, it directed its energies toward a common novitiate for North America.[95] By early May of 2005, each member of the Steering Committee confirmed her commitment to participate in a common NAP interprovincial novitiate, and discussion began regarding location, timeline, possible directors, and fundamental program design.[96]

While the Task Force on Initial Formation created two models for a common Felician Novitiate, one for North America and one for Mexico, both models shared common features, including a neutral location, inclusion of vowed members along with formation personnel, appointment of both a novice director and an assistant director, a team approach regarding teaching the novitiate course of study, and second-year ministry placements arranged by the novice director and her assistant. Later, based on the recommendation of the director of novices, it was determined that living/ministry placement of the second-year novice would lie with the provincial minister and her council.[97]

Recommending a site for the common Felician novitiate was one of the first tasks assigned to the Initial Formation Task Force. Four sites were considered, and task force members visited two: St. Francis Convent in Mount Arlington, New Jersey, and St. Felix Center on the Enfield, Connecticut, campus. The assessment included thirty-eight factors in two categories: environment and location, and building specifics. Top priorities in the first category included availability of Eucharist, environment for contemplation, opportunities for interaction with other novices, sites for ministry to the poor, and safety of environment and building. Second category building specifics were a chapel, classroom space, bathrooms, bedrooms, and offices for directors.[98]

After receiving the carefully researched report from the task force, the Steering Committee made its recommendation to the minister general and her council.[99] In a letter dated February 11, 2006, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, with the deliberative vote of her council, approved the request of the NAP Steering Committee to establish the common novitiate for

the North American provinces in Enfield. Sister Raymond wrote, "May these decisions along with the work of the NAP Vocation Team and the lived example of the sisters in North America bring many new and zealous vocations to our Congregation."[100]

New Common Novitiate Site

When Mother Mary Annunciata Bretschneider, the first provincial superior of Our Lady of the Angels Province initiated construction of an infirmary in 1936, she doubtless never dreamed that the building would one day house the common novitiate for the North American provinces. According to the history of the Enfield province, the general administration in Krakow, Poland, granted permission for the construction of the two-story building and, on May 5, 1937, ground was broken, and work began. One year later, as the local leader of the Catholic Church, the Most Rev. Maurice A. McAuliffe, bishop of Hartford, blessed the building that would house sisters needing medical care.[101]

The building served its purpose for many years until the rising number of sisters needing extended care outgrew these quarters. Toward the end of 1973, Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski, then provincial superior, and her council decided to move Holy Family Infirmary into the south wing of the provincial house. In its new incarnation, the original infirmary building became home for the faculty and staff of Our Lady of the Angels Academy and took on a new name as well—Mother Angela Residence. For two of those years, the building was also home to the sisters who constituted the staff of the Felician Healthcare System.[102]

In 1988, when Longview Catholic High School closed (formerly Our Lady of the Angels Academy), the building continued to house sisters engaged in various ministries, including the Town of Enfield Day Care and the Felician Adult Day Care. In 1995, when these sisters relocated to the second floor of the original provincial house, the Orrin Thompson Mansion, the building underwent extensive renovation and again was given a new name for its new function. Now called St. Felix Center, it was used to accommodate guests as well as retreatants. With the decision to use the building as the common novitiate, it was further enhanced with the installation of central air conditioning, replacement of the roof and windows, and upgraded wiring. Soon after, construction began on a garage, located adjacent to the building.[103]



The infirmary built on the Enfield campus in 1936 became the home for the common novitiate of the North American Province in the spring of 2006.

In the province's quarterly newsletter, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl wrote, "I like to think that Mother Annunciata smiles on the decision for the original infirmary building to be of further service to the Congregation, particularly to house those beginning their journey of hope in the Felician way of life."[104]

Called to serve in Initial Formation

The next step was to engage a facilitator to direct a discernment process for those sisters who were qualified and called to serve as the novice director and the assistant director for the centralized novitiate. Nine sisters, including Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, participated in the discernment process for these roles that took place from March 15 through March 17, 2006, at Villa Angela in Elma, New York. Sister Elaine Marie Frigo (Lodi) facilitated the process. During the sessions, the sisters shared their concerns, including that the differences among the provinces in vision, values, and perceptions would not be easy to negotiate; that accountability to eight different provincial ministers from provinces with very different "cultures" might prove to be too challenging; and that the novice director and her assistant would need to be available "24/7" and have no personal time.[105]

When discussing skills that might be needed for providing direction for a common novitiate, the sisters identified holding a congregational vision as compared to provincialism; having an openness, an appreciation, a willingness to learn about diversity of cultures that are ethnic, religious, socio-economic, or related to life experiences; and being a synthesizer who could envision the program considering all the hopes, expectations, and concerns. In the end, the group identified and recommended to the Steering Committee two sisters for the role of novice director and three sisters for assistant director.[106]

The NAP Steering Committee appointed three sisters to staff the central novitiate: Sister Mary Sharon Iacobucci (Coraopolis), novice director; Sister Mary Clare Kehl (Rio Rancho), assistant director; and Sister Mary Carlotta Myszka (Chicago), local minister. The Steering Committee set the opening date for some time in October or November 2006 with the canonical novitiate beginning in January 2007. Women who were postulants at the time participated in pre-novitiate activities toward the end of the year but returned to their home provinces for the Rite of Initiation in January 2007. The second-year novice from Canada would also be a member of the novitiate community.[107]

Preparations began in earnest for the common novitiate with Sister Mary Sharon arriving for a site visit of St. Felix Center on June 20, 2006.[108] Later that summer, on August 26, when the entire team arrived for an onsite visit, the members requested that the name St. Felix Center be changed to St. Felix Convent.[109] Before taking up residence on October 2, the team continued planning for the novices who would arrive in late November, following the Felician Convocation in Chicago. After their arrival in Enfield by car, van, and plane on October 2, the sisters enjoyed a welcome dinner hosted by the sisters of the Enfield Province at the provincial house. The group returned to St. Felix Convent for a tour of the common novitiate accompanied by Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, who led a prayer of thanksgiving.[110]

Preparations by the novitiate team included considering goals and objectives for both the orientation period and the canonical novitiate;

completing novitiate policies; discussing the role of each formator on the team and composing job descriptions; engaging in a conference call with provincial ministers whose postulants and novice would be participating in the common novitiate; and assessing financial needs and preparing a budget.[111]

Postulant Anna Blazuk, the first of the three "pioneers" at the newly established common novitiate, arrived by van from Livonia, Michigan, on November 16, followed by Postulant Maryann Spiller who arrived on November 17 from Chicago, Illinois. On November 18, the novitiate team and the two postulants, together with their traveling companions, participated in the Eucharistic liturgy with the sisters of the provincial house. At breakfast, the two postulants were introduced to the community.[112] During the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, the sisters and postulants enjoyed a "getting to know you" gathering with the sisters and staff at Holy Family Infirmary on Sunday, November 26, where they were greeted with "Bread and Salt," traditional welcoming symbols in Poland. Musical entertainment, delicious treats, and conversation added to the spirit of joy.[113] The third pioneer, Sister Esmeria Marie Bastos, a second-year novice, arrived from Canada to continue her novitiate at St. Felix Convent on December 5.[114]

Sisters from the provincial house enjoyed an Open House at St. Felix Convent, the common novitiate, on December 9. Postulants Maryann Spiller and Anna Blazuk, as well as Sister Esmeria Marie, second year novice, gave a grand tour of the refurbished building to the visitors. The formation team, Sister Mary Sharon, Sister Mary Claire, and Sister Mary Carlotta were also on hand to greet the sisters who recalled the building's former uses and marveled at the renovations.[115] Sister Mary Helene Hadam expressed the sentiments of those present, saying, "I am happy this beautiful building is now home for the youngest of our community." Refreshments were served, and each visiting sister received a token of appreciation.[116]

Both postulants, Maryann and Anna, were admitted to the novitiate while in their home provinces—Livonia and Chicago, respectively—from late December 2006 until early January 2007. During a simple ceremony, they received the brown Felician habit and a white veil and their religious names and returned to the novitiate in Enfield as Sister Maryann and Sister Mary Monica Anne.

New novitiate 'holy ground'

All eight provinces in the United States and Canada were represented by sisters who traveled by air or drove many miles to be present for the blessing and dedication of the common novitiate on January 23, 2007. Also in attendance were Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, and Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, vicar general, who came from Rome to represent the North American provinces in this historic moment. Father Michael Zielke, OFM, Conv., presided at the ceremony. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, provincial house chaplain, also participated.[117]

After Sister Mary Sharon welcomed the guests and invited the sisters to pray for this new beginning, Sister Mary Clare led the intercessory prayers. As Father Michael blessed each part of the house with holy water, the waiting sisters listened to the hymn, "Holy Ground," by Christopher Beatty. Following the blessing, the novices—Sister Esmeria Marie Bastos, Sister Maryann Spiller,

and Sister Mary Monica Anne Blazuk—began a "Felician Franciscan Dialogue." The presentation gave them the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about living in their new environment. Sister Mary Seraphine Moynier, provincial minister in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and liaison for the novitiate house, shared words of wisdom from Blessed Mary Angela. Father Michael spoke the words of St. Francis of Assisi, and Sister Mary Laureann spoke the words of St. Felix of Cantalice and shared a brief history of St. Felix Convent. Tears of joy could be seen in the eyes of many sisters as the moving ceremony concluded with the song "All Are Welcome," by Marty Haugen. Sister Mary Carlotta brought the service to a close, expressing thanksgiving and inviting everyone to enjoy the reception.[118]



The North American Felician Novitiate Community celebrated the blessing and dedication of the common novitiate in Enfield on January 23, 2007. From l: SM Clare Kehl (Rio Rancho), assistant novice director; S Esmeria Marie Bastos (Canada), S Maryann Spiller (Chicago), SM Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general; SM Sharon Iacobucci (Coraopolis), novice director; SM Monica Anne Blazuk (Livonia), and SM Carlotta Myszka (Chicago), local minister.

The novices became quickly involved in several activities beyond their regular classes, such as volunteering, participating in special events and retreats, and visiting the sick. Second-year novice Sister Esmeria Marie began a two-month community/apostolic experience and assisted with vocation ministry first in Manchester, New Hampshire, and then in Webster, Massachusetts. Reflecting on her experience, she said it profoundly deepened her vocation: "The concept of ministry became very clear to me as I stood side by side with those in need. I saw Christ in each person and situation. The Gospel came alive as I saw the sisters ministering, living in community, and living out their vows. 'Eucharist, sister and servant to all' became a reality deep within me."[119] By mid-2007, the NAP Steering Committee felt that, overall, the Felician Common Novitiate was meeting the expectations of the Initial Formation Program.[120]

CYCLE 6

First North American Felician Convocation

As they began to prepare for the first North American Felician Convocation in Buffalo, New York, from March 17-19, 2006, the NAP Steering Committee wrote to the sisters, assuring them with the words of Blessed Mary Angela:

"Don't worry about yourself nor of what will happen to you. Submit yourself to God's will without reservation and you will merit his blessings."[121]

Forty sisters from Enfield were among the 425 Felician Sisters from North America who gathered at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Buffalo, New York, for this historic convocation. Following the opening prayer ritual, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, emphasized the importance of this event, highlighting it as a transitional moment and recalling the challenge of the late Pope John Paul II: that it is important not only to stand at the threshold, but also to cross it. Sister Raymond noted that while wonder and joy had been experienced on the journey, the question remained, "Where is the hope?" She suggested that hope lies in the reality that "tomorrow begins today," that "Christ walks before us, leading us where he will. We need to let ourselves be led. The hope we feel is a sign of the Spirit working."[122]



SM Lawrence Lojko injects a humorous note into the discussions during the first North American Felician Convocation held in Buffalo, NY, from March 17-19, 2006.

Friday's session included table dialogue that focused on the gifts that sisters bring—personally and communally—to the process of reconfiguration. The discussion that followed provided the opportunity for sisters to introduce themselves and become immersed in what would be the start of an intensive and dynamic enterprise. On Saturday morning, inspired by the Eucharistic celebration, Sister Mary Charlene Nowak (Buffalo) recounted key elements in Sister Nancy Schreck's article, "The Rock from Which You Were Hewn: The Prophetic Role of Religious Life." After the morning break, Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch (Chicago) reviewed the history of the reconfiguration process—*The Journey in Hope*—over the last ten years. She noted that the data collected from the brainstorming sessions following the 2005 provincial chapters served as

the basic data for the *Values and Elements of Reconfiguration* and the *Models of Reconfiguration.*[123]

In collaboration with the NAP Steering Committee, the Government Task Force identified the *Values and Elements of Reconfiguration* in eight areas of Felician life: Heritage; Evangelical Counsels; Life of Prayer; Community Life; Apostolic Mission; Religious Formation; Government; and Administration of Temporal Goods. A slide show articulated each area of Felician life with its corresponding values and elements. The remainder of the weekend's sessions were dedicated to the presentation, study, discussion, and shared reflection on the *Models of Reconfiguration*. The models presented were:

- Model 1 -- One province, two regions
- Model 2 – One province, three or more regions
- Model 3 – Two provinces, no regions
- Model 4 – Two provinces, three regions

Though still in a conceptual stage, the models illustrated a simple, basic scenario of what they would look like in the life of a Felician Sister. While each model suggested a different provincial structure, each adhered to five basic aspects:

- There would be an entity or entities known as province(s).
- Provinces will have a provincial minister and councilors.
- The provincial treasurer will serve in the provincial administration but not necessarily as a member of the provincial council.
- The main office of the provincial minister and provincial councilors will be located at a neutral site.
- All members live in community.[124]

Centralized services and sponsorship oversight were also components of each model. Centralized services would include the vocation office, communications, and the novitiate since consolidating these would conserve finances and allow sisters currently in these fields to move to other ministries. Sponsorship oversight would assist provincial leadership in areas of finance, liability, insurance, law, technology, and human resources. At the Convocation's end on Sunday evening, Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, provincial minister in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, spoke for everyone when she said, "We have made history in bringing so many Felician Sisters together, and has it not been great?"[125]

CYCLE 7

General Chapter

During the 22nd General Chapter of the Felician Congregation that took place at the Generalate in Rome, Italy, from June 5-25, 2006, Sister Mary Renetta Rumpz offered a full report of the activities of the North American Provinces process to the delegates. She presented a short history of the *Journey in Hope* up to the spring of 2006, the accomplishments of the assemblies, the interprovincial meetings, and the mission and ministry gatherings. Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio discussed the progress of the twelve task forces, the three ad hoc committees, and the North American Felician Vocation Team. The report

concluded with a summary of the accomplishments of the Convocation held in Buffalo in March 2006.[126]

Sister Renetta told the general chapter delegates that after projecting the statistics for North America and discussing the reality of the future for the North American provinces with the sisters, the Steering Committee felt even more strongly that the reconfiguration of the provinces would enhance the viability of the mission for the North American provinces *to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world.* She concluded her report with a presentation of the four proposed models of governance developed by the Governance Committee that were presented to the sisters in the spring.[127]

Sister Renetta ended her report to the general chapter delegates expressing gratitude to God "for all the graces and blessings He has bestowed on us during this process to date." She continued, "In the spirit of our pioneer sisters, we stand on the threshold of a new frontier—a holy newness—we reflect on our pioneer sisters and recognize THEIR STRENGTH, THEIR COURAGE, and THEIR RESPONSE, to the needs of God's people—THEIR WILLINGNESS to risk all! Drawing from their spirit we prayerfully discern God's will for us."[128]

In the end, the general chapter delegates issued the following directive regarding the NAP process:

> The 22nd General Chapter will empower the minister general and her council to approve the plans for the potential restructuring of the North American Provinces according to these guidelines:
>
> - That the plan is to be developed and recommended by the North American Provinces Steering Committee (NAP).
> - That the ratification of the plan may occur without the convocation of a subsequent General Chapter.
> - That a progress report will be given at the Biennial Assemblies of 2008 and 2010.[129]

At the conclusion of the 22nd General Chapter, several members of the NAP Steering Committee were called to leadership in the Felician Congregation. Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch (Chicago) was elected minister general; Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio (Coraopolis), vicar; and Sister Mary Ambrose Wozniak (Buffalo), general councilor. With their election three new members were added to the Steering Committee: Sister Mary Andrea Chudzik, provincial minister in Chicago; Sister Mary Lorianne Tylczynski, acting provincial minister, Buffalo; and Sister Mary Christopher Moore, acting provincial minister, Coraopolis. Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz (Enfield) assumed the position of co-chair of the Steering Committee along with Sister Mary Renetta Rumpz (Livonia).[130]

Animation Day

The NAP Steering Committee recognized that having every sister of every province become a vocation animator was a critical element in vocation promotion. Accordingly, the Felician North American Vocation Team collaborated with each province to schedule a "Vocation Animation Day." On August 26, 2006, the sisters of the Enfield province gathered in the provincial house community room to reflect on their personal role in cultivating a culture of vocations. Sister Mary John Fryc, director of vocations, coordinated the day's

program. The presentations focused on "The Five Seeds to Cultivate Vocations" with members of the Vocation Team conducting the presentations:

To Pray	Sister Louise Marie Olsofka (Coraopolis)
To Evangelize	Sister Mary DeSales Herman (Livonia)
To Experience	Sister Marilyn Marie Minter (Lodi)
To Mentor	Sister Mary Therese Chmura (Buffalo)
To Invite	Sister Judith Marie Blizzard (Lodi)

During a panel discussion on religious life that followed, panelists shared personal insights on the impact of vowed religious women. Members of the panel included:

Father Gary Dailey, vocation director, Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts

Arthur and Mary Aubin and their daughter Casey, from Rockville, Connecticut

Laura Beckman and her daughter Jeanne, from Glastonbury, Connecticut

Rachel Walsh, a volunteer at Holy Family Infirmary from Enfield, Connecticut

The sisters appreciated these presentations and the program energized their intentions to pray for vocations and gave them a greater appreciation of their own vocations.[131]

CYCLE 8

Fall 2006 NAP Convocation

Thirty-eight sisters from Enfield were among the almost 400 sisters from the eight North American provinces who gathered in Chicago, Illinois, from November 10-13, 2006, for the Fall North American Provinces Convocation. In her opening remarks, Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, spoke at length about Blessed Mary Angela's charism, the Felician charism. "Its flame will continue to give light to our society, our Church, and our world," she said. Reflecting on the significance of the weekend gathering, she told the sisters, "The NAP journey is about being faithful and passionate daughters of Angela." While encouraging each sister to reflect on our past, she said it is "[t]he heart of why we are here together." In closing, she challenged the sisters to "Light the fire again. Bear her [Blessed Mary Angela's] torch in innovative and resourceful ways."[132]

School Sister of Notre Dame Deborah M. Cerullo was the keynote speaker on Saturday morning. A civil and canon lawyer, she was retained along with the firm with which she was associated—Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer and Feld LLP—to help address the various civil and canonical issues that arose as the reconfiguration process moved forward. Her presentation, entitled "For the Sake of Mission: Canon and Civil Law Overview of the Reconfiguration Process," included a historical overview of religious life, Church criteria for reconfiguration, and phases of reconfiguration. She reviewed the distinction between "universal" and "proper" law as well as significant canonical topics in reconfiguration, including mission and purpose, temporal goods, apostolate, and authority and governance. She noted the importance of reappropriation of the founding charism—of recapturing the original spirit of the foundress—and affirmed the importance of reconfiguration for the sake of mission.[133]

Members of the Governance Task Force presented a summary of the opportunities and challenges derived from the March Convocation in Buffalo. Sister Mary Aquinas Szott, liaison, reported that most sisters indicated a leaning toward a one-province model, based on Franciscan relational values. She said the general perception was that the one-province model held the greatest promise for preserving unity among the sisters of North America. This model also promised to generate a greater pool of sisters as well as finances for ministry while creating a greater diversity of ministerial opportunities. Following further clarification and development by other members of the Governance Task Force, the sisters considered factors to determine regional groupings. After further discussion, they reviewed possible regional groupings but deferred a final decision to have the opportunity to discuss these matters with those sisters not in attendance and to provide time to prepare additional models.[134]

The convocation agenda included information and updates from the task forces. After hearing a brief introduction about the Hispanic Pilot Program, the sisters listened to Sister Elizabeth Ann Marie Schilling (Livonia) and Sister Michele Marie Bolda (Livonia) as they enthusiastically shared their experience in a mini-immersion program in Mexico. After reviewing the list of potential programs submitted by the provinces to work with the poor and needy in the Multifaceted Ministry Center, the NAP Steering Committee selected St. Ann Catholic Outreach Center in Kingstree, South Carolina, for establishment of the Center. The sisters also heard from the Ministry Task Force, the Provincial Policy Handbook Task Force, and the Treasurers Task Force. Deborah Standridge, president, Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-St. Francis, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, responded to the question, "Why are we sponsoring institutional ministries?"[135]

The final task of the Convocation was a review of the new cycle of the *Journey in Hope,* with the next convocation scheduled for November 2007 in Livonia, Michigan, and "Celebration of the New" in November 2008. Sister Frances Marion Bonczar summed up the weekend experience for many when she said, "Each time we meet in convocation, boundaries melt, and the bonds of fraternity and friendship grow stronger. It will not be easy, but we are moving forward."[136]

CYCLE 9

Journey in Hope 2009

Conscious of the multiple areas that needed to be addressed regarding the reconfiguration, the North American Provinces Steering Committee continued planning and working with the task forces. During the meeting of the provincial administrations at Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, Sister Mary Aquinas Szott (Lodi) presented a draft copy of the *Journey in Hope 2009: Evolving Design for Reconfiguration of the North American Felician Provinces.* Prepared by the Governance Task Force, the document, a compilation of materials submitted to the task force as well as the experiences from the two convocations, would shape the core presentation of the spring provincial assemblies.[137]

Assessment of Buildings and Properties

In the spring of 2006, the NAP Steering Committee agreed to undergo a process of assessment of the buildings and properties in North America with the R.T. Milord Company of Bridgeview, Illinois, which the group had selected in the spring of 2005.[138] Once the contracts had been reviewed and signed in early 2006, the assessment, projected to take a year, was approved in May 2006. By mid-August 2006, representatives had visited the Enfield campus twice and were planning a third visit.[139]

On January 30, 2007, Phil Milord, president, along with Leanne Meyer-Smith, principal/licensed architect, presented an update of the assessment that included "Future Use Analysis Without Disposal of Properties," "Property Consolidation Analysis," and "Identification of Underutilized Properties." They reported that the entire assessment project was expected to be completed by the end of spring 2007.[140] By mid-May 2007, the revised timeline set May 31 as the completion date for the projected future use analysis of properties and the end of June 2007 for reviewing possible consolidations within the province and among the North American provinces. The target date for reviewing and identifying properties either underutilized or not utilized was set for mid-July.[141]

Other accomplishments included:

- Establishing the North American Provinces Communications Office in Livonia, Michigan, with Sister Mary Francis Lewandowski (Livonia) as director.
- Appointing Sister Carole Marie Wiatrek (Rio Rancho) as the coordinator of the Spirituality Center Among the Poor that would be established in Pomona, California. Sister Mary Therese Ann Parobek (Buffalo) and Sister Joan Marie Rybicki (Chicago) would work together with her.
- Consolidating the Transitions and Spiritual Preparation Task Forces to include the integration of reflection and prayer as a resource for the sisters.
- Creating the position of Coordinator for Directors of Associates and appointing Sister Danat Marie Brysch (Rio Rancho) as the liaison.
- Designating the Hispanic Pilot Program, the Spirituality Center Among the Poor, and the Multifaceted Ministry Center as subcommittees of the Ministry Task Force.
- Since *Journey in Hope* was adopted as the name given to the process working to ensure the future viability of the Felician Sisters in North America, the NAP Steering Committee became known as the *Journey in Hope Steering Committee.*[142]

Furthering Steps Along the Journey in Hope

The sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province took another step along the *Journey in Hope* at the spring *Journey in Hope* Provincial Assembly held on Saturday, May 12, 2007, at the provincial house in Enfield. Sister Mary Renetta Rumpz, provincial minister, Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, Livonia, Michigan, and Sister Joan Marie Swierzb (Enfield) represented the Governance Task Force. As the representative of the *Journey in Hope* Steering

Committee, Sister Mary Jean Romanowicz, provincial minister, Holy Name of Mary Province, Canada, addressed the question, "Why are we here?" She defined "reconfiguration" as the opportunity to create something new.[143]

Sister Joan Marie guided the sisters through the PowerPoint presentation, "Another Step Along our Journey in Hope" a review of efforts over the past few years to collaborate intensely toward reconfiguration of the North American provinces. Sister Renetta presented "Model of One Province" and discussed elements in the *Journey in Hope 2009* document such as membership in the province, sisters' participation in the province including "Circles of Hope,"[144] and other ways to gather and relate within the province. The document also provided an overview of aspects of the reconfiguration process including regions, current provincial practices, care of the sick and elderly, provincial leadership, transition to new leadership, and associates. In the final presentation, Sister Renetta reviewed the revised cycles on the NAP *Journey in Hope* for the next few years, culminating in having new provincial leadership in place in October 2009. Following each presentation, the sisters had the opportunity for questions, which ranged from concerns about centralizing the finance office to location of the new provincial house.[145]



At left, SM Bernardine Mucha accepts carnation from SM Jeanette Piorkowski. At right, SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, distributes carnations to SM Evelyn Rybicki, S Theresa M Gondek, S Marcia Mary Polchlopek, SM Bernadette Swist.

A ceremony of reaffirmation in the chapel was the culminating activity of the day. After Sister Mary Laureann invited the sisters to "Come along the road with me toward the God of our hopes and dreams secure in the knowledge that we travel together toward God's future breaking in," each sister had the opportunity to indicate by choice of a white or blue carnation whether she was fully supportive of the one province model or was unsure of this action at this time. The sisters unanimously indicated their choice of the one-province model.[146]

Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis said she was happy to see the province's total commitment to the one-province model. "It is evident that we all understand the need as well as the urgency to do this if we intend to have viable ministries." She added, "I am looking forward to the November Convocation. I hope that all issues can be addressed in a timely fashion, and

that we can come to some agreeable decision in order to move the process forward. It will be very difficult for some to make new transitions, but we need to keep the vision of our early founders before us as we all go forth to explore new frontiers."[147]

GENERAL VISITATION 2003

The general visitation of Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, and her councilors Sister Mary Rosita Brennan and Sister Mary Janice Ziolkowski, was met with great anticipation by the sisters in Enfield. In her communication of September 16, 2003, Sister Raymond said she saw it as "truly a time of grace and renewal in the life of the province and the Congregation" that provided an opportunity "to reflect on how we . . . are cooperating with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world."[148]

Her letter focused on the Eucharist, "the heart of a Felician Sister's consecrated life." It is this "very soul of our community life," she wrote, that nourishes each Felician Sister, so that "she could grow in love and unity with her sisters and with all whom she served." In the hope that the Eucharist would continue to be "a dynamic force unifying our Community," Sister Raymond and her councilors prepared a theological reflection entitled "Eucharist and Community Life," which served as the heart of the six regional meetings held throughout the province. Readings from sacred scripture, Church documents, Franciscan and Felician writings, as well as other sources, served as the catalyst for discussion.[149]

Visitation opened with the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy in the Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House chapel on Sunday, October 26, 2003. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, was the celebrant and homilist of the Mass entreating the blessings of the Holy Spirit. At the conclusion of the Mass, in song and using liturgical gestures, sisters carried customized candleholders to the altar. Sister Mary Laureann then called forth the local ministers hosting the regional meetings and presented them with the candles that were used in the opening prayer service at the regional gatherings while providing a symbolic setting for the area meetings.[150]

Dinner and a general gathering followed. This session acquainted the sisters with the background of each visitator. In her remarks to the sisters, Sister Raymond recalled the words of Pope John Paul II to the Felician Sisters during the 21st General Chapter in Rome. She said the pope spoke of the life of the Sisters of St. Felix as women "whose self-emptying, like Mary's and Angela's, would allow God to fill them with the joy of the Holy Spirit." She told the sisters that she and the visitators "come to personally share and live this joyful life with the sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province!" Sister Raymond encouraged the sisters to "re-energize each other during the weeks ahead!" She continued, "Let us fully cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world! I am convinced that we can do this for daily we are being transformed by Christ and we are Eucharist alive." Then, as a sign of unity, she invited the sisters to join hands and hearts, singing, "Transformed by Christ, we are Eucharist alive!"[151]

Throughout the time of the visitation, sisters had the opportunity for personal interviews with Sister Raymond or one of the general councilors. During the six regional meetings that took place at various sites in the province,

sisters had the opportunity to share with the visitators and other sisters any aspects of the theological reflection that they found thought-provoking or that moved or inspired them.[152] The regional meeting with the sisters of the provincial house community took place in two sessions on October 31[153] and with the sisters of Holy Family Infirmary on November 1.[154] The visitators also met with the provincial minister and councilors during the beginning and closing days of the visitation and received reports from the administrators of the sponsored ministries. They met with Most Rev. Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford, as well as several pastors and priests within parish/ministry settings.[155]

On November 5, Sister Mary Janice conducted the visitation of St. Joseph Convent in Webster, Massachusetts, founded in 1892, while Mother Mary Angela was still living. Sister Janice entertained the possibility that Mother Mary Monica Sybilska, one of the five Felician pioneers who came to America, might have visited Webster when the sisters accepted the invitation to direct the school and teach the children of Polish immigrants.[156]

The closing of the general visitation took place on November 21, 2003, in the provincial house chapel with festive Evening Praise commemorating the congregational feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary as well as the 148th anniversary of the founding of the Felician Congregation. During the closing hymn, "Transformed by Christ, We Are Eucharist Alive," sisters carried the hearts they had designed and created in procession and presented them before the image of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple.[157] Sister Francine Mary Sousa, provincial councilor, who prepared the service, had invited each sister to design her own heart –any size, any color, any medium, any design. Mindful that the heart stands for what is deep within each sister–her hopes, fears, joys, and concerns—all the hearts were offered to Mary, Mother of God. Some hearts shared an inspiring thought or reflection motivated by the visitation.[158]

In her closing remarks to the sisters following the celebratory dinner, Sister Raymond encouraged them to "continue to journey together and maintain our focus and our vision." She added, "As we travel to spend time with other Felician Sisters in the Congregation, we will share your story with them. We will tell them that you love one another, that you love the Congregation, and that you love God whom you have chosen to serve."[159]

In their report submitted to the provincial minister, provincial councilors, and sisters of the province, the general visitators wrote: "We have left the Enfield province knowing that the Felician spirit and way of life is alive and well." They drew supporting evidence from the sisters' daily life, including their

- Struggles to be prophetic witnesses;
- Call to each other to embrace the need for conversion;
- Outstanding apostolic zeal in serving the Church;
- Relentless commitment to remain known as women of prayer;
- Reverence and love for the Eucharist;
- Deep need to share hopes, dreams, tears, and fears.[160]

The report noted that while it was "only a small part of your story and of your journey as consecrated women religious," it recorded observations,

concerns, and recommendations of the visitators. Commendations included providing the sisters with a unique tool—the Awareness Examen—that could foster a greater openness to receiving the gift of inner conversion. Compiled by the Community Life Committee, the Examen was based on the Focus/Action Direction Statement of the 1999 Provincial Chapter.[161]

Also noteworthy was the sisters' commitment to justice issues, the province's efforts to enhance the living and care areas for those sisters in the provincial house whose health needs warranted greater attention, and the valuable contribution the sisters brought to the Church in whatever area of ministry they were involved. The visitators also commended the openness of the provincial minister and councilors in providing the necessary resources to effectively spread devotion to Blessed Mary Angela as well as the implementation of the program, "The 12 Keys to Spiritual Vitality: Powerful Lessons in Living Agelessly," which formed the basis of the ongoing formation program for golden jubilarians held every summer.[162]

The visitators encouraged the sisters to effectively reach out to the laity, especially by inviting them to share prayer with them and to engage in dialogue regarding the concept of succession planning in the province's sponsored institutions as well as all ministries where the province felt a corporate commitment. The visitators challenged the sisters of the province to renew their support for their sponsored ministries, "visible expressions of Angela's charism." The report concluded with an affirmation of the provincial leadership team and the sisters and exhorted them to "continue to be Eucharist alive!"[163]

FORMATION

Formation continued to be at the forefront of priorities for the Felician Congregation. The formation program in the Enfield province followed the principles set forth in *The Spirit's Creative Presence,* a compendium of guidelines for the incorporation of new members into Felician life and mission. At Sister Laureann's first business meeting with the new provincial council, the leadership team approved the following sisters as directors of formation for Our Lady of the Angels Province.

Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha	Golden jubilarians
Sister Frances Marion Bonzar	Silver jubilarians to golden jubilarians
Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko	Pre-tertians
Sister Joan Marie Swierzb	Temporary professed
Sister Mary John Fryc	Vocation minister
Sister Mary Ann Papiez	Assistant vocation minister
Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz	Associates[164]

Vocation ministry

With the appointment of Sister Mary John Fryc as vocation director for Our Lady of the Angels Province, vocation ministry was revitalized. At the time of her appointment, Sister John was ministering in pastoral care and hospice at St. Joseph Hospital, a position she held for half of her sixteen years at SJH. For the other half, she was volunteer coordinator. As the volunteer coordinator, Sister John said she liked working with the junior and adult volunteers because "their support and dedication have certainly been an inspiration to me." Reflecting on

her time at SJH, Sister John said she most enjoyed "going from room to room and hearing the patients tell me about the great care they are receiving and how everyone is so caring. A constant at St. Joseph Hospital is that people are happy in their employment here."[165]

Sister John found her listening skills very useful as she maintained communication with more than 360 interested young women who inquired about Felician life in-person, or by letter, email, or telephone calls. Along with her vocation ministry co-director, Sister Mary Ann Papiez, both worked diligently to direct days of prayer, parish retreats, "Take Time out for God Retreats," and "Come and See" weekends, to participate in diocesan meetings and regional vocation events such as Steubenville East, and to conduct programs within the provincial geographical area.[166]

Even before formally beginning her new ministry responsibility, Sister John participated in the 17th World Youth Day held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, from July 22 to 28, 2002, along with Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak, joining more than 400,000 young people from 170 countries, as well as religious men and women, priests, and seminarians from around the world. Twenty Felician Sisters from the North American provinces and one sister from Poland resided with the Felician Sisters in Toronto at Tau House where they enjoyed wonderful Felician-Franciscan hospitality.[167]

The theme for this multi-faith celebration of young people from all over the world was "You are the salt of the earth . . . you are the light of the world" (Mt 5: 13, 14). Highlights of the week included the opening Mass celebrated by Aloysius Cardinal Ambrozic, archbishop of Toronto, in the Exhibition Place, a vast exhibition area near Lake Ontario. An area of the site was also dedicated to Eucharistic adoration. In the afternoon of the opening day, the Youth Festival opened, featuring a varied panorama of artistic, cultural, and spiritual experiences based on the life and faith of young people from all over the world; exhibitions, vigils, concerts, round tables, films, dances, and theatrical events were organized at Exhibition Place.[168] Felician Sisters staffed booths at the Franciscan Fest and at the Vocations Pavilion where they disseminated literature on Saints Francis and Clare and shared Felician vocation information. The sisters also distributed 9,500 Felician pins, medals of Blessed Mary Angela, and rosaries.[169]

The Stations of the Cross, the dramatic moment of Christ's passion, were re-enacted on University Avenue, one of Downtown Toronto's main arteries and came in procession to the Royal Ontario Museum, passing in front of the University.[170] Along with three other Felicians, Sister Thomas walked the pilgrimage on foot (four to six miles) with thousands of other pilgrims to Downsview Park, the place of the vigil.[171] A former military airport, it was the largest urban park in Canada. Along with about fourteen other Felicians and the young people, Sister Thomas camped overnight on site in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, weathering the rain, wind, and sun.[172] Sister John was privileged to be on stage for the prayer vigil with Pope John Paul II, who passed within five feet of her as he was leaving.[173] Reflecting on the event, Sister Thomas said, "To see so many youth from different nations on fire with their faith and praising God just brought tears to my eyes as I know it did to so many other people witnessing this and being a part of this event. The Pope

encouraged the youth and really all of us to bring Christ to others by being the 'salt of the earth and the light of the world.'"[174]

Helping to 'Make Christ Known, Loved and Glorified'

Assisting Sister Mary John and sisters within the province to foster the "ministry of invitation" that was theirs was a new Congregational vocation booklet entitled, "The Felician Journey . . . To Make Christ Known, Loved and Glorified." In twelve pages, the booklet shared information about the Felician Sisters including foundress Blessed Mary Angela, the history and charism of the Congregation, ministries in which the sisters were engaged, and the formation process. Contact information for each North American province was included on the back cover.[175]

Recognizing the great and urgent need for religious women in the Church and world, Sister John spearheaded several initiatives in the Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island. Through the Diocesan Vocation Office/Office of Religious, she initiated discernment sessions entitled "Wondering about God's Plan for You?" The monthly sessions were held from January through April and ran for two hours. At St. Adalbert Parish in Providence, Sister John introduced parishioners to the "Calendar for Vocations" on the First Sunday of Advent 2003. Parishioners signed up on a given day, pledging to pray for vocations—for the whole year—through Advent 2004. They also prayed for vocations during Eucharistic Adoration held each Thursday in the convent chapel, from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m.[176]

Members of the province's vocation team also took advantage of the opportunity offered by diocesan initiatives. Sister Clare Marie Berryhill participated in the Naomi Meal, originated by the Religious Vocation Commission of the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire. The Naomi Meal provided an opportunity for women ages 16-45 who were considering religious life to come together with sisters in an informal setting for prayer, a meal and discussion about religious life. Eight young women who were thinking about answering God's call to religious life were in attendance.[177]

Ten women participated in the Mothers Get-Away Day held at the provincial house on May 3, 2003. This day of quiet prayer and reflection, designed to encourage helping to make Christ known, loved and glorified, was directed by Sister Mary John Fryc, Sister Mary Florence Pelczynski, and Sister Mary Ann Papiez.[178] Repeated in 2005 with twelve participants, the day included a reflection on the Eucharist, time for private prayer and adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament and praying the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary. The moms also had the opportunity to enjoy lunch that they didn't have to cook or wash dishes after. According to Sister John, the moms were feeling the need for more prayer experiences and welcomed the weekend retreat.[179]

Felicians join pilgrimage for vocations

Since 1978, the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico, sponsored pilgrimages in late spring for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated religious life. The 2004 pilgrimage began on Pentecost Sunday, May 30, with 250 pilgrims, including eight Felician Sisters, all vocation directors, along with Sister Mary John, who served as a support person to the sisters and other pilgrims each evening at their rest stops along the journey. Their 107-mile pilgrimage began at Holy Rosary Parish in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with the

celebration of the Eucharist, and ended a week later at *El Santuario de Chimayo,* the "Lourdes of America."[180]

The five pilgrimage routes include Albuquerque, Chama, Costilla, Estancia, and Bernal. The route that the sisters joined, known as the Southwest route, was generally acknowledged as the most difficult. Due to the extreme temperatures—often 90+ degrees at altitudes of 5,000-7,000 feet above sea level—the pilgrims began their day at 3 a.m. to complete their 20+ mile walk before the extreme heat of the day set in upon them. The pilgrims walked, prayed silently and aloud, sang, shared fellowship, and stopped for water breaks and feet checks. *Encuentros* (encounters) became opportunities for enjoying a meal, praying with the people, singing, or simply enjoying a real experience of what it meant to be about the new evangelization with people along the way.[181]

Outreach to young people

"The Winds of Change" swept 18,000 Catholic youth into Atlanta, Georgia, for the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) October 28-30, 2005. As part of the North American Vocation Team, Sister Mary John attended along with Sister Louise Marie Olsofka (Coraopolis). The three-day conference, held at the Georgia Dome and Georgia World Congress Center was replete with liturgies, reconciliation services, Living Stations of the Cross, workshops, concerts with top-notch Catholic musicians, and opportunities to meet with teens as well as adults interested in religious life. Prayer activities included the opportunity to meditate on the mysteries of Christ's life in the rosary, spend time in the adoration chapel, come together for evening prayer, and hear the musical prayer developed by the Taizé ecumenical community. Sister John explained that she and Sister Louise attended to be present to the young people and to staff the Felician Vocation Table, which was visited by several hundred young adults. She added that, additionally, "It was a great opportunity to network and share ideas with other vocation directors."[182]

Along with several members of the North American Vocation Team, Sister Mary John spent December 1-5, 2005, at the College Station campus of Texas A & M University being a Felician presence. The sisters met and talked with students and priests throughout the week. The sisters also presented "A Closer Look: Felician/Franciscan Prayer and Spirituality" at the Campus Activity Center.[183]

Because vocations are nurtured in families, in early fall 2006, Sister Mary Ann Papiez invited the families of St. Joseph School in Webster, Massachusetts, to participate in the "Vocation Cross Program," part of an effort to promote a culture of vocations. Families were invited to commit to praying for the gift of new sisters, brothers, deacons, and priests to serve the Church. Each Friday of the school year, parishioners took turns hosting the Vocation Cross for one week. The cross was placed in a prominent place in the house so that family members were reminded of its presence throughout the week. The Family Prayer Service that accompanied the Cross included a psalm, a reading, petitions, and prayers for vocations to the priesthood and religious life.[184] Both Sister Mary Ann and Sister John had facilitated a Family Holy Hour for Vocations in the provincial house chapel in late April 2005. After enjoying light refreshments, the twenty participants toured the Felician Heritage Center.[185]



S Mary Ann Papiez, co-director of vocations, with two eighth-grade students at St. Joseph School in Webster, MA. Sarah Ducharme (at l) and William Manak represented the first two families to take home the Vocation Cross.

Because of the positive correlation between service experience and new membership, Sister Mary Ann invited seven teenagers to participate in a "Service Experience with the Felician Sisters" at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House. While residing with the sisters, the young women worked alongside them, completed mailings for the annual Lawn Festival and shared community, meals, prayer, and recreation with them.[186]

The Vocation Team was supported by sisters in the province who represented the province at diocesan events or accompanied team members and sisters who were prayer partners to inquirers. They were deeply grateful to the sisters in the provincial house who supported vocation events there and extended gracious hospitality. They felt actively accompanied by the prayer of their sisters throughout the province, particularly their sisters in the infirmary who offered their prayer—and even more, their suffering, for vocations.[187]

Initial Formation

For the period 2000-2005, Enfield had neither postulants nor novices.[188] Numbers across the Congregation were decreasing steadily,[189] and by the time of the 2006 General Chapter, there were thirty postulants (nine in Kenya alone), seven first-year novices, and fifteen second-year novices.[190] Of the women who participated in weekends of discernment in the Enfield province, two showed interest in the pre-entrance stage of formation.[191] Blanca Martinez, a young woman originally from Ecuador but at the time a resident of Waltham, Massachusetts, spent a "Come and See" Weekend at the provincial house with Sister Mary John and Sister Mary Ann from January 7 to 9, 2005.[192]

Several months later, she requested admission and was received to the candidacy program on October 1, 2005, after observation, interviews with the provincial minister and two council members, and review of her written recommendations. The simple acceptance ceremony took place in the Holy Family Infirmary Chapel in the presence of Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, and council members Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and Sister

Mary Florentine Myjak, treasurer.[193] Sister Mary John, director of vocations and candidates, was also present. Blanca received a Felician emblem pin, signifying her acceptance as a candidate.[194]

Blanca resided at the provincial house for one month under the direction of Sister Frances Marion who, in daily classes, helped her to deepen her personal and spiritual life. In her daily adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, Blanca came to know Christ intimately, to experience his love for her, and to share that love with others. Each school day, she traveled to St. Adalbert School in Enfield with the school's principal, Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, where she tutored children and assisted in the school office and library.[195] On November 1, Blanca continued in the candidacy program at St. Adalbert Convent in Providence, Rhode Island, and was guided in her community experience there by Sister Mary John.[196] Before completing her community experience in Providence, Blanca decided to withdraw from the candidacy program. In her memo to the sisters announcing Blanca's departure, Sister Laureann wrote, "She is grateful for the opportunity to experience community life and ministry in the provincial house and in a local home setting." She also indicated that Blanca would continue to pray and discern where God was leading her.[197]

Temporary professed

Sister Clare Marie Berryhill and Sister Angela Marie Boyarchuk continued to live their vows while integrating the spiritual, communal, and ministerial dimensions of their consecrated life. Both sisters renewed their vows in 2001 and 2002 and on June 8, 2003, publicly petitioned to make perpetual profession of vows in the presence of the provincial house community.[198] Before leaving for the interprovincial second novitiate on June 14, both sisters participated in classes with Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, their director.[199]

During the second novitiate program, the sisters continued their spiritual formation under the direction of Sister Mary Rosita Brennan, general councilor, at the Portiuncula in Mount Arlington, New Jersey, located on the shore of Lake Hopatcong. The Portiuncula was surrounded by the beauty of creation and, according to the sister participants, provided an ideal setting for prayer, silence, and reflection. In addition to daily prayer, the sisters reflected on vital aspects of religious life in the Felician Congregation. Presenters from the various provinces and their topics included Sister Elaine Marie Frigo (Lodi), "Prayer"; Sister Mary Lucette Kinecki (Buffalo), "The Vows"; Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz (Livonia), "Community Life"; Sister Mary Antonelle Chunka (Lodi), "Ecclesial Charism"; Sister Janet Marie Kurgan (Lodi), "Marian Charism"; Sister Mary Elizabeth Mackowiak (Buffalo), "Franciscan Spirituality"; Sister Mary Julie Weckwerth (Chicago), "Ministry"; and Sister Mary Alodia Stozek (Chicago), "Blessed Mary Angela."[200]

Each afternoon, the sisters spent time with Jesus in the daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament. Twice each week they met together in the evening to reflect and share on *Response to Love*. Free days afforded time for trips to Holy House USA at the Blue Army Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Washington, New Jersey, to a candle factory, and to Philadelphia's historical sites including the Zoo, the Liberty Bell, and Independence Hall.[201]

The group participated in an eight-day retreat with Father Bart Karwacki, OFM, Conv., and Sister Elaine Marie Frigo. A celebration of the Eucharistic

liturgy at the provincial house in Lodi on August 10 formally concluded the Second Novitiate Program with the provincial minister from each province in attendance. After Sister Rosita called each sister and her provincial minister by name, she presented the sister to her provincial as a gesture of returning her, now prepared and ready to pronounce her perpetual vows after eight weeks of an intensive second novitiate. After each sister received a candle to remind her of the experience, a solemn prayer of blessing and consecration followed.[202]

Sister Clare Marie and Sister Angela Marie returned to Enfield on August 11 to make their perpetual profession of vows on Thursday, August 14, 2003, at 11 a.m. in Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel. Most Reverend Daniel A. Cronin, archbishop of Hartford, was the principal celebrant and homilist, and he received the vows. Concelebrants included Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain; Father William L. Baldyga, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Suffield; Father Joseph F. Gorman, pastor, St. Leo the Great Parish, Waterbury; and Father Leo Spodnik, former pastor, St. Leo the Great Parish, Waterbury. Rev. Msgr. Thomas M. Ginty, secretary to the archbishop, served as master of ceremonies. Sisters, parents, relatives, and friends attended the Mass and ceremony and then enjoyed dinner in the main dining room of the provincial house.[203]

Tertianship

During the period from 2001 to 2007, two sisters in the Enfield province had the opportunity to deepen their ecclesial and Franciscan spirituality by participating in the tertianship program sponsored by the Felician Congregation.

Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek traveled to Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, to begin the 2001 Tertianship Program on July 5.[204] Sister Mary Celestine Giertych, vicar general, assisted by Sister Mary Leona Kutsko from the Brazilian province, directed the eighteen sisters of the tertianship group. The theme for the program was 'Transfiguration,' and the motto was derived from the hymn of the same name, *Transformed by Christ, We Are Eucharist Alive,* which the sisters often sang in English, Polish, and Portuguese.[205]

The international program shifted from Canada to the Felician Generalate in Rome where the sisters shared personal hopes and dreams during this spiritual journey and, as pilgrims, sought to deepen their union with the Lord and to strengthen their commitment to one another in *fraternitas.* Members of the general council, the generalate staff, and several sisters from the North American provinces gave conferences for reflection and discussion. Sister Marcia said, "Each presenter gifted the participants with her knowledge, wisdom, and personal experience. Much spiritual growth and healing was experienced."[206]

The sisters also had the opportunity to spend five days in Assisi, days that were filled with "peace and joy and perfect simplicity," where the sisters climbed to the heights of Mount LaVerna and descended to the depths of the caves of the Carceri. Sister Marcia said she was grateful for "this spiritual journey on holy ground, a blessing in my life," and for this "grace-filled period" that enabled her to "renew, recommit, and intensify my relationship with Christ."[207]

Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak

Six sisters comprised the tertianship group of 2004: Sister Mary Victoria Richardson, Sister Mary Angela Parkins, and Sister Elizabeth Ann Marie Schilling from Livonia; Sister Christina Marie Kazimirek from Canada; Sister Mary Patricia Kennedy from Lodi, and Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak from Enfield. Sister Mary Celestine, vicar general, once again served as the director, guide, and leader for the program that began on July 1 at Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. After classes and a directed retreat, the group departed for Rome and Assisi.[208]

Sister Thomas said the tertianship experience was filled with "many special moments, especially during the pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi," singling out praying in the Portiuncula chapel that Francis helped repair and prayed in. She said, "Here I prayed for our Felician Congregation, but especially for the sisters of our province." She added, "San Damiano was also a special place—very peaceful and conducive to prayer. Walking in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare was an awesome experience," and, "Of course, the highlight was meeting the Holy Father personally and receiving a blessing from him."[209]

"Words cannot adequately express my tertianship experience, but I know that the Holy Spirit was speaking throughout the program in all our classes on the vows, prayer, Blessed Mary Angela, consecrated life, Franciscanism and community life. If I had to sum up everything in one phrase, I would have to say that our Vision Statement encompasses it all: *Turn to the Lord and be Eucharist, Sister and Servant to all.* My tertianship experience confirmed for me that life is all about our relationships—with God, with others, and with ourselves."[210]

Congregational Formation Meetings

Getting to know one another and sharing hopes and dreams made it possible to rise above diverse backgrounds and cultures. At the various formation gatherings and programs, a focus of the general councilor responsible for formation was to provide opportunities for the formators to deepen their relationship with God. Consequently, the sisters spent considerable time devoted to prayer, reflection, and discussion of various topics regarding Felician life and formation.[211]

In 2002, the Interprovincial Meeting of Formation Coordinators and Directors of Ongoing Formation took place in the Felician Heritage Center in Enfield from June 13 to 15. Sister Mary Celestine Giertych, vicar general, coordinated the sessions that opened with reflection on the Eight Beatitudes from Matthew 5:3-12. The formators read and discussed two chapters in *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* by Oblate of Mary Immaculate Father Ronald Rolheiser. The thought-provoking meditations in Chapter 9, "A Spirituality of Sexuality," and Chapter 10, "Sustaining Ourselves in the Spiritual Life," gave the formators much to reflect on and discuss.[212]

Sister Frances Marion and Sister Mary Lawrence attended the meetings of the North American Formation Coordinators, Directors of Temporary Professed, and Directors of Pre-Tertians held at Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in North America in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, from January 30 to February 1, 2003. The major work of the meeting consisted of study and reflection on the document *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium.* Published on May 19, 2002, the

Solemnity of Pentecost, this document from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life invited religious women and men to "give new vigour to the prophetic dimension of their vocation." Sister Elaine Marie Frigo (Lodi) prepared the process to study the document and to guide the sisters in recalling their initial journey of faith with gratitude and hearts full of desire as they lived the mystery more deeply. Their study led to action statements that the sisters could incorporate into their lives. [213]

The Formation Coordinators from the North American and Polish provinces met in Krakow from September 28 to October 9, 2004, to walk in the footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela. Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, council member and director of ongoing formation group of silver jubilarians to golden jubilarians, represented the Enfield province. It was her first trip to Poland and, she said, "One that will never be forgotten." The sisters also visited the sisters in Warsaw and Przemyśl. While in Warsaw, Sister Mary Fidelia Janas led the sisters on a special pilgrimage to the many places where Blessed Angela lived and ministered in the early years of the Congregation. Sister Frances said that as the walking pilgrimage progressed, everyone felt a strong sense of faith and history. She added that she found the sisters of the three Polish provinces a joy to be with: "Their happiness radiated on their faces and through their true Felician-Franciscan hospitality. They gave of their time, treasure, and talents as they eagerly toured the visitors through the many places of interest in their respective provinces."[214]

For Sister Frances, one of the "unforgettable" moments during the pilgrimages was a visit to the Shrine of Our Lady of Częstochowa. Here the coordinators participated in a Eucharistic liturgy before the miraculous icon of the Blessed Mother, Foundress of the Felician Congregation. Reflecting on her experience, Sister Frances said, "I felt a sense of rootedness and belonging in the place of my ancestors and the birthplace of the Felician Congregation."[215]

During their meeting, the group examined Blessed Angela's approach to formation by studying and reflecting upon Volume I of her *Selected Writings* from the perspective of her vision of what constitutes a Felician Sister. The sisters came to deeply appreciate Blessed Angela's attitude toward God and her personal growth in God and to others. Meeting in small groups with the sisters in initial formation gave the formation coordinators an opportunity to exchange thoughts on a variety of topics.[216]

The entire group of Formation Coordinators met again in Mississauga from September 7 to 11, 2005. There they pondered the *Memoirs of the Congregation,* reading them from the perspective of the Felician charism in the areas of boundless love of God, complete surrender to His Divine Will overflowing into compassion and mercy, faithfulness to heritage, service to the needy, and concern for the salvation of all people. Once again, Sister Frances Marion represented the Enfield province.[217]

Aging, the opportunity of a lifetime

Ongoing formation encompasses the longest and most fruitful period of religious life. The personal history of each religious has its own stages, its own development, requiring an attitude of personal reflection and availability, a time to "put on the mind of Jesus," and then to radiate his attitudes. As Pope Benedict XVI said to the young people gathered in Germany for World Youth Day 2005,

"The encounter with Jesus Christ will allow you to experience in your hearts the joy of his living and life-giving presence and enable you to bear witness to it before others."[218] Even more, this period of continued formation enabled each sister to model Mother Angela's boundless love of God, manifested in complete surrender to God's divine will, overflowing into compassionate service, total availability, and concern for the salvation of all people (Felician Charism).

During the summer of 2002, sisters who participated in the two-day program at the provincial house coordinated by Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, director, had the opportunity to step back and to reflect on the theme, "The Spirit Empowers Us to Live out the Charism of the Felician Congregation." The days together helped the sisters to deepen within themselves the spirit of the Congregation and to promote their spiritual growth.[219]

In 2003, the program expanded under the team leadership of Sister Mary Bernardine, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz. The week-long study and reflection on the process of aging, open to all sisters, took place from July 6-12 at the provincial house and averaged forty participants each day. "The 12 Keys to Spiritual Vitality: Powerful Lessons on Living Agelessly," by Richard Johnson, PhD, executive director of the Association for Senior Adult Ministry, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, formed the basis of the dynamic program. The *keys* explored included "Transform Your Attitudes about Maturation," "Seek Love Everywhere," "Accept Your True Self," "Forgive Others and Self," and "Achieve Balance in Your Life." Dr. Johnson maintained that using the *keys* would enable participants to harvest the high-quality fruits of emotional and spiritual growth throughout their elder years, "The better you incorporate these twelve keys into your everyday living, the better prepared you will be to harvest God's abundance from the garden of your life."[220]

The keys were divided across six days, with each session running approximately an hour and a half. Sessions began with a prayer and consisted of a warm-up exercise, a taped conference by Dr. Johnson that lasted approximately thirty minutes, and several follow-up activities. The sisters participated enthusiastically and found that the topics developed a deep response of personal reflection followed by discussion. Scripture and "virtue" passages were available for further reflection. Each key was paired with a corresponding symbol. For instance, the symbol for Key 1, "Transform Your Attitudes about Maturation," was a doorknob. The author explained that, while it is obvious that on our journey we open new doors—thus the doorknob—it may not be as obvious that in moving ahead we need to close doors behind us to avoid regrets and grudges.[221]

Overall, the sisters found the experience personally beneficial and wanted to continue study of the material through further reading and independently listening to the audiotapes. Sister Jeanne Marie Akalski said she appreciated the sisters' spontaneity. Her twin sister, Sister Mary Valenta (Lodi) who also participated, said, "The workshop was like a retreat," adding her appreciation for the freedom and space allotted to the participants and commending the dedication of the sister facilitators.[222]

Two field trips supplemented the program. A visit to the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven, Connecticut, was first on the agenda. There, eighteen sisters viewed highlights of the work of the Knights of Columbus since its incorporation on March 29, 1882, as well as various gifts and honors

bestowed upon the organization by government leaders and several popes. The exhibit "John Paul II: A Passion for Peace," explored the pontiff's ceaseless efforts to bring peace to all people and nations of the world, especially during his long pontificate. Later that week, twenty sisters toured the Pequot Indian Museum in Ledyard, Connecticut, that featured the Narragansett Indian Powwow. The Indian Village with more than thirty realistic life scenes was a focal point of the tour and the sisters were deeply impressed by the authentic artifacts, the landscape, and the dramatic presentation.[223]

The following summer, from July 4 to 7, 2004, Sister Bernardine, Sister JoAnn, and Sister Nancy facilitated the "Well, Wise, and Whole Workshop" at the provincial house for post tertians and golden jubilarians. The program focused on the need for physical well-being and was divided into three segments, Well in body, Wise in mind, and Whole in spirit. Topics included, "Lifespan Vitality Enhancement," "Mastering the Psychology of Leisure," and "Vitality Blockers." The workshop emphasized the need for exercise, nutrition, and proper sleep. After completing a personal survey on the seven areas of physical health, participants were invited to join PACERS. With club membership, each sister received a Stepometer, compliments of McDonald's, and a monthly score sheet. Incentives for reaching monthly individual goals for "steps" were provided to participants.[224]

A field trip to the Quadrangle Museums in Springfield, Massachusetts, during the workshop provided leisure for the workshop participants. Twenty sisters explored the four major attractions there, including the Connecticut Valley Historical Museum, the Springfield Science Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum. A treat for teachers and lovers of children's books was the visit to the Dr. Seuss National Memorial Sculpture Memorial Garden, honoring Springfield native Theodor Seuss Geisel. The sisters especially enjoyed wandering around his favorite characters, Horton the Elephant, the Grinch and his dog Max, and the Lorax.[225]

CENTENARIANS

From 2001 to 2007, four sisters celebrated their 100th birthday: Sister Mary Sylvestra Konicka, Sister Mary Emilette Bonczar, Sister Mary Klaus, and Sister Mary Laetitia Plona. At this same time, David Snowdon published the results of his revolutionary scientific study of Alzheimer's disease with the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Minnesota. Snowdon's report, *Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives,* was published on May 8, 2001.[226]

While the Nun Study focused on understanding Alzheimer's disease, Snowdon and his colleagues teased out a series of intriguing and informative revelations about why nuns lead "longer, healthier, and more meaningful lives." Since the sisters had remarkably similar lifestyles, the Nun Study could focus on the key differences that enabled some to enjoy robust health into old age. One of Snowdon's findings was that sisters with a college degree had a much better chance of surviving to old age and maintaining their independence, that is, without requiring nursing services or help with self-care tasks: "Not only did the less educated sisters have higher mortality rates, but their mental and physical abilities were much more limited if they did reach old age."[227]

Earlier in 1987, researchers had reported a strong connection between the level of a person's education and what they called "survival with good function." But their data had many potentially confounding variables. Snowdon's finding was significant because his participants were "clean," without the variables that had confused earlier results. The results of his pilot study led him to definitively conclude that the better-educated sisters had a lower risk of death at every age. "In other words," he said, "the protective effects of education seemed to start early and last throughout life," and he maintained that this was further evidence that "the connection to growing old gracefully could not simply be attributed to differences in health-related behaviors, income, or access to health care.[228]

During his time with the sisters, Snowdon said one of the first things he noticed was how much mealtimes meant to them. Other than the chapel, he came to realize that the dining hall was the one place where all the sisters were together, and especially for many of the retired sisters, meals were the major social occasions of the day. As he heard the laughter and the lovely, distinctive pitch of elderly women chatting, listened to the sisters hearing news of former students and family members, and heard them discussing sports or politics, the social importance of mealtimes was brought home to him, and he acknowledged that this dimension of nutrition, totally missing from his earlier research, had particular importance for the study of aging. He concluded: "What I know for sure is that nutrition for healthy aging is not just about eating certain foods or downing a certain number of milligrams of a prescribed number of vitamins each day." He found that "it also depends on where we eat, whom we eat with, and whether the meal nourishes our heart, mind, and soul as well as our body."[229]

The United States Census Bureau projected that the number of centenarians would jump to more than eight hundred thousand by 2050, noting that centenarians are the fastest-growing age group in the country. Snowdon said that how the eighteen sisters in his study lived a century or longer remained a mystery to him but as he came to know them, clues to their longevity began to emerge. He admitted that while two of the factors could not be scientifically tested by the Nun Study data, "after fifteen years of working with the sisters, I believe strongly in their importance."[230]

The first factor he identified was the "deep spirituality these women share." He said he sensed that profound faith, like a positive outlook, buffered the sorrows and tragedies that all people experience. Other studies have also found that prayer and contemplation have a positive influence on long-term health and may even speed the healing process. The second factor he identified was the power of community. He pointed out that research had increasingly documented that marriage, membership in churches, clubs, or other social groups and regular contact with family and friends reduce the risk of death from the major killers, coronary heart disease and stroke.[231]

> For more than fifteen years now, I have witnessed how the School Sisters of Notre Dame benefit from the ever-present network of support and love. The community not only stimulates their minds, celebrates their accomplishments, and shares their aspirations, but also encourages their silences, intimately understands their defeats, and nurtures them when their bodies fail them. From the day they enter the convent, they are members of a congregation that existed

long before they were born. On the day they are laid to rest, they are celebrated by a community that will endure long after they are gone. How many of us are held so securely throughout life?[232]

Snowdon concluded that these factors helped to shift the distribution of age at death in the entire congregation: "This means that the sisters live dramatically longer lives than their lay counterparts. The centenarians simply represent the leading edge of this phenomenon."[233]

Enfield's sisters on this "leading edge" included **Sister Mary Sylvestra Konicka** who entered eternal life on January 31, 2002, at the age of 100, a beloved member of the Felician Congregation for eighty-two years. The former Helen Konicka was born on August 7, 1901, in Webster, Massachusetts, one of eleven children of John and Constance (Wieczorek) Konicki. She attended St. Joseph School in Webster, where her teachers, the Felician Sisters, encouraged early signs of a vocation to the religious life. In 1915, she entered the aspirancy in Lodi, New Jersey, and upon graduation from Immaculate Conception High School in 1920, was accepted as a postulant. During her investiture ceremony in August 1921, Helen received the holy habit and her new name, Sister Mary Sylvestra.

In 1928, Sister Sylvestra pronounced her final vows, and in 1934, she transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut. She furthered her education at Fordham University in the Bronx, New York, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education in 1953.[234] Sister Sylvestra spent fifty-five years as a full-time teacher in schools staffed by the Felician Sisters from Baltimore, Maryland to Adams, Massachusetts. She served as principal at several of these schools, and local minister of several communities for many years.[235]

Sister Sylvestra lived in a spirit of Franciscan simplicity, with a joyful song in her heart and very often on her lips. She enjoyed helping others even in the smallest task and even when failing eyesight limited her activities, she maintained a positive outlook. She believed that the small irritations of daily living called her to live life with a greater love for God and others. In 1990, she joined the Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House community. She became a patient in Holy Family Infirmary shortly after, maintaining her strong and independent spirit. On January 31, 2002, she died peacefully, surrendering herself to the arms of Jesus. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial in Our Lady of the Angels Convent Chapel on February 4. Sister Mary Sylvestra was laid to rest in the Felician Sisters plot at St. Adalbert Cemetery in Enfield.[236]

Sister Mary Emilitte Bonczar

On October 19, 2003, her 100th birthday, sisters in the infirmary community along with the provincial house joined Sister Mary Emilitte Bonczar in thanking God for the gift of her long life and many years of service in the Felician Congregation. A festive dinner followed the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy of Thanksgiving.[237] On behalf of the Felician Congregation, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, sent a congratulatory message: "May the blessing and love of God bring you much happiness and joy! May this time of celebration be filled with countless special moments!"[238] Sister Emilitte also received a Papal Blessing. On October 19, 2005, her 102nd

birthday, her face radiated with joy as she heard the sisters sing "Happy Birthday" before she shared the noonday meal with them.[239]

Sister Mary Emilitte was born to Joseph and Salomea (Dlugosz) Bonczar on October 19, 1903, in Poland and given the name Mary at baptism. The family migrated from Poland in 1904 and settled in Lowell, Massachusetts. She was the oldest in the family of six children, four boys and two girls. The Bonczars were parishioners of Holy Trinity Parish, and Mary attended the parish school staffed by the Felician Sisters. From the first grade on, Mary desired to become a sister and, inspired by her teachers, she entered the aspirancy program at Immaculate Conception High School in Lodi, New Jersey, in 1918, graduating from high school four years later.[240]

After spending two years as a postulant, she was admitted to the novitiate in 1924 and began her initial formation in the Felician Congregation. At the ceremony of investiture in the Felician habit, she received the name Sister Mary Emilitte. She made first profession in 1925 and sealed that commitment for life with her final profession on August 9, 1931. In 1934, Sister Emilitte was transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut. In 1944, she proudly became a naturalized citizen of the United States.[241]

In preparation for the apostolate of teaching, Sister Mary Emilitte earned a bachelor's degree from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., in 1939 and a master's degree in education from Our Lady of the Elms College in Chicopee, Massachusetts in 1961. Her thesis, completed to fulfill requirements for her master's degree, was entitled "Survey of the School Libraries Conducted by the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province."[242]

As an educator, Sister Emilitte taught primarily eighth-grade students in schools staffed by the Felician Sisters in the Middle Atlantic and New England states. Her full-time teaching career spanned sixty years, and for twenty-five of those years, she served as principal. From 1983-1984, she taught French at Our Lady of the Angels Academy in Enfield. Until 1997, Sister Mary Emilitte served the Church and the Felician Congregation in a variety of ministries, including as an aide and a catechist.[243]

Upon returning to the provincial house in Enfield, she performed assigned duties until moving to Holy Family Infirmary in 1998. In March 2007, Sister Emilitte's physical condition declined significantly. On March 28, her breathing became labored, and she weakened considerably. Comfort measures were initiated, and sisters prayed the Chaplet of Mercy at Sister Emilitte's bedside. She died on Wednesday, March 28, 2007. She was 103 years old and had spent eighty-five of those years in faithful service to God and his people as a Felician Sister. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Saturday, March 31, 2007, with Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, as the celebrant and homilist. Deacon Steve Papik, Sister's nephew-in-law, assisted. Sisters, family members and associates participated in the services. In addition to the Felician Sisters who remained to cherish her memory, Sister Emilitte was survived by her niece, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar. Sister Emilitte was laid to rest in the Felician Sisters plot at St. Adalbert Cemetery in Enfield.[244]

Sister Mary (Humilianna) Klaus[245]

On December 30, 2005, Sister Mary Klaus' sister Sophie, along with many nieces and nephews, arrived at the infirmary to celebrate Sister Mary's 100th birthday. A beautiful birthday cake, greeting cards, gifts, and loving wishes from her family made the day extra special. Throughout the day, sisters visited Sister Mary and wished her God's special blessings. A Mass of Thanksgiving entreated God's blessings for her.[246]

Mary was born to John and Julia (Kos) Klaus on December 29, 1905, in Bondsville, Massachusetts, one of nine children, three boys and six girls. The Klaus Family belonged to St. Bartholomew's Parish in Bondsville, but since there was no school, Mary began her education at the tiny Franklin School in Belchertown, Massachusetts. Called to religious life, Mary left Bondsville on May 29, 1926, to enter the postulancy of the Felician Sisters at Immaculate Conception Convent in Lodi, New Jersey. On August 4, 1927, she was invested with the Felician habit and received the name Sister Mary Humilianna. The following year, she professed temporary vows and six years later, on August 4, 1934, her final vows.[247]

Preparing for the teaching apostolate, Sister Humilianna studied at Fordham University in New York and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Education in 1953. For 55 years, Sister Mary was in active ministry, working primarily as an elementary school teacher in schools staffed by the Felician Sisters in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York. She served as principal at St. Adalbert's School in the Thompsonville section of Enfield, and St. Joseph's School in Rockville, Connecticut.[248]

After her long ministry as a teacher, Sister Mary "retired" to the provincial house in Enfield, where she served the community as seamstress from 1983 to 1992, the year she was admitted to Holy Family Infirmary. While a patient in the infirmary, Sister Mary was gracious toward everyone, never complaining, always grateful for even the smallest service rendered to her. She spent a considerable part of each day in prayer, especially meditating on the mysteries of the rosary, and for many years, kept a prayer journal where she recorded her thoughts and reflections.[249]

On Saturday, August 11, 2001, following a breakfast in their honor, a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated the 75th anniversary of Sister Mary and the other two sisters in her group, Sister Mary Noel Falicki and Sister Mary Virginelle Paciorek. Felician Sisters, family members, and friends joined the Jubilarians in thanking God for all the blessings bestowed on them throughout the years. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, was the main celebrant and homilist. Concelebrants were Father Joseph Paciorek, CM, brother of Sister Virginelle and Father Anthony Iwuc, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Central Falls, Rhode Island.[250]

Afflicted by coronary-artery-disease, Sister Mary's condition began to deteriorate in mid-May 2008, and she died on Thursday, July 3, 2008, at the age of 102 in the 83rd year of her consecrated life as a Felician Sister. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial in the provincial house chapel on Monday, July 7, at 10:30 a.m. In his homily, he reminded the sisters, family members, associates and friends present that our Lord said, "'Do not let your hearts be troubled.' Sister Mary trusted in these words. God has rewarded her for all she did in her long life that was good and

virtuous." The Rite of Committal followed at the Felician Sisters plot in St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Enfield.[251]

Sister Mary Laetitia Plona

The last day of 2006—December 31—was one of remembrance as the sisters prepared to celebrate Sister Mary Laetitia Plona's 100th birthday. Many of her relatives arrived bearing flowers, gifts, and a very large birthday cake.[252] On behalf of the State of Connecticut, Governor M. Jodi Rell congratulated Sister Laetitia on this special milestone. The proclamation read, in part, "May you continue to enjoy a rich life, filled with good friends and cherished memories. I wish you a happy and healthy 100th Birthday." United States Senator Joseph A. Lieberman also sent greetings acknowledging this significant milestone as well as the "many remarkable changes and innovations in our great nation" that Sister Laetitia had experienced.[253]

Born in Gardner, Massachusetts, on December 31, 1906, Stella Agnes Plona was the fifth child in an extraordinary family of sixteen children born to Alexander and Alexandra (Wiski) Plona, natives of Poland. She and her siblings grew up in the Polish section of the city known as "The Patch." Alexander was a founding member of St. Joseph's Parish in Gardner, a short distance from the family home.[254]

After attending local public schools, Stella graduated from Gardner High School in 1926. Following graduation, she was employed as an office worker until 1931. Stella said the first signs of a religious vocation stirred in her at the age of twelve when she began reading biographies of female saints who entered the convent, and became aware that maybe God was calling her, too. Her interest was renewed when she was about seventeen, and she secretly pondered entering religious life. This casual interest eventually transformed into a strong inner conviction through a significant inspiration on the feast of the Blessed Mother. While contemplating this event, she said an "inviting inquisitiveness" began to grow, but she remained at home working while continuing to life a full, joyful life. When she shared her desire to enter religious life with her family, who were very religious, she said, "They seemed pleased."[255]

On August 6, 1931, Stella traveled to Immaculate Conception Convent in Lodi, New Jersey, where she was accepted as a postulant. The following year, she was invested with the Felician habit and received the religious name Sister Mary Laetitia. In 1938, she was transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut, where she professed perpetual vows in 1939. Sister Laetitia began her ministry in the Felician community at Immaculate Conception Home in Lodi as teacher and mother to the youngsters and then as teacher for two years before beginning training at the Mercy Hospital School of Nursing in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1944. Later, she earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Education from The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and a master's degree in nursing from Boston College.[256]

Nursing assignments included Our Lady of the Angels Infirmary in Enfield, Connecticut, Blackwell General Hospital School of Nursing in Blackwell, Oklahoma, and St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine. With several other Felicians, Sister Laetitia was a pioneer in the formation of St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, in 1947, serving as director of nursing services and briefly as

administrator. She was most proud of establishing and directing the School of Practical Nursing, one of the few accredited licensed practical nursing schools in the United States. This program later became the School of Diploma Nursing. It enabled licensed practical nurses (LPNs) to upgrade their status to become registered nurses through its fifteen-month program. Both programs were approved by the Maine State Board of Nursing, and both were National League for Nursing accredited. The two programs numbered almost 450 graduates, including several male nurses.[257]

Sister Laetitia urged nursing students to remember that "Compassionate human touch brilliantly overshadows all other components of nursing and health care," and "Every man has a mandate to keep learning and become perfect in whatever his life devotion is." During her more than forty years of service at St. Joseph's, Sister Laetitia touched the lives of many there who continued to communicate with her.[258]

Sister Laetitia wrote "The History of Early Nursing in Our Lady of the Angels Enfield, 1943-1955," the twenty-year history of the St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing entitled "Nurturing the Seed of Caring through Nursing Education LPN: 1963-1972 and RN 1972-1982," and the forty-year history of St. Joseph's Hospital. She served as director of the hospital for several years and when she retired, she was named director *emerita.* She then moved back to the provincial house in Enfield in 1991.[259]

On May 3, 1981, Sister Laetitia celebrated her 50th anniversary of religious life with the five other sisters in her group: Sister Mary Presentia Kaznocha, Sister Mary Helene Hadam, Sister Jane Mary Kisiel, Sister Mary Demetria Rokita, and Sister Mary Joanille Wikar. Rev. Msgr. John Cwalina, a cousin of Sister Mary Laetitia was the principal celebrant for the solemn Eucharistic liturgy. Redemptorist Father George J. Keaveney was the homilist.[260] In 2001, she became a patient in Holy Family Infirmary where she continued to inspire others with her gentle, prayerful manner. She enjoyed occasional visits from family members and though her hearing and sight were impaired, her lips moved in continuous prayer for others.[261]

On November 4, 2006, the sisters gathered from throughout the province to celebrate the 75th anniversary of religious life of Sister Mary Laetitia, Sister Mary Phyllis Nowak, Sister Mary Presentia Kaznocha, and Sister Mary Helene Hadam. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, was the main celebrant for the Eucharistic liturgy, assisted by Father Adam Krempa, brother of Sister Helene. A festive dinner in the main dining room followed the Mass, and the aura of celebration was heightened by the presence of many family members.[262]

Sister Mary Laetitia died in Holy Family Infirmary in Enfield on September 27, 2008, at the age of 101, in the 77th year of religious life in the Felician Sisters Congregation. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated in the convent chapel on Tuesday, September 30, at 10:30 a.m. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, was the principal celebrant and homilist. He was assisted by Father Thomas M. Tokarz, pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Gardner, Massachusetts. In his homily, Father Adolphe said, "Sister Laetitia is a symbol of every nun who gave her whole life to Christ alone. . . . She deserves to be near Jesus." He concluded, "She has stretched out her tired old hands for the last time. Now she fulfills the words of the psalmist: 'My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never

forget all his blessings.'" Sister Mary Laetitia was laid to rest in the Felician Sisters plot in St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Enfield.[263]

FELICIAN RENEWAL PROGRAM: A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

The second congregational Interprovincial Renewal Program took place in Europe from July 1 to August 7, 2003, with twenty-two sister participants, including two from the Enfield province, Sister Mary John Fryc and Sister Mary Ann Papiez. Sister Mary Celestine Giertych, vicar general, directed the program with Sister Mary Inga Borko, general councilor, assisting her. Every province was represented.[264]

The program consisted of a spiritual experience focusing on the Ecclesial, Franciscan, and Felician aspects of our life. To that end, the sisters prepared papers and prayers that reflected on one of these aspects: Pilgrimage, Art and Spirituality, Early Christian Worship, St. Francis and the Poor, Martyrdom and Suffering, Mary and Women in the Church, Impact of St. Peter and St. Paul, Culture and the Church, Mary and the Church, St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, Prayer and Solitude, The Power of Beauty, Friendship, Blessed Angela, and Mary of Częstochowa. Felician Sisters and priests presented many conferences on different aspects of life within the Church and on the evangelical way of life as Felicians. The pilgrimages to various sites were arranged thematically and the participants received reflection sheets for the places being visited.[265]

In her letter of invitation to the renewal program, Sister Celestine wrote: "Let the Spirit of God, the spirit of St. Francis and Blessed Angela walk with us as we prepare for this Renewal Program. Let us pray for each other and for a true transformation of our hearts as we will walk the path of the Ecclesial and Felician-Franciscan places and deepen our understanding of what it means to be a Felician Sister."[266]

What follows is Sister John's account of the program.[267]

> As a participant in the Felician Renewal Program in Europe, the phrase that comes to mind for me is "holy ground" as Sister Mary Ann Papiez and I pilgrimaged to the magnificent churches and basilicas in Rome, Assisi, Prague, Warsaw, Przemyśl, Krakow, Vienna, and Venice, listened to conferences, and faith-shared at the end of the day as to how God was calling us to deeper union with Himself and each other in community.
>
> The universality of Church was best experienced by participating in liturgies and prayer services in various languages as we traveled through several countries. An especially personally rewarding experience for me was the audience and group picture taken with Our Holy Father, John Paul II, which took place on my anniversary of entrance to community (July 9). That day, we had the opportunity to experience being Church with some 7,000 people from various parts of the world.
>
> Our long days—often ten to twelve and a half hours—had us walking in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi, reflecting upon his life and praying in significant places that fashioned his faith journey. Our sense of rootedness in the Franciscan charism was deepened as was the impact of Francis' call to continuous conversion. Walking on the

"holy ground" of Assisi, LaVerna, the Rieti Valley, and Poggio Bustone where St. Francis experienced a profound forgiveness of sin, one could almost sense the spirit of Francis—his call to be with God in solitude as well as his call to be with people and make the Gospel come alive in word and deed for the spiritual renewal of the world. We spent a good deal of time in quiet prayer and solitude in these holy places.

Reflecting on "Mary" and the "saints in our lives"—role models of discipleship in the Church—included visits to the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy before the image of Our Lady of Częstochowa, and the monastery of Sts. Scholastica and Benedict in Subiaco, Italy. We also spent a few days in Innsbruck, Austria—7,000 feet in the Alps—where Mother Angela received her call to religious life. The words of the hymn, "How Great Thou Art," will never have the same meaning for me as in the past.

We prayed for all our sisters and friends and we, in turn, felt their prayers throughout the summer as God was truly with us. His presence was deeply felt in special moments like being able to celebrate the investiture of the five novices in Krakow. Our visits to Poland included Warsaw, Przemyśl, Krakow, and Częstochowa—all of which renewed our devotion to and love of Blessed Mary Angela, to kneel on her kneeler, pray in her bedroom, touch her desk, and know that we were again on "holy ground."

While there were many highlights in Poland, I am still touched by the gracious hospitality and genuine Felician joy of the sisters in all three of our Polish provinces. Our program was fast coming to an end when, on August 5 (my birthday), we experienced a tour of Vienna, Austria, and were treated to a most enjoyable concert in a famous place. From Vienna, we traveled to Venice where we concluded our pilgrimage with a visit to St. Mark's Cathedral before returning to Rome.

Sister Mary Ann Papiez summed up the experience she shared with Sister John and so many other Felician Sisters when she wrote, "We have returned with . . . new fire in our hearts to spread the Good News of the kingdom of God."[268]

ASSOCIATES

According to Amy Hereford, CSJ, nationally, the number of associates in the United States began to grow substantially around the year 2000. In her article, "Associates of Religious Institutes—A Way Forward," she noted that this increase happened at a time when the number of vowed members was decreasing in most communities.[269] The associate group in Enfield remained relatively small, with nineteen associates renewing their commitment in 2001, fifteen in 2002, twenty in 2003, eighteen in 2004, nineteen in 2005, fifteen in 2006, and fourteen in 2007. Some years also saw candidates making their initial commitment.[270]

The associates' Recommitment Ceremony took place annually on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which generally occurred in the Church's liturgical calendar in the month of June. The simple but uplifting ceremony followed Evening Praise with the sisters in the provincial house chapel, and

Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Afterwards, the associates enjoyed a celebration dinner with the sisters who warmly welcomed them.[271]

Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz resumed her responsibility as associate director when Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski moved to Rome for her new ministry there in August of 2001.[272] In 2004, Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett was appointed assistant director. The associates met regularly with their directors and took advantage of numerous opportunities to share in retreat days and community celebrations, including jubilees of the sisters and significant feast day celebrations as well as wakes and funerals.[273]

As often as possible, each year the Enfield associate leadership provided a retreat experience for the associates. The retreat experience that took place from July 7-10, 2003, consisted of four two-hour-long evening meetings that focused on "Catholic Morality" and "Introduction to the Scriptures."[274] The 2004 experience was a day-long retreat[275] while in 2006, eleven associates gathered with Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, assistant associate director, at St. Felix Center on the campus grounds in Enfield from July 14-16.[276]

The theme for the 2006 retreat was "A Closer Walk with Jesus." Retreat activities included reflecting on Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium).* During a prayer service, the associates placed pictures and written petitions at the foot of the altar, and these offerings remained there throughout the retreat. They also shared their favorite pictures of Jesus and reflected on the different names for Christ mentioned in scripture and in other faith traditions. After the conclusion of the retreat, the associates brought gifts to the sisters in Holy Family Infirmary.

Speaking of the weekend experience, Louise Archambault said, "I could not thank God enough for all the graces I felt. It brought me closer to the other associates. What a gift I received when I became an associate!" Beatriz Dell'Arco said this was her first experience of a weekend retreat. "My wish was to forget the outside world for these three days. In my mind, I wanted to spend this time with God. This retreat was a success and I thank the Lord." Joan Schmid said, "I really loved being in the chapel and having the Blessed Sacrament exposed. The different sessions were great, and everyone shared their insights. Sister Susan did a great job!"

While sharing in the faith life, vision, and mission of the sisters, the associates witnessed to the Felician vision and mission at their places of employment. They continued to volunteer their services in the provincial house as substitutes for Eucharistic adoration and receptionists in the main office, as well as arranging for and cleaning up after social events, especially for fund-raising activities such as the Polish Supper and the Pre-Christmas Sale. Helen Corbo, a devoted Felician Associate since 1997, along with Dolly Tippett, mother of Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, organized a twice-a-week Bingo for the sisters in the infirmary. Helen said, "Just being associated with the sisters brings out the better person in us. . . . I just love them all!"[277] Four associates, Catherine Chilicki, Paula McCloskey, Beatriz Dell'Arco, and Nona Reichle formed a "Rosary Circle." They gathered in the provincial house once a month to make rosaries. Each time, they invited a sister resident of the infirmary to chat with them as they worked and expressed appreciation for having a Felician Sister as their companion.[278] The associates decided to become more intimately involved with the sisters residing in the infirmary and they provided ice cream

treats and a pizza break. Sister Seraphine said, "What a beautiful sight, when all gather to share end enjoy each other's companionship."

The associates continued publication of their newsletter, "Angel Wings," edited by Catherine Chilicki and George Archambault. Begun in 1997, it included reflections on the life of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela, highlights about the lives of the members, reminders about upcoming events, and a space for sharing thoughts with the other associates. In the December 2006 issue, Louise Archambault wrote, "For me, to be an associate means an opportunity to grow in closer relationship with the Lord and to do his will in everything."[279] In the May 2007, issue, her husband, George, reflects on "The Resurrection." A walk through his garden after Easter inspired him to write: "I see the tiny green shoots poking their heads out of the warm earth. I can't help but marvel that even creation is celebrating Jesus' resurrection!"[280]

Several interprovincial meetings of the directors of the Felician Associates in North America took place during this period, led by Sister Mary Celestine Giertych, vicar general. Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, associate director, attended the first meeting held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent in Buffalo, New York, from October 1-3, 2001. Large group sharing followed the theological reflection that focused on the connection of the associates with the Felician Charism, Mission, and Vision. During the discussion, one director noted the addition to Article 5 in *Response to Love* officially recognizing associates. It reads: "We seek to share and promote the charism of Mother Mary Angela through associate programs and other collaborative efforts." Another director spoke about the associates as a gift, "given to us by God to help us carry on our mandate to bring about a spiritual renewal of the world, to bring the Felician mission to the marketplace, to places that we cannot reach." Following Sister Carole Mary Capoun's (Chicago) brief history of how the associate movement began in the Felician Congregation, the directors shared the particulars of their successes and concerns.[281]

The next meeting of directors took place in Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Provincial House in Lodi, New Jersey, from March 6-8, 2005, with Sister Celestine once again directing the meeting.[282] After reading and reflecting on Blessed Angela's letters considering the Felician charism, the directors reasserted the importance of being affirming, compassionate, encouraging, and challenging in their roles as formators.[283] Associate Director Sister Mary Seraphine, who represented the Enfield province, said the group concluded that that there is a need for the sisters to identify themselves as Felicians, faithful daughters of Francis, not from their garb, but from their spirit. She added, "We need to reflect with the associates how they are living the charism in their state of life and what steps they can take to further live it out."[284]

Following the first North American Felician Convocation in Buffalo, New York, from March 17-19, 2006, the directors from seven of the eight North American provinces met on Sunday evening, March 19, to share materials, as well as their concerns and hopes for the associate movement in the context of the reconfiguration process. At this time, the group decided to meet again in conjunction with the planned November 2006 convocation in Chicago, Illinois. During that meeting, they shared results of a survey of the associate programs

in their provinces and discussed concerns and hopes for the associates in the future.[285]

On February 1, 2007, three Steering Committee Members, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, Sister Mary Jean Romanowicz (Canada), and Sister Mary Seraphine Moynier (Rio Rancho), met as a subcommittee concerned with the future of associates in the context of the North American Provinces reconfiguration process. Sister Danat Marie Brysch (Rio Rancho), who had served as the Felician Associate Director in the Rio Rancho, New Mexico Province, and who had participated in several gatherings of the associate directors, including those at the two NAP convocations, met with them to clarify questions the group had and to share information on issues recently addressed by the associate directors.[286]

As a result of that meeting, Sister Laureann invited Sister Carole Mary Capoun, associate director in Chicago, to develop a one-page proposal for presentation to the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee at its meeting on May 18, 2007. The proposal asked the NAP Steering Committee, "To establish the position of a central office of Director of Felician Associates that would help move the Felician Associates into a one province mode." According to Sister Carole, the associate directors had already laid the groundwork for this, since the sixteen different associate "regions" had entertained communication among the associate directors over the past fifteen years.[287] When the Steering Committee met in Enfield for its spring meeting, the group appointed Sister Danat Marie as liaison for the directors of the Felician Associates, to provide resource assistance and offer consultative services and support to the directors.[288]

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

The Felician Congregational Mission and Vision Statements emphasize the need for collaboration with the laity in promoting the mission of the Church. Article 5.3 in *Response to Love* explicitly directs the sisters to "share and promote the charism of Mother Mary Angela through associate programs and other collaborative efforts."

Impelled by the spiritual heritage of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, Sister Mary Antonelle Chunka (Lodi) desired to expand the Congregation's efforts for the spiritual renewal of the world and to live out the Felician charism with all her heart:

To imitate Blessed Mary Angela's
boundless love of God
and surrender to God's will
in compassionate service,
total availability
and concern for the salvation of all people.

The 21st General Chapter adopted the following Mission Statement:

As Felician Franciscans
called by God,
we cooperate with Christ
in the spiritual renewal of the world.

This Mission Statement invited the sisters to accept the challenge of new ministries and new ways of sharing with the family of God while giving priority to the cause of the poor and oppressed. During that General Chapter, Sister Antonelle proposed initiating an international volunteer program, Felician Volunteers in Mission (VIM), "by which young adults, associates, and Felician Sisters would mutually join a short-term experience of prayer, community, and ministry to the poor as a means of extending the Felician charism."[289]

After arriving home from the chapter in Rome, Sister Antonelle did preliminary research and networking in preparation for the project, including organizing a group of sisters who could respond to God's call in this new venture with vigor, enthusiasm, and energy. From April 12-14, 2002, this first group of North American Coordinators of Felician Volunteers in Mission met in Our Lady of Lourdes Hall in Lodi, New Jersey. Representatives from each province attended: Sister Mary Antonelle Chunka, chair, Lodi; Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, Enfield; Sister Mary Dorothy Tomaszewski, Canada; Sister Mary Johnna Ciezobka and Sister Louise Marie Olsofka, Coraopolis; Sister Margaret Mary Eder, Chicago; Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz, Livonia; Sister Mary Susanne Dziedzic, Buffalo; and Sister Veronica Marie Lucero, Rio Rancho. Sister Mary Inga Borko, general councilor, had been appointed as liaison to the general administration but was unable to attend this foundational meeting.[290]

Four coordinators had attended a Formation Training Workshop in Washington, DC, from January 11-14, 2002, conducted by the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service for congregations beginning a lay volunteer program. Sister Antonelle, Sister Connie, Sister Louise, and Sister Margaret shared their learning and brought the materials they received for review by the group. An initial task of the group was to clarify the nature of Volunteers in Mission. The members envisioned it as a new ministry of spiritual formation of the laity in the Felician Franciscan tradition that would prepare women and men to grow in holiness as well as to commit to Gospel service while extending the charism of Blessed Angela. The participants shared personal knowledge of their experience with volunteer groups and agreed that it was time to implement the general chapter initiative and coordinate and expand these efforts into the congregational program, Felician Volunteers in Mission. After much discussion, the group tentatively agreed that:

- Felician VIM would be grounded in the Roman Catholic faith with Felician Franciscan spirituality.
- Volunteers would be people of faith in God, motivated by Christian values in the Catholic tradition.

The program would:

- Offer both domestic and international placements and full-time placements of 1 or 2 years, and short-term placements of one of more weeks.
- Be open to female and male volunteers, single or married, but with no dependents.
- Consider volunteers who were 18 years or older with a high school diploma.

- Review applications of volunteers who were 21 years or older with a college degree or appropriate life-work experience for full-term programs.

The group also decided that for the initial full-time program, the Felician Volunteers would live in their own intentional communities with one or more Felician Sisters(s) and have contact with other assigned local Felician communities. Policies, handbooks, and financial concerns were also on the agenda. Personnel needed to implement the program as well as a proposed action plan were reviewed.[291]

The coordinators proposed a timeline for next steps with Sister Antonelle submitting materials and results from this first meeting to Sister Mary Inga for presentation to the general administration. Within the next month, coordinators presented the results of the meeting to their respective provincial leadership. Sister Antonelle agreed to work with Sister Mary Ann Therese Kelly (Buffalo) and a Felician College student on a PowerPoint presentation for the 2002 Biennial Assembly (September 25-October 4). The coordinators hoped that pending approval at the Biennial Assembly, they could then present the VIM Program to the entire province at provincial assemblies or by another means of communication.[292]

A proposed plan for initiating the VIM ministry for full-time volunteers included designing brochures, composing handbooks and policy books, recruiting potential volunteers, screening applicants, planning formation and funding, designing an orientation program for volunteers and personnel involved in the areas of spirituality and ministry. The coordinators hoped that the volunteers would be ready to begin their year of mission in community and ministry by late August or early September 2003.[293]

Sister Margaret offered a possible site in the Chicago province where volunteers could work with United Stand, a ministry of Mother of Good Counsel Province. The coordinators also identified several short-term sites that could be considered for placements in the future. St. Ann's Center in Kingstree, South Carolina would serve as the domestic site while sites in Mexico and Canada were recommended for the international site placements. The sisters left the meeting with a vision for the successful implementation of Felician Volunteers in Mission.[294]

Sister Antonelle addressed the Biennial Assembly of 2002 using sixty PowerPoint visuals to explain the work that had been accomplished. Following their discussions, the delegates affirmed "the concept of the initiative regarding Felician VIM (Volunteers in Mission) accepted by the delegates of the 21st General Chapter, June 2000." The initiative was clarified to read as follows:

> Felician Volunteers in Mission is an international venture of lay volunteers with Felician Sisters who join in an experience of prayer, community, simple living and service to the poor or marginalized as a means of extending the Felician charism.

The 2002 Biennial Assembly also supported continued action by the Coordinating Committee of Felician VIM and those provinces choosing to plan and implement the program.[295]

The Mission Statement was revised at the Biennial Assembly and accepted as follows:

> Felician Volunteers in Mission (VIM) is an international venture of the laity with Felician Sisters to cooperate with Christ in the spiritual renewal of the world in solidarity with our poor or marginalized brothers and sisters.
>
> Volunteers in Mission live Gospel values in a Catholic community environment. In short-term and long-term ministries, we witness Felician Franciscan spirituality as we serve others without discrimination and challenge unjust structures.
>
> Committed to being a transforming presence in a world in need of healing, we pray, minister and live simply in right relationship with one another and creation.
>
> In free response to love, as Eucharist Alive, we share our talents and resources with compassion, mercy and joy in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi and Blessed Mary Angela, foundress of the Felician Sisters.

At the Biennial Assembly, three provinces offered to pilot a long-term VIM program: Chicago, Livonia, and Rio Rancho.[296]

Committed to the goal of Felician VIM as enabling volunteers to become a transforming presence in the world, the coordinators met at Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Convent in Livonia, Michigan, from March 22-24, 2003, to continue planning. The focus of the meeting was to ensure that volunteers were nurtured in their spiritual growth as well as in the Felician-Franciscan charism.[297]

By the time of their meeting at Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, Illinois, from October 17-19, St. Ann's Center in Kingstree had hosted three short-term missions, Madonna University students traveled to Nueva Rosita in Coahuila, Mexico, and the first three Felician volunteers had moved into Sts. Peter & Paul Convent in Chicago, Illinois. The highlight of the weekend was the opportunity for the VIM coordinators to meet the three volunteers and to hear them talk about their community life, ministry, and prayer life. Sister Margaret Mary Eder coordinated the program for the three volunteers, all from Felician University in New Jersey.[298]

The volunteers lived on the first floor of the convent and joined the sisters for meals and recreation. The three ministered through United Stand Family Center, a sponsored ministry of the Chicago province. Founded by Sister Kim Marie Mis, United Stand offered mental-health services to inner-city Chicago children and families with few or no resources. Each volunteer worked in five of these Chicago schools, where they assessed student problems and provided counseling individually and in groups. The VIM coordinators were impressed with their enthusiasm and desire to live simply.[299]

When the representatives of the interprovincial coordinators of VIM met at St. Ann's Center in Kingstree, South Carolina, from November 12-14, 2004, Sister Margaret spoke at length about the highlights of the first year of VIM. She said she found praying with the volunteers and hearing about their ministries and experiences most rewarding. Her greatest concerns included securing sustained funding as well as recruiting future candidates, and she hoped to attract teachers and nurses for the program the following year. She also expressed appreciation for the support of Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, provincial minister, and Sister Mary Brendan Bogdan, provincial councilor.[300]

While not a goal of the program, Sister Carol Marie Wiatrek (Rio Rancho) noted that "VIM was really creating a culture of vocations," and she suggested providing printed vocation resource material to volunteers who might be considering a religious vocation. During the meeting, the committee also reviewed the progress of the short-term volunteer programs. Sister Carol Marie spoke about short-term experiences that the sisters in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, had engaged in with volunteers, including married couples in the area. Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz (Livonia), who coordinated the program at Madonna University, shared the experience of students who worked with skilled carpenters and local volunteers in Kingstree, South Carolina, to make home improvements and assisted in the food pantry and tutoring program. She said they were moved by Sisters Mary Susanne Dziedzic and Mary Johnna Ciezobka, who inspired them to understand how people working together can make a difference in helping people in need. The Madonna volunteers looked forward to returning the following summer.[301]

The long-term Volunteers in Mission program continued for several years in Chicago until Sister Mary Andrea Chudzik, provincial minister in Chicago, decided to temporarily discontinue it in 2007. The Volunteers in Mission Program itself remained viable, and the Livonia province continued its mission with students from Madonna University participating in a week of prayer, community, and service at the Felician-sponsored St. Ann's Center in Kingstree, South Carolina. St. Ann's also hosted sisters and associates from the Buffalo province, students from Hilbert College in Hamburg, New York, and Felician postulants and novices.[302]

APOSTOLIC MISSION

The Memoirs of the Congregation Felician Sisters reminds the sisters that:

> They must be mindful of their call to fulfill a mission with which the Most Holy Trinity is concerned throughout all the ages from the creation of the world to this day and shall not cease to be concerned until the end of time.
>
> Memoirs, VII, 8.

In reflecting on the "Sphere of Activity of the Sisters of St. Felix," the title of Chapter 7 in the *Memoirs,* Sister Mary Joanne Zakrzewski (Livonia), concluded that the sisters' task is "to sow and cultivate" always cognizant of the fact that "God gives the growth." By this time, the beginning of the new millennium, the Felician Congregation had grown into a worldwide community stretching across four continents. Sister Joanne noted that the sisters' faithfulness in the ministries they were embracing and their openness to new ones "allow God to be known, loved, and glorified."[303]

At the 2002 Biennial Assembly, the Apostolic Mission Coordinators recognized the need to assist the sisters of the Congregation to better know and appreciate the other provinces and their apostolates. This understanding was achieved through a bulletin titled *Apostolic Mission.* Each month, a different province wrote a descriptive article about an apostolate in the province. The bulletin, available in the three Congregational languages—English, Polish, and Portuguese—shared and fostered the charism of Blessed Mary Angela and served as a vehicle for information about the Congregational ministries for the sisters, the associates, their friends, and the wider public. Enfield's apostolates

included St Joseph Hospital, Felician Adult Day Care, the Enfield Montessori School and the Polish Bakery, Music Ministry, the Local Soup Kitchen—Loaves and Fishes—and Homebound Ministry.[304]

Enfield's *State of the Province Report,* prepared for the provincial chapter of 2005, affirmed the sisters as "very dedicated witnesses of Christ" responding to the needs of the Church and God's people. Despite a decline in membership from 131 sisters in December 1999 to 92 as of June 2005, Enfield's commitment to education remained strong with sisters serving in nine parish schools and one college. Additionally, the sisters were involved in parish ministry visiting the homebound, elderly, and sick, taught piano and vocal music, and served as organist in local parishes. While a relatively small group, the sisters of the Enfield province made an impact as they endeavored to see that Catholic values were planted in the hearts and minds of many young people.[305]

The province strongly supported its three sponsored ministries—St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine; The Enfield Montessori School in Enfield; and the Felician Adult Day Care, also in Enfield. The provincial administration offered assistance and direction through regular attendance at board meetings, frequent visits, and ongoing communication that provided data in evaluating the effectiveness of each ministry in the light of the Felician charism and mission as well as resources and needs.

The schools, as well as the sponsored ministries, rededicated themselves to spreading the Christian message and the mission of the renewal of the world, as well as Blessed Angela's charism of love and care for the poor, undertaking many charitable projects. Administrators, faculty and staff, students and employees participated in Thanksgiving and Christmas charitable activities, helped in soup kitchens, collected goods for the poor, and hosted auctions and fashion shows.

Catechesis continued to be a significant part of the province's educational ministry. The sisters faced this challenge resourcefully and used all the opportunities at their disposal to evangelize and teach children and young adults who were not enrolled in Catholic schools.

Many sisters were involved in the internal works of the community. They provided the leadership and support to effectively manage the provincial house, the congregational archives, the finance office, the bakery, and to minister to the care of the retired and infirm members of the province. The retired and infirm sisters were especially aware of their ministry as the prayer supporters of the province and took their contribution to the community very seriously.[306]

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL

At the beginning of the 21st century, the administration and staff at St. Joseph Hospital continued to work together, innovate, and embrace value-based approaches to improving the health and well-being of the patients they served in the Greater Bangor Area, while struggling to address the persistent challenges endemic to the healthcare system. They were energized by the Catholic Health Association's publication of its "Shared Statement of Identity for the Catholic Health Ministry," reminding them that:

> We are the people of Catholic health care, a ministry of the church continuing Jesus' mission of love and healing today. As provider, employer, advocate, citizen—bringing together people of diverse faiths

> and backgrounds—our ministry is an enduring sign of health care rooted in our belief that every person is a treasure, every life a sacred gift, every human being a unity of body, mind, and spirit. We work to bring alive the Gospel vision of justice and peace. We answer God's call to foster healing, act with compassion, and promote wellness for all persons and communities, with special attention to our neighbors who are poor, underserved, and most vulnerable. By our service, we strive to transform hurt into hope.[307]

Innovation seemed ingrained in the culture of St. Joseph Healthcare. Always working to follow through on its promise to deliver first-rate care to the Greater Bangor community, the hospital began construction in late fall of 2001 for a fixed magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) unit. Because MRI does not use radiation, it is a safe and valuable diagnostic tool. Using this advanced technology, physicians could see images of the body in greater detail and detect abnormalities earlier than ever before. MRI services had been available in a mobile unit at the hospital since 1991.

The project included preliminary earthmoving followed by construction of a three-story addition to the south wing of the hospital building, abutting the entrance to the old Emergency Department. The third level was dedicated to the MRI unit itself, which featured a state-of-the-art Siemens Magnetom Symphony MRI unit with an open, flared-bore design and rapid image-processing, making it patient-friendly.[308]

The MRI unit was officially opened on August 14, 2002. St. Joseph Chaplain Father John Austin was the principal celebrant for the Blessing and Dedication. President/CEO Sister Mary Norberta joined St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation Board Chairman Edward Clift and Director of Imaging Deborah Rowe in cutting the ribbon on the new unit.[309] Felician Sisters, hospital physicians, board members, employees, government officials, and Bangor community members attended. An Open House showcasing the new unit was held the following day.[310]

SJH's Problem Wound and Hyperbaric Medicine Center, formerly managed by an outside provider, moved to in-house management, and new transcutaneous oximetry monitors, which measure oxygen levels in the tissues, were added. The noninvasive test helped diagnose whether a wound was self-healing, or if conditions such as venous or arterial problems would complicate healing. The Problem Wound Center employed Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy not only for wound healing but also for decompression emergencies, cases of carbon monoxide poisoning, and treatment of infections of aggressive necrotizing bacteria.[311] To accelerate healing, the Center used Apligraf, a bioengineered artificial-skin product that served as a substitution for skin grafting in certain cases. Along with compression therapy, the product was used for treatment of some venous ulcers and certain cases of diabetic foot ulcer. The Wound Center had also begun a pilot project in telemedicine with sites in Calais and Ashland, Maine. This new service offered the potential for conducting follow-up evaluations of patients at remote locations using a two-way audio-video hookup.[312]

But not everyone was happy with the expansion of St. Joseph's, and a small group of the hospital's neighbors voiced concerns over St. Joseph's sprawl. Following St. Joseph Hospital's request in September to rezone nine

properties—already owned by the hospital—from residential to institutional, a meeting took place at the hospital on Tuesday, October 31, 2001. Under the hospital's plan, most of the rezoned properties, many of which were apartment buildings and two of which were vacant lots, would be used for administrative uses or parking. At this point, the only concrete expansion plan was a small addition to the south end of the hospital's old wing to house an MRI Center. The future of the remaining residential properties was not clear.[313]

During the meeting, residents asked for a preview of the city's concept for the area to protect the remaining homes. A resident, who complained that her home for 38 years, now bordered on two sides by the hospital, said she felt as though she were being pushed out of the area and she worried that should she ever decide to sell her property, a buyer other than St. Joseph would be hard to come by. The City Council voted to table the hospital's request until November 26 and asked the hospital to talk to worried neighbors about any plans for the properties. Sister Norberta said she would not oppose the neighbors' efforts to modify the plan but would not actively support them.[314]

Bangor hospitals' rivalry

While a single mile separated Eastern Maine Medical Center (EMMC) from St. Joseph Hospital (SJH) in the city of Bangor, according to the *Bangor Daily News (BDN)*, the distance "might as well be a milewide canyon." In an article headlined "Hospitals' rivalry detailed," the newspaper reported that "The strong-willed chief executive officers of the region's two largest hospitals have been feuding for the better part of a decade."[315]

Observers claimed that the once friendly rivalry between the two hospitals was replaced with "predatory" competition that began with the unhealthy quest for dominance in 1993, shortly after Norman Ledwin assumed leadership of Eastern Maine Healthcare (EMH), EMMC's parent corporation. The *BDN* reported that Ledwin had barely unpacked his bags when he began negotiations with Sister Norberta on a "merger." She confirmed that he had EMMC's checkbook open, offering to buy the smaller hospital and that he intended to eliminate acute care services at St. Joseph to gain unfettered control of the hospital. His next move, according to William Diggins, executive director of Maine Health Aliance, a group of eleven affiliated hospitals including St. Joseph, was to guarantee Sister Norberta's salary for a period of years. Sister Norberta responded, "He couldn't afford me."[316] She saw this as an administrative ploy in his plan to absorb St. Joseph's into Eastern Maine.[317]

Once these negotiations had failed, Ledwin let it be known he would put the smaller hospital out of business within two years. These early moves poisoned the atmosphere between the two hospitals. Gordon Smith, executive vice president of the Maine Medical Association, said, "When he came in there and took on St. Joe's so strongly, he alienated a lot of people because they didn't see why he had to do it." Ledwin claimed that the relations between the two institutions "are appropriately competitive and clinical relations are good." He added that, once discussions had ended between the two hospitals, Sister Norberta stated "her preference to compete," and "Ledwin accepted Sister Norberta's premise that SJH and EMMC should compete."[318]

The rivalry escalated, impacting eastern and northern Maine. In March 1994, Ledwin announced that he expected to form an HMO with the then-

nonprofit Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine together with every other hospital in the region—except St. Joseph. This caught some of the hospitals off guard. Ray Davis, CEO at Calais Regional Hospital, said he found the idea troubling when he learned the plan was "to exclude St. Joseph Hospital and that was not acceptable." William Diggins, head of Maine Health Alliance, said the proposed exclusion frightened some hospitals that feared they could be the next odd one out. So, ten small hospitals, including Calais and St. Joseph, created the Maine Health Alliance as a defensive measure. The member hospitals met regularly to discuss regional health issues and priorities as well as ways to standardize and improve care. EMH's proposed network with Blue Cross was never realized. [319]

In another plan, EMH and Aetna investigated creating an HMO to serve Medicaid patients across eastern and northern Maine. Department of Health Services Commissioner Kevin Concannon said this plan was also designed to exclude St. Joseph, and because it would have run counter to the whole principle of Medicaid, which is paid for by all taxpayers, the state declined the request. Concannon said, "We would not allow any exclusion [of] any hospital."[320]

Calais administrator Davis, who had worked at EMMC under Ledwin's predecessor, believed the hospital's operating philosophy was different toward rural hospitals. Instead of cooperation, the dominant idea was control. While in 1992, the only hospital that Eastern Maine Healthcare owned was EMMC, by 2001 EMC owned six hospitals from Waterville to Presque Isle and was affiliated with a seventh.[321]

The polarization of the two hospitals led to other conflicts. The results, said observers, were unnecessary competition and lost opportunities. For example, in 1998, St. Joseph asked the state for permission to create a cardiac catheterization lab, arguing it needed the "bread-and-butter" service to compete, and noting that EMMC would not negotiate a fair price for use of the lab it already operated. On November 21, 2001, both hospitals finally reached an agreement after a contentious three-year saga.[322] In another skirmish, in 1999, the two hospitals staked out distinct positions before the Bangor City Council over whether the Fire Department should expand its ambulance services. St. Joseph, which contracted with the city for patient transfers, supported the expansion. EMH officials said they wanted the city to use EMH's Capital Ambulance service, and denied charges it might not serve St. Joseph. They said the city was unfairly competing with a private business. The city expanded its services.[323]

Observers also suggested that the tensions had hamstrung cooperative ventures that could have benefited the whole community. One example involved an effort to better serve the disadvantaged. The federal government identified Bangor as an area where Medicaid patients lacked access to routine medical and dental services because many clinicians limited the number of Medicaid patients they served since reimbursement was inadequate. Lack of access resulted in Medicaid patients delaying care until much more expensive emergency room visits were necessary. The federal designation allowed local medical providers to apply to create a "Federally Qualified Health Center." FQHCs were fully reimbursed for the total cost of care by the federal government. When Sunbury Primary Care and EMMC submitted competing applications to start a Federally Qualified Health Center, Sunbury was chosen,

but federal guidelines required the doctors' group to raise about three quarters of a million dollars in seed money.[324]

While Sunbury was not owned by either hospital, its doctors had privileges at both facilities and its FQHC would have given and received referrals from both. But Sunbury was considered loyal to St. Joseph, which had helped the group begin operations. So, when Sunbury asked EMH for startup help, its request was denied. EMMC's administration claimed it had limited resources that were better applied to its own operations. In the end, Sunbury put up $80,000 of its own money and got a $410,000 bank loan. St. Joseph gave $150,000 and lent $150,000 to the effort. Sister Norberta said St. Joseph's helped the new FQHC even though it was operated by a private practice because its mission was consistent with the hospital's.[325]

There were lost opportunities for collaborative regional planning as well. Just three weeks before the publication of its article about the hospitals' rivalry, the *Bangor Daily News* found that Ledwin released a $200,000 study of health-status indicators for the region from Augusta to Fort Kent. A Portland-based consulting firm compiled the study under the direction of a committee of community and medical leaders, but there was no representative from St. Joseph on the committee. Sister Norberta said the study was a collection of previously known data. "It didn't tell us anything new," she said. "I could have saved him money. I wish he had hired me."[326]

Faced with a different kind of competition during the past decade—specifically Ledwin's threat to shut down the hospital—Sister Norberta said St. Joseph had undertaken defensive maneuvers. Hospital expansion was scaled back to build financial reserves. In 1995, the hospital changed architects and pared the construction budget from $18 million to $13.5 million. Also lost were opportunities to combine laundry services with EMMC and to maintain electronic patient records for patients.[327]

Private-practice woes

Area doctors claimed that they, too, were affected by the escalating tension between the two hospitals. Some doctors who worked at both St. Joseph and EMMC said they were less interested in these institutional political squabbles than in caring for patients while making a living wage, but they said it was hard to stay out of the fray. Unfortunately, the competition put them and rural hospitals in the unpleasant position of choosing sides.[328]

Technically, a practice group employed by the hospital is free to send its patients to any hospital where the doctor has privileges to practice and the patient can also ask for one hospital over the other. But if the patient does not have a strong opinion about which hospital to go to, in practice, most patients wind up at the hospital system that writes the doctor's paycheck. "Owning" the doctors can help ensure a stream of patients at the competitor's expense. Some private practice doctors in Bangor who wanted to retain autonomy complained that EMH wanted to put doctors under its corporate umbrella as a competitive move.[329]

One group whose members said they had been nearly driven out of business by EMMC's desire to employ more doctors was Spectrum Medical Group, the largest group of anesthesiologists in Bangor. The group claimed that EMMC was trying to hurt St. Joseph by hiring doctors and preventing them

from working at the smaller hospital. Spectrum's Dr. David Kliewer and Dr. Richard Smith, a Spectrum anesthesiologist and former EMMC medical staff president, suggested that without their agreeing to stop serving St. Joseph, the administration chose to ignore requests for help in shoring up the declining anesthesiologist population in Bangor.[330]

Because of the tensions at EMMC that were leading to anesthesiologists leaving Bangor, Sister Norberta said she took the step of offering a contract to some of Spectrum's employees. The five anesthesiologists remained Spectrum employees but got guarantees from the hospital for the services they supplied. Sister Norberta said she would rather there not be such arrangements, but she worried the anesthesiology situation could cause St. Joseph to end up without anesthesiologist coverage. Smith said Ledwin's first reaction was to get control of the physicians by making them employees, while Sister Norberta's was, "What can we do to help? The best thing that could happen to the community is to have better communication," she said.[331]

"Community Care," an editorial published in the *Bangor Daily News* just two days later, commented on the details provided by reporter Michael Moore regarding the relations between Eastern Maine Medical Center and St. Joseph Hospital. Moore wrote, "None of this has helped patient care," and while acknowledging the complex, difficult universe of health care administration, urged the community to ask, "how it can end this expensive standoff and how it can protect the quality of care."[332]

Despite the degraded relations between the two hospitals, as Sister Norberta reflected on the year 2001, she wrote, "We have much to be grateful for at St. Joseph Healthcare," and added, "The year was busy, and we experienced growth in most of our service areas. Patient satisfaction ratings were high, and we received numerous letters of thanks for our care and compassion." Laying out the organization's goals for the new year 2002, she said she hoped to maximize resources and noted that planning was in process for relocating some services to 900 Broadway.[333]

Cardiac catheterization lab

The hospital began planning for construction of a cardiac catheterization lab in November of 2001, after Eastern Maine Medical Center (EMMC) dropped its opposition to a three-year-old proposal by St. Joseph's to build it. Department of Human Services Commissioner Kevin Concannon said he quickly approved the $1.5 million project after the two sides announced the end of EMMC's opposition because the service had rapidly become a standard medical procedure. The approval meant that St. Joseph patients would not need to be transported to EMMC for diagnostic catheterizations. Concannon said, "It enhances the level of patient care in the Greater Bangor area," adding that it would be a boon to the region.[334] During the summer of 2002, work began on the cardiac catheterization lab and was scheduled for completion in early 2003. The lab was being built in space where the hospital's general laboratory had been located, the space previously occupied by Dahl-Chase Diagnostic Services, which was moving to EMMC.[335]

Staff and friends marked a medical milestone on Saturday, January 4, 2003, with the blessing and dedication of the hospital's long-awaited cardiac catheterization laboratory. Governor-elect John E. Baldacci and Maine's

auxiliary bishop, Most Rev. Michael R. Cote, cut the ribbon to the new lab, located on the third floor of the hospital on Center Street. As he blessed the laboratory, Bishop Cote prayed for the skill of health-care workers and that "all who come through these doors be treated with kindness and hospitality, with respect and dignity." Baldacci, who was preparing for his inauguration on Wednesday, January 8, recalled that his younger brother, Bangor lawyer Joseph Baldacci, was named after the hospital where his mother gave birth to her eighth child.[336]

About seventy-five people attended the midmorning ceremony, braving a heavy snowstorm outside to witness a jubilant celebration inside. Hospital trustees and staff, including Chaplain Father John J. Austin, joined Kenneth G. Simone, MD, president of the medical staff, and Sister Mary Norberta, president and CEO, who proclaimed the laboratory "a long time in coming" and extended congratulations and appreciation to the community members who helped support and make the event possible. Several physicians attended the open house including Cardiologist Glen Garson, MD, of Northeast Cardiology Associates, who served as medical director for the unit, along with Robert M. Hoffman, MD. Among the honored guests were United States Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins.[337]

The state's newest cardiac catheterization laboratory brought to seventeen the number of such facilities in Maine, spread out over ten hospitals. The St. Joseph Hospital laboratory was funded through a $1.5 million bond the facility took out through the Maine Health and Higher Education Authority. In addition, $200,000 was raised through community donations. Employees at the hospital raised $46,000 toward the project.[338] In late summer 2003, SJH received a generous gift from the Sidney Epstein Family in memory of Helen B. Epstein. Her children said the gift was made "in acknowledgement of the extraordinary care and compassion the entire staff of St. Joseph Hospital showed to our mother, Helen Epstein, during her stay here prior to her death in June of 2000." Their statement continued, "Both the quality of the medical care and the exemplary dedication of the talented nurses allowed our mother to live the final weeks of her life to the fullest extent and with dignity." Her children said, "We believe the Cardiac Catheterization Center enhances the already pivotal role St. Joseph's plays in its mission of bringing excellent medical care to the entire community."[339]

The focus of the new laboratory wing was a $1.1 million Siemens "C-arm" machine, a device that traced the progress of a flexible tube inserted into a blood vessel in the arm or leg and threaded toward the heart to detect blockages and other abnormalities. Testing and diagnosis of vascular conditions could also be done with the machine, including pacemaker and defibrillator implants, radiological procedures, and vascular procedures such as stent implants to open blocked arteries.[340]

At the time of its opening in 2003, the laboratory had eight procedures scheduled in its first week and could perform twenty-five to thirty procedures weekly. Almost immediately, the number of patients far exceeded expectations by performing a total of 605 procedures.[341] The State of the Hospital Report for July 1999-May 2005 noted that cardiologists were happy with the unit and staff, and patients were pleased with the service. By the end of 2004, 404

patients had received heart catheterizations, and 498 additional procedures were performed, including pacemaker and defibrillator insertions.[342]

Sleep Center relocated

Early in March 2003, St. Joseph Hospital's Center for Sleep Medicine, established in 1996, moved to its newly renovated facility at 268 Center Street, formerly the Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education. The Center offered a full range of polysomnography studies that monitored and recorded pulse; breathing, blood pressure, muscle, eye, and body movements; EKG and brain wave activity; the oxygen concentration in the blood; and other vital signs.[343]

The Center's four comfortable, well-appointed patient bedrooms could all be monitored simultaneously. Up to four sleep studies could be performed per night from a central control room, and patients could be observed unobtrusively, using an infrared video camera. Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy could also be delivered to each patient, as necessary. In addition to providing inpatient sleep studies, St. Joseph's Sleep Center also offered home studies using portable monitoring equipment for follow-up testing and for those who were unable to come to the lab for a study. St. Joseph's Sleep Center made a significant contribution to the St. Joseph mission and performed important diagnostic work for people with sleep-related health concerns.[344]

Telemedicine at St. Joseph Healthcare

Over the last few years, St. Joseph Healthcare had engaged in a series of projects that built upon each other and culminated in a state-of-the-art telemedicine system for deploying specialty care throughout northern and eastern Maine. SJH's involvement began in 1999 when the hospital successfully applied for and received a $99,000 grant from the USDA for telemedicine. The money was used to purchase telemedicine and teleconferencing equipment. This grant, along with grants awarded in 2001 and 2002, set the base for establishing The Northern Maine Telemedicine Healthcare Access Improvement Project, funded by another USDA grant of $569,750.[345]

This project sought to improve access to specialty care for underserved Northern Maine patients as well as continuing medical-education opportunities for rural health professionals by leveraging its current telemedicine resources in Northern Maine and expanding to encompass six new rural and two new hub sites. The project built on its existing network while expanding its technical capabilities to offer specialty care to more underserved rural patients by linking new rural sites to the previously established SJH/Maine Health Alliance telemedicine system using high speed broadband. Additionally, the project expanded the system's multimedia applications to enable doctors to conduct virtual visits with patients in real time to explain a diagnosis or treatment plan.[346]

In 2003, the Rural New England Healthcare and Distance Learning Access Improvement Project augmented the 2002 project in managing chronic disease in rural areas and expanded its scope by bringing in new partners in distance learning as well as providing equipment for the beginnings of a teleradiology network. New partners included the American Lung Association of Maine, a provider of education in the chronic disease areas of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and asthma. The second partner, Medical Care

Development, a Maine-based international organization, was involved with mental health as well as housing the Maine Cardiovascular Health Council.[347]

By the beginning of 2003, the management of patient-care information was enhanced at St. Joseph with the implementation of the MIDAS+ Information Management System that integrated widely scattered data on the hospital's network into a single storehouse of information. The consolidation of data enhanced patient care, utilization review, and quality assurance throughout the hospital. Performance Improvement Director Georges Nashan, RN, said, "For the medical staff, MIDAS will mean that we will have a much less labor-intensive system for tracking the care that their patients receive, alerting them to things they may need to be aware of, or care that their patients may possibly need."[348] As Nashan emphasized, patient care was still under the control of the physician, nurses, and other caregivers, who would always make the decision. "MIDAS will provide them with a resource that can help them to make more informed decisions," he said.[349]

Palliative care

St. Joseph Hospital provided an additional dimension to inpatient care with the introduction of a new palliative-care program in mid-2004. The Palliative Care Team comprised a medical director certified in end-of-life care; a team of certified hospice and palliative care nurses; and a licensed social worker. The program also included an interdenominational pastoral-care component. The team addressed issues such as pain control, symptom management and, where appropriate, do not resuscitate (DNR) orders and end-of-life care. The individualized program also included a follow-up contact for patients discharged to their homes without home care. The team members ensured that the patients were doing well, assessed further needs, and contacted their primary physician if further services were needed.[350]

MRI-guided breast biopsy

To complement St. Joseph's mammography and ultrasound in diagnosing and treating breast cancer, the hospital added the first computer-aided Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) detection system in Maine in March 2006. With the arrival of a Suros ATEC vacuum-assisted biopsy system, SJH became the first hospital in Maine to offer minimally invasive, MRI-guided breast biopsy services. Designed to work with the new DynaCAD system installed in November 2005, the system had a wide-ranging set of automatic image-processing features and was the most comprehensive breast MRI analysis tool available.[351] This innovative technology enabled physicians to analyze breast MRI images more precisely for more accurate diagnoses and biopsies. It also provided a way to accurately track chemotherapy results. Breast MRI was used as a diagnostic complement to mammography and ultrasound because it provided an accurate method of detecting cancer and the disease stage.[352]

New CT (Computerized Tomography) technology

Powerful, innovative computerized tomography (CT) technology went online in the St. Joseph Hospital Radiology Department at the end of summer 2006. The new "Sensation 64" CT system from Siemens replaced the scanner that had been in service at the hospital for the previous eight years. According to Siemens literature, the device was the world's fastest and most advanced

64-slice CT system. Scans that previously took several minutes or more to complete could now be done in seconds with unprecedented picture quality. The increased speed of the new scanner enabled it to monitor the progress of contrast dyes in the blood stream, allowing better studies of how blood vessels work. In heart studies, the scanner could freeze motion and allow razor-sharp imaging of even the tiniest cardiac blood vessels. The system's advanced computing power made it particularly useful in orthopedic imaging, allowing it to render three-dimensional images from skin surface down to the bone structure.[353]

Osteoporosis Research

Clifford J. Rosen, MD, director of St. Joseph Healthcare's Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education (MeCORE), announced his groundbreaking research results from an ongoing National Institutes of Health (NIH) osteoporosis study during a press conference on Thursday, September 25, 2003. Dr. Rosen explained that he and Dr. Dennis Black of the University of California at San Francisco thought of the idea for the clinical trial on a ferry ride from Nova Scotia and decided to proceed in the grant-writing process. In 1999, they received a $3.5 million grant from the NIH to pursue an osteoporosis research study with more than one half million dollars funded directly to MeCORE. Dr. Rosen led the clinical trial for this research study.[354]

The study focused on testing the efficacy of combining two powerful anti-osteoporosis drugs that exhibit different mechanisms of action. One drug, alendronate, blocks bone absorption and bone turnover, while the other drug, parathyroid hormone, stimulates bone formation and turnover. The study hypothesized that the concurrent administration of the two drugs would increase bone density more than the use of either alone.[355]

Although the hypothesis was disproved, Rosen believed the findings would have tremendous financial implications for the treatment of osteoporosis. With parathyroid costing $7,000 per year and alendronate costing $700 per year, the cost saving could be immense with future research. Based on these research results, Dr. Rosen resolved to further investigate the efficacy of parathyroid hormone in relation to the frequency of dosage administration during the second phase of this clinical research study.[356]

Moving toward the future

By the mid-1970s, multi-institutional arrangements among healthcare facilities were on the rise, and the days of the completely autonomous, independent hospital were ending. Researchers were flooding the professional journals with articles entitled, "Healthcare delivery: strength in numbers," "Multi-hospital systems: a revolution in healthcare," and "Multi-institutional arrangements: hospitals' move toward systems gains momentum."[357] While hospital administrators recognized that, by themselves, hospital systems were no panacea in dealing with the challenges facing hospitals, they also acknowledged that these arrangements offered more opportunities than problems in coping with the rapid changes facing the health-care industry.

Always working to prepare for the future head-on, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, coordinated a meeting between Sister Mary Norberta and Sister Mary Renetta Rumpz, provincial minister of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province in Livonia, Michigan, which sponsored

St. Mary Hospital in Livonia. During the meeting held in Livonia on February 16, 2004, Sister Norberta and Sister Renetta exchanged information about their respective services, programs and general status. Sister Renetta outlined the negotiations and procedures that the province took to lease the hospital building and property to the Mercy Healthcare System, an option she thought might serve St. Joseph. Sister Renetta was impressed by what she heard about St. Joseph Hospital, and believed it was in a strong negotiating position should it choose to follow the route of St. Mary Hospital.[358]

In mid-September 2004, Felician Services representatives, including Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski, president; Joseph Parrillo, executive vice president; and Gerhard Mahr, executive vice president, met in Chicago, Illinois, with Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, council member, and Sister Mary Norberta. The primary focus of the meeting was to assess the future of St. Joseph's Hospital. After the group reached consensus that in the future St. Joseph's would not be viable as a stand-alone hospital, the group considered whether selling the hospital, preferably to a Catholic entity, or affiliating[359] with another health care entity, again, preferably Catholic, was the appropriate and desirable option.[360]

The group identified the entities that had the right to approve or disapprove the sale of the hospital. The lengthy list included the bishop, the general administration of the Felician Sisters, the provincial council, the Certificate of Need (CON) entity with jurisdiction in the state of Maine, the bond holders of the hospital debt, and the attorney general, as well as limitations, if any, that may be contained in the articles or bylaws of the hospital. The same entities had the right to approve or disapprove an affiliation agreement.[361]

In response to the information presented at the meeting, the sisters immediately began notifying the entities that held the right to approve or disapprove actions regarding St. Joseph Hospital. Sister Norberta scheduled a meeting with Bishop Richard J. Malone to present the case for obtaining approval for the sale of and/or affiliation agreement for the hospital. Sister Laureann contacted Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, to discuss the pros and cons of selling the hospital as opposed to entering into an affiliation agreement. Joseph Kozak, hospital attorney, was asked to respond to the likely reaction to a sale or affiliation by the CON entity, the bond holders, the attorney general, including the transfer of funds, and the hospital articles of incorporation and bylaws. The group decided that once the additional information became available, a determination would be made with respect to whether an affiliation agreement was more desirable to the province compared to an outright sale.[362]

On September 24, 2004, Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial vicar, and Sister Mary Norberta met with Bishop Malone. After Sister Laureann expressed her concerns regarding St. Joseph Hospital as a small, stand-alone hospital, Bishop Malone affirmed his appreciation for the ministry established by the sisters in Bangor and acknowledged an understanding of the difficulties faced by small Catholic hospitals, stating that he would write a letter acknowledging the visit and promising his prayerful support.[363]

Sister Mary Laureann shared pertinent information regarding St. Joseph Hospital with Sister Mary Raymond, minister general. On October 22, Attorney

Kozak presented information regarding State of Maine regulatory and legal issues that would affect the sale or merger of hospitals, citing the severe impact State of Maine regulations could have on St. Joseph Hospital. Following a lengthy discussion with the provincial administration, the FSI team, and Sister Norberta, the group recommended that Attorney Kozak continue to investigate specifics to determine what options exist.[364]

During a meeting at the Enfield provincial house on February 12, 2005, Attorney Kozak reviewed the options for St. Joseph Hospital proposed by the Felician Services, Inc. team with the provincial administration and Sister Norberta. After explaining the State of Maine regulations that would restrict the options the province and the hospital would have in considering the future of St. Joseph Hospital and its affiliates, he recommended continuing affiliation with the Covenant Health System rather than full membership.[365] After reading a letter from Sister Norberta, Sister Mary Clarette, president of Felician Services, Inc. concluded that since there were no special benefits from full membership in the Covenant Health System, FSI agreed that St. Joseph Hospital should maintain associate membership. Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, and the provincial administration agreed with this decision but resolved to continue to communicate with the hospital regarding future planning.[366]

In mid-September 2005, the provincial administration entered into a formal agreement with Felician Services, Inc. to assist the sponsors and the province as consultants/advisors on an ongoing basis with respect to the needs and long-range goals for St. Joseph Hospital and the province. Sister Norberta presented this information to her executive team, and Sister Laureann met with the executive committee prior to the board meeting on September 29. During the board meeting, Sister Clarette explained the role of FSI on behalf of the province.[367] Shortly thereafter, Sister Laureann received an email from Ed Darling, board chair, who presented the board's concerns relating to the terms of the FSI agreement. The hope was that clear communication would allow for preparation and increase the chances for successful changes.[368]

It soon became clear that the idea of change and the transitional process would be neither linear nor swift. In May and July 2006, video conferences took place with FSI and the St. Joseph Hospital Board to discuss concerns regarding the possible affiliation/membership options with Covenant Health Systems.[369] By the end of summer, the St. Joseph Hospital administration appeared ready to pursue further options with Covenant Health Systems.[370] After reviewing the options, FSI made recommendations to SJH and the provincial administration.[371] By mid-September, Sister Norberta and Wayne Woodford, Chief Operating Officer of St. Joseph Healthcare, submitted a report to FSI and the provincial administration addressing valuable and critical information to study and consider before considering further affiliation with Covenant Health System.[372] However, the hospital's leadership—Sister Norberta and the SJH Board—did not fully support membership with CHS. SJH's leaders were divided between the potential benefits of membership for the hospital and its patients, and concern for the cultural change for the organization that this might effect.

The provincial administration discussed the report with FSI and then followed up with the hospital administration.[373] After working together, the provincial leadership sent a letter to Covenant Health System outlining key

concepts and conceptual approaches that would benefit both the Enfield province and St. Joseph Healthcare.[374] Once financial studies were completed, all parties met at the provincial house in Enfield on March 16, 2007, to continue discussion of proposed offers and plans regarding future affiliation of St. Joseph Hospital with Covenant Health Systems.[375]

Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, Making a Difference in Maine

Sister Mary Norberta's clinical experience and dedication to the Catholic health ministry significantly shaped St. Joseph Healthcare and healthcare in the state of Maine. In a continuous effort to provide healthcare services encompassing the healing of the whole person, she made countless inroads and created numerous innovative programs. It should have come as no surprise, then, that when one of a handful of permanent Cabinet positions was still unfilled by Governor John E. Baldacci, three area legislators recommended her for the Department of Human Services leadership. Senator Tom Sawyer, R-Bangor, Representative Joe Perry, D-Bangor, and Rep. Edward Dugay, D-Cherryfield, confirmed their support for her in late February 2003.[376]

Representative Sawyer said he had many occasions to work with Sister Norberta and found her to be "incredibly bright and forthright." Heading the problematic state agency, he said, would "require the wisdom of Solomon . . . and I'd personally trust her to head up just about anything." Representative Perry said Sister Norberta had proved her mettle in dealing with "the 800-pound gorilla next door," referring to the rancorous relationship between Sister Norberta and her administrative counterpart at Eastern Maine Medical Center, Norman Ledwin. He added, "She won't put up with any foolishness, and she'd bring credibility to [DHS] overnight." Dugay said the greatest challenge in retooling DHS was "changing the culture" of the department. Maine residents who received services would see "a huge difference" with Sister Norberta in the commissioner's seat, he predicted.[377]

Baldacci's campaign platform in 2002 included a promise to streamline the Department of Human Services, which had been under fire in recent years for its handling of child protective cases and other programs. The plan included a commitment to wrap DHS together with the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services, which oversaw the delivery of mental health and substance abuse services in Maine. While both agencies were headed by acting commissioners, neither was expected to be considered for leadership of the combined program.[378]

However, in a news release on Friday, March 14, Sister Norberta said that while she was honored to be considered for the commissioner's seat at DHS, she decided she would not pursue the opportunity. She said she was committed to her work in the St. Joseph Healthcare community and hoped to continue to influence health policy through her leadership there.[379]

The following month, on April 22, Penobscot Community Health Care (PCHC) in Bangor dedicated its waiting room in honor of St. Joseph Healthcare President/CEO Sister Mary Norberta. Making the presentation were Rev. Robert Carlson, PCHC President/Board Chairman; Dr. Barbara Vereault, medical director; and Kenneth Schmidt, CEO. Penobscot Community Health Care provided comprehensive, integrated primary health-care services for all to improve the health and wellbeing of its patients and the Maine communities

it served. Its vision for success was a community in which everyone had access to quality, cost-effective health care, where people were empowered to advocate for their personal goals and needs and were supported by community-based resources, and where health encompassed physical and emotional wellness, personal dignity, and a sense of belonging. The St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation supported the organization with financial and material contributions.[380]

The November 2005 issue of *Down East Magazine* ranked Sister Mary Norberta #12 of 150 reasons to "Give Thanks We Live in Maine."[381] In the fall of 2005, she was the focus of an article in the *Tufts University Alumni Magazine* where she earned a degree in civil engineering. At the same time, she received two prestigious awards: the Deborah Morton Award and the Distinguished Citizen Award of the Katahdin Area Council Boy Scouts of America.[382]

On September 26, 2005, the trustees of the University of New England at the Westbrook College campus in Portland, Maine, presented the Deborah Morton Award to Sister Norberta. The purpose of this award was "to honor and recognize outstanding women with strong ties to Maine who, in the spirit of Deborah Morton, have combined high distinction in their careers with a record of public service or whose volunteer leadership in civic, cultural, or social causes has been exceptional."[383] The award, first presented at Westbrook College in 1961, was the first annual award in Maine to honor women's achievements. It was named in memory of Deborah Morton of Round Point, valedictorian of the 1879 class of the Westbrook Seminary, the forerunner of Westbrook College which merged with the University of New England in 1996. Morton was a teacher, dean, linguist, historian, and prominent Portland civic leader whose service to Westbrook College spanned more than sixty years. More than 150 women had received this award since its origin in 1961.[384] Perhaps United States Senator Olympia Snowe captured the persona of Sister Norberta best when, in her letter of congratulations, she wrote, "As President and CEO, Sister Norberta has proven that through determination and meeting every challenge head on, St. Joseph's Healthcare and St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation has expanded to provide medical care to countless individuals."[385]

The Katahdin Area Boy Scout Council presented its award to Sister Norberta at the Bangor Civic Center on November 15. This award acknowledged the spirit of community service and the contribution to the quality of life of others in countless ways.[386]

Sister Norberta's unwavering commitment to excellence, reflected in the dedication of staff to St. Joseph's Hospital and mission, did not go unnoticed. She and Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, vice president of Mission Integration, accepted the Common Good Award for "Living personally and professionally, a commitment to healing and service." The annual award, presented by Linda Godfrey, a representative of the Women of the Commons in Eastport, Maine, on May 26, 2005, recognized people who made an impact in leadership of their community.[387]

On Sunday, April 23, 2006, Sister Mary Norberta received the Excellence in Nursing Leadership Award from the Omicron XI Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International. The award ceremony took place in the Campus Center of Peabody Hall at Husson College in Orono, Maine. This award was given to honor individuals who have contributed to nursing and the ideals of Sigma Theta

Tau International Honor Society. In her letter to Sister Norberta, Ann Sossong, RN, DNSc, and president of Omicron XI Chapter said, "Sister, you have been an inspiration to all of Maine's nurses. You have influenced nursing through your visionary and innovative approaches to leadership as well as enhanced the image of nursing through the creation of a supportive nursing environment. New nurse leaders have been able to develop their own leadership in nursing and in the health care arenas from your mentoring expertise."[388]

Sister Norberta used the occasion of the celebration of her 25 years of service at St. Joseph Hospital on December 21, 2005, to reflect on the blessings she received during those years.

> After 25 years of consecutive service in administration, I am grateful for the opportunity to lead St. Joseph Hospital and for the support of the sisters and my administrative team in doing so. We have achieved many firsts in the healthcare field in Bangor such as the first lithotripter for kidney stones, the first laser surgery for gall bladders and other procedures, the first digital mammography unit. In keeping up with technology, we have not lost sight of the mission which is founded on our values of competence, compassion, and community. The spirit of our foundress is alive and well in Bangor.[389]

On April 26, 2006, Beta Sigma Phi celebrated its 75th anniversary by honoring Sister Mary Norberta as Woman of the Year. Begun in 1931, it was the largest Greek-letter women's organization in the world. The organization was devoted to service, social, and cultural projects of all kinds. Members were women of all ages, from all walks of life and its membership of 165,000 women came from more than twenty countries.[390]

A story in *Bangor Metro Magazine*'s October 2006 edition, entitled "Women in Charge," featured Sister Mary Norberta as CEO of St. Joseph Healthcare since 1982. In addition to chronicling her personal and professional history, the article included anecdotes about her experiences at St. Joseph's over the past twenty-four years. Noting her drive for continual improvement and her fundamental belief and her effort to keep SJH independent, the article provided deeper insight into Sister Norberta as it concluded with a comment by Jim Cassidy, CEO of St. Mary's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston, who said, "A lot of hospital leaders said, 'Look, this is just overwhelming. It's time to merge.' They decided that they just couldn't survive. But that's not Sister Norberta."[391]

A Most Memorable Meeting

An incredible moment for Sister Mary Norberta, and one that made headlines in the *Bangor Daily News*, occurred on Monday, January 9, 2006, when she got a big hug from former President Bill Clinton at Bangor International Airport. The former president's plane—enroute to New York from Paris—had problems, so he was awaiting another plane when Sister Norberta arrived from a meeting in Enfield. As president of St. Joseph Healthcare, Sister Norberta took advantage of the opportunity to bring up the topic of healthcare with Clinton. She said, "I told him that Hillary (Rodham Clinton, then in the United States Senate) was right on target" with her approach to the issue and added that, "We need everybody at the table." Noting his skill as one of our best strategists, she said, "I'd like to see him and Hillary head up some kind of health-care commission for the country."[392]

While at the airport, Clinton helped greet the troops on their way back from Iraq. The former president had joined the Maine Troop Greeters, who were always on hand to welcome returning military personnel. Sister Norberta said she joined in greeting the troops and described it as "a very moving experience. Close to 1400 planes have landed in Bangor to date and been welcomed home by our greeters, regardless of the time of arrival." She explained, "They stop here from Iraq for refueling and then go on to a base in the United States for debriefing. They are anxious to call home and speak to their families."[393]



Former President Bill Clinton greeted the Rev. Bob Carlson and SM Norberta Malinowski while his plane stopped at Bangor International Airport the evening of January 9, 2006. Clinton stayed at the airport longer than planned to join the Maine Iraq Greeters welcoming military personnel returning from Iraq. (Photo by Kevin Bennett/The [Bangor] Weekly)

Sister Norberta's gregarious personality, enthusiasm, and sense of humor made her an engaging and sought after speaker who immediately built connection and rapport with an audience. Early in 2002, local community leaders, who gathered at Merrill Merchants Bank in Bangor for the Community Reinvestment Outreach Committee meeting, listened as Sister Norberta addressed current healthcare changes and those anticipated in the future.[394] At the second annual Economic Prosperity for Everyone Conference held at the Sheraton Hotel in Bangor in May 2003, she once again addressed current healthcare issues and their economic impact on the community.[395] Shortly after, Sister Norberta was among several area healthcare officials participating in a press conference to stimulate public awareness during the first annual "Cover the Uninsured Week."[396] As the guest speaker at Professor Carol Gilmore's business management class at the University of Maine in Orono, she spoke about holding a leadership position in the healthcare field.[397] At the University of Maine's Business School Beta Gamma Sigma induction, she spoke on "Values in Management."[398] But she also frequently spoke about two of her favorite topics: her hobby, photography, and the life and charism of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela.

Each year, St. Joseph Hospital urged employees to nominate their colleagues for the Mother Angela Service Award because "One Life Can Make a

Difference." Sister Norberta's accomplishments stand as evidence that one life can, indeed, make a difference.

First place in patient satisfaction

Since 1982, Sister Norberta continued to shepherd St. Joseph Hospital with dedication, foresight, diligence, and resourcefulness, forging it into a leader in high-quality care. In April 2003, Avatar International, Inc., presented St. Joseph Hospital with an award for having the highest patient satisfaction scores in Avatar's national database for 2002. This medical research, consulting, and training firm conducted random patient satisfaction surveys for hospitals nationwide after discharge from the hospital. Survey questions pertained to all aspects of the hospital stay, including the level of respect shown by staff members, care the patient received, and friendliness of the staff as well as the admission process, meals, and billing procedures. Avatar calculated the results quarterly with patients, using the services providing the data. Hospitals were classified depending on their bed size. St. Joseph Hospital patients had higher expectations than any other hospital in the country within the 100-150 bed size classification.[399]

Sister Norberta said, "I can't tell you how excited and pleased we were with the National Award from Avatar for hospitals in our size category in Patient Satisfaction."[400] She praised SJH's dedicated employees, acknowledging that, "because of each employee's commitment to our mission and values, we are able to provide extraordinary care to those who come to us."[401]

In 2004, the hospital received Avatar's Five Star Service for exceeding Patient Expectations for 2003. "This award just reinforces our commitment to these goals and clearly tells us that we are fulfilling our mission and fulfilling the needs of our community members," she said. "Our employees deserve a tremendous amount of credit for this accomplishment."[402]

Based on results of the hospital's 2005 inpatient-care patient surveys, Avatar awarded SJH its national award for being the Best Performer in Inpatient Care in 2006. Dr. Michael Everett, Avatar founder and CEO, said, "St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine and its staff are to be applauded for being a top performer. It is a remarkable achievement to be the best performer in inpatient care in the United States." Sister Norberta said, "It takes continual teamwork and monitoring to make sure that we are all giving our best every day and is right in line with our values of Compassion, Competence, and Community."[403]

When St. Joseph Hospital was recognized by Avatar as a leader in service quality for the fourth time in a five-year period in 2006, Sister Norberta once again shared the recognition with the St. Joseph Healthcare Community. She said, "This national recognition should make each one of you proud to be part of St. Joseph Hospital. It is your hard work, commitment, and dedication to patient care that our patients recognize. Thank you for doing your part." The Five Star Service Award that SJH received was one of the highest honors bestowed upon a healthcare organization.[404]

SJH-A Tier 1 Preferred Hospital

Early in 2007, St. Joseph Hospital received notification of its inclusion on the list of Tier 1 Preferred Hospitals, joining 22 Maine hospitals with this distinction. To become Tier 1 Preferred, a hospital must have met three criteria: submitting the 2006 Leapfrog patient-safety survey data, achieving

the benchmark score on the Maine Health Management Coalition's patient medication-safety survey, and receiving a requisite score in measured clinical data submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.[405]

Celebrating Sixty Years of Service

The seven Felician Sisters in the Bangor community joined hundreds of patrons on March 18, 2007, as St. Joseph Hospital officially began its year-long celebration of the 60th Anniversary with a Mass at St. Mary's Church in Bangor. Most Reverend Richard Malone, bishop of Portland, celebrated the Mass in honor of St. Joseph Hospital and the founding sisters.[406] Concelebrants included Father Roland Nadeau, chaplain at SJH; Father Thomas Lequin, S.J., pastor, St. Mary's; Father John J. Austin, former hospital chaplain; and Monsignor Marc B. Caron, chancellor of the Diocese of Portland. Bishop Malone expressed appreciation to Sister Norberta for her many years of service and leadership to the hospital as well as to the Bangor community. The choir of St. Mary's provided music for the liturgy.[407]



Sisters from the Bangor community gather with Bishop Richard J. Malone following the Mass that opened the 60th anniversary celebration. From l: SM Edith St. Jean, S Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, SM Romuald Bednarczyk, SM Fabian Cymes, SM Norberta Malinowski, SM Thomas Lesniak, SM Edmund Dzienkowski.

Felician Sisters in attendance were Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, Sister Mary Edmund Dzienkowski, Sister Mary Fabian Cymes, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, and Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak. A reception followed the Mass in St. Mary's parish hall. Employees, board members, legislators including Senator Susan Collins and Congressman Michael Michaud, members of the medical staff and hospital administrative team, and members of the Bangor community gathered to share in the gala event and honor the sisters for six decades of service at St. Joseph Hospital.[408]

Reflecting on the hospital's sixty years, Sister Norberta said, "It is truly amazing to look back at the growing pains of the hospital and see where we started and where we are at currently. We have the problem of not having enough space for our programs and physicians, which is a good problem or



Friends and patrons of St. Joseph Hospital joined the sisters for the 60th Anniversary Eucharistic Liturgy. From l: SM Fabian Cymes, SM Edmund Dzienkowski, SM Romuald Bednarczyk, SM Edith St. Jean, SM Norberta Malinowski.

opportunity to have. We are in the process of revising our strategic plan for the next three years."[409]

Other events celebrating the 60th anniversary included a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon and Recognition in February attended by seventy volunteers. The 60th Anniversary Dinner-Dance for the medical staff drew close to 100 attendees. On May 16, 59 long-term employees, with five to thirty-five years of service, were recognized. The highlight of the day was a PowerPoint presentation that captured employees at work and at play.[410] An Open House on June 1 welcomed members of the local community. Guests visited the operating rooms, emergency room, cardiac catheterization rooms and other sites in the hospital and the outpatient facilities located at the 900 Broadway complex. Staff were on hand to offer tours and explain services.[411]

THE ENFIELD MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Enrollment at the Enfield Montessori School (EMS) remained stable for the years between 1995-2001, ranging from a high of 124 to a low of 110. While adequate classroom space was available, EMS experienced stress in its shared space and had no cafeteria or gym. School Director Sister Mary Anastasia Holak dreamed of an all-purpose room, a library, a warming kitchen, offices, bathrooms, and storage space, so near the end of 2001, she began discussions concerning an addition to the school with an interested group of parents and Jon Brayshaw, architect.[412] Just two weeks later, Brayshaw presented an outline of the phases of this project to the members of the Capital Campaign

Committee,[413] and in mid-January, displayed five architectural sketches of the proposed addition.[414]

To move the project forward, on May 22, 2002, Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, EMS Director Sister Mary Anastasia Holak, and Architect Jon Brayshaw attended a meeting with the Enfield Historic Society Board.[415] The Enfield Historic District encompasses a two-mile stretch of Enfield Street and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. To protect the physical character of the district, the Historic District Commission (HDC) was established by an ordinance adopted by the Enfield Town Council on July 17, 1972, and was revised on June 6, 1983.[416]

Historic District Guidelines

The HDC reviewed only exterior alterations to properties within the Enfield Historic District and provided protection and a degree of oversight over the exterior architectural character of the buildings in the district. If a property owner or tenant planned to undertake any alterations or additions to the exterior of properties that were visible from a public street, way, or place within the historic district, including new construction, the ordinance required that the plans be submitted to the Town for the review of the HDC.

The HDC required that owners and tenants within the Enfield Historic District consult with the commission so that all results would be in harmony with the general historic and architectural character of the district. The historic district extends east and west from the state highway markers to the rear of the property lines of the properties located on either side of Enfield Street, but "in no event more than 250 feet" from those markers.[417]

After Brayshaw presented the plans for the Montessori School building expansion during the May 22, 2002, meeting, Anthony and Lillian Troiano, the school's neighbors to the north, contested the size of the projected fifty-three-car parking lot. Esta Clarke, a neighbor to the south, said she thought the school added a certain charm to the neighborhood, but added, "I feel that this charm would be in jeopardy if we were to allow this parking lot as it stands." Although the addition itself would not sit within the town's historic district, the school needed a Certificate of Appropriateness from the commission to construct the new parking lot that included fifty-three regular spaces and two handicapped spaces, driveway areas, sidewalks, and other exterior site improvements.[418]

Historically, parking had been problematic at the school because fifty percent of the school's student body came from surrounding towns. Although there was paved parking for six cars adjacent to the brown building, parents lining up to drop off and pick up their children had been parking for many years on a grassy area located to the south of the white building, an area that had been covered over with gravel in 1992 to make it more stable for use in inclement weather. Although the addition of the gravel parking area somewhat alleviated problems caused by traffic overflowing onto Enfield Street, Stephen Mitchell, a traffic engineering consultant for Connecticut, noted that the existing parking area remained troubled because it was "poorly defined," and was crowded and blocked by the school vans and cars that needed to make multiple turns and maneuvers to exit the site. [419]

Before the EMS Board would consider approval of the expansion, the board members individually visited the proposed site and found that the proposed

addition was not within the 250 feet of the historical landmark.[420] Some commission members suggested different configurations for the addition and the parking lot. Vice Chairman F. Russell Meyer advised detaching the building from the main school, and using a covered walkway to connect the structures, to make room for parking space elsewhere on the property. "If we reject what you have, then you have to look at alternate plans," he said.[421]

At the second meeting held on Wednesday, June 26, 2002, commission members voted unanimously to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness and suggested moving the scaled down thirty-seven-space parking lot from the front of the building to its rear, or reconfiguring the addition so the parking lot would not be built within the historic district. EMS School Director Sister Anastasia contended that placing the parking lot anywhere other than the front of the building could compromise the safety of the children arriving and leaving daily. "Because all of the hallways and entrances to the classrooms are in the front [of the building], that is where the supervision is going to be available for the children," she said.[422]

Anthony Troiano Jr. again spoke against the application, saying it "has not been thought out very well," as the building would likely need to meet additional requirements when it went before the town's Planning and Zoning Commission and that it would depreciate the value of his property. "As you expand the use, there are new requirements and new regulations," he said. His wife, Lillian, an alternate member of the Historic District Commission, recused herself from the discussion.[423]

Research on the ordinance of the Enfield Historical Society discovered that parking lots were not within its scope. Hence, the actions taken regarding the EMS projected parking lot were considered null and void.[424] After receiving Attorney Dominic J. Ferraina's letter regarding this issue, the Town claimed it was within its jurisdiction to control parking lots within the historic district. Nevertheless, the EMS Executive Board met and decided to cut back on its plan by 1000 square feet.[425] During the meeting of the Enfield Historic Commission on June 26, 2002, Jon Brayshaw explained the reworked site plans and the proposed redesigned area with its reduction of parking spaces, but the Historic District Commission still found it unacceptable.[426]

At a press conference on October 16, 2002, a week before the next meeting with the Historic District Commission, Vice Chairman Meyer insisted that although the commission voted unanimously against the school's initial proposal, that did not mean it would vote "no" again. He claimed that commission members had not discussed the proposal among themselves since September, and he did not know how they would vote on October 23. "We're gonna go in there with the same open mind that we had from the very first presentation, trying to make the best decision for the town of Enfield," he said.[427]

Sister Anastasia responded, "The space is limited, and we have used up every square millimeter. Right now, school meetings, cultural events, and parent meetings entail moving and piling tables and chairs, standing together packed tightly in a room . . . and then rearranging the class when we are done." She said she felt the school had accommodated the commission's concerns by

revising the plans three times and said the commission was giving them "the runaround" and stalling an addition that the approximately 120 students at the school deserved.[428]

In a letter to the editor of the *Hartford Courant* that was published in the October 18 edition, Sister Anastasia said the school would go ahead with the addition even if permission for the parking area was denied. She pointed out that the Enfield Street School, also in the historic district, had a large parking area in front of the school, "completely exposed and visible from Enfield Street," and asked why EMS was being denied a "barely visible, needed parking area" that would "ensure the safety of the children."[429]

Historic Commission Again Rejects EMS Plan

EMS's proposed expansion requiring more parking—now further scaled down to seventeen spots—and more blacktop, was not something the Enfield Historic District Commission wanted to see, so at its meeting on Wednesday evening, October 23, 2002, it again voted down the school's latest plan for expansion following a two-hour hearing. Dozens of parents had crowded into the town hall in support of the project that they said would enhance the historic district by moving the school's parking area out of sight and replacing a gravel lot with grass. They also spoke of the need to bring the sixty-year-old building up to modern standards. Catherine MacKinnon Hurlburt, an Enfield resident whose daughter attended the school, said, "A little red schoolhouse is quaint but who wants to send their child to one nowadays?"[430]

While EMS had no plans to add more students above its current enrollment of 120, Troiano said he was worried about the potential for more growth. "I'm for education but this location is maxed out,"[431] and he suggested that the school be relocated onto the provincial house grounds. "If you wish the school to grow as it has in the past, the most sensible thing to do is find another location out of this Historic District to build a brand-new beautiful school. Or do the most obvious thing. Use the empty buildings across the street owned by the Felician Sisters."[432]

Several Montessori School Board members asked to visit the Enfield Day Care Center to determine the feasibility of housing the Montessori School in the former Our Lady of the Angels Academy/Longview Catholic High School building.[433] Shortly after, on December 15, 2002, four EMS board members joined Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Mary Anastasia, and Sister Francine Mary Sousa for a tour of the building. They noted the neglected condition of the building and decided that in addition to extensive costly renovations that would need to be undertaken, the area was too large for the Montessori School, which would not use the entire building for its purposes.[434] The matter continued to be a concern for both the Montessori School as well as the provincial leadership team.

Meanwhile, the *Hartford Courant* published an op-ed piece supporting the Enfield Historic District Commission's decision that "rejected plans for an ugly, asphalt school parking lot adjacent to two of the oldest houses in the town and in the heart of the historic district." The writer argued that "Alternatives, such as parking across the street at the Felician Sisters' property, need more serious consideration." The article concluded that, "Maintaining the authenticity of a

historic district requires sensitive decisions to halt the damaging encroachment of modern changes."[435]

Prior to the February 2003 meeting of the Enfield Montessori School Board, Sister Mary Anastasia had met with Enfield Fire Marshal Edward Shirley, who claimed that the EMS driveway access was a safety hazard and recommended a larger turn-around area. This further bolstered the school's case regarding updating the driveway and parking area.[436]

After several denials, but still hoping to achieve successful resolution of this conflict, the Felician Sisters of St. Francis of Connecticut, Inc., early in 2004, retained Kenneth R. Slater, Jr., partner at Halloran & Sage, whose expertise was in matters involving land use, real estate, and civil litigation, to represent the Enfield Montessori School.[437] Mr. Slater's first action was to present an affidavit to the Town of Enfield proving the school's legal existence and justifying the need for improving the parking area for safety and emergency reasons.[438] Following a public hearing on July 28, 2004, the five members of the Enfield Historic District Commission voted unanimously to deny the Enfield Montessori School's application on the grounds that it did not qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness because the added pavement diminished the historic character of the property and the surrounding area.[439]

EMS seeks reversal of decision

Following the Historic District's decision, the key stakeholders met on August 6, 2004, to outline a plan of action. Felicians' attorney Kenneth Slater, Architect Jon Brayshaw, and EMS Board Chair Dan O'Connell, along with Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, and Sister Mary Anastasia, recommended that Mr. Slater prepare a brief to be filed with the Probate Court of Connecticut and to meet with Maria Stavropoulos, senior assistant town attorney, to try to move forward.[440] The lawsuit filed on August 13 in Hartford Superior Court sought a reversal of the Enfield Historic District Commission's decision and charged that in denying the new proposed lot, the commission did not provide adequate reasons for the decision and acted in abuse of its discretion.[441]

In mid-December 2004, Enfield's Zoning Enforcement Officer (ZEO), Wayne T. Bickley, issued an order to the Felician Sisters and the Montessori School, ordering them to cease and desist from "all activities and uses which are contrary to the regulations contained in the Zoning Ordinance of the Town of Enfield." The order claimed that a gravel parking area was constructed at the property without Planning Zoning Commission approval. More specifically, the Montessori School was ordered to secure Planning Zoning Commission approval or remove the gravel parking area. The school was given ten days to address this order.[442]

On or about January 14, 2005, Attorney Ken Slater filed a notice of appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) for the Felician Sisters and the Enfield Montessori School. At its January 31 meeting, after hearing testimony from many witnesses in support of the school, the Enfield Zoning Board of Appeals overturned the cease-and-desist order handed down in December by ZEO Bickley. Mr. Slater told the *Journal-Inquirer* that the gravel lot was the school's main parking lot and if the cease-and-desist order had been upheld by the ZBA,

the school would have had a crippling lack of parking. "That threatened the existence of the school," he said.[443]

ZBA Chairman Peter Yarum said that all the testimony from the many witnesses who spoke at the meeting provided proof that the parking lot was not in violation of any planning and zoning violations. When issuing the cease-and-desist order, Yarum explained, Bickley had used a site plan from 1974 that did not show the parking lot which, according to witnesses, had been there since the school opened in the 1940s.[444]

Aggrieved by the decision of the ZBA, the Planning and Zoning Commission sued the Zoning Board of Appeals two weeks later, contending that it was the only entity that could approve the parking lot. In its lawsuit, the commission asked the court to reinstate Bickley's cease-and-desist order and not allow use of the parking lot unless the commission approved it.[445]

The Felician Sisters' lawsuit against the town was still waiting to be heard in court and Slater speculated that it would be heard in the spring or summer. In June 2005, Slater met with Judge Beatrice Isabelle in Hartford, who suggested that the issue of the Montessori School parking lot be settled outside of court using arbitration. After Slater pursued the matter with the lawyer for the Town of Enfield,[446] they agreed to approach the Planning & Zoning Commission regarding approval of the existing and proposed site for the Montessori School's parking area.[447]

Superior court dismisses appeal

While the complications with the two town-zoning boards were playing out, the lawsuit filed with the Hartford Superior Court in August 2004 came to trial on February 15, 2006. On that day, Sister Mary Laureann, members of the provincial council, Sister Mary Anastasia, EMS Director Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and EMS Teacher Sister Carol Marie Saladin, along with several sisters from the provincial house and local convents, attended the court trial at the Connecticut Superior Court in Hartford. Kenneth Slater represented the Felician Sisters in the matter of *The Felician Sisters of St. Francis of Connecticut, Inc., et al v. Enfield Historic District Commission* regarding the legality of the Enfield Montessori School parking lot.[448] Following presentations by attorneys for both sides, the judge announced that a ruling would be forthcoming within four to six months.[449]

The sisters were in court on April 21 for *Felician Sisters v. Enfield Historic District Commission* when Samuel Freed, judge trial referee, upheld the Enfield Historic District Commission's decision. "The first issue before the court was whether the statute authorizing a historic commission to issue certificates of appropriateness required an elementary school located in a historic district to obtain a certificate of appropriateness." Freed said that it did, noting that "the plaintiffs are not exempt from the constraints of the statute." The second issue was whether the Commission acted illegally, arbitrarily, and in abuse of its discretion in denying the plaintiffs' application. Again, the trial court found the Historic District "well within their authority to deny the plaintiffs' application," and rendered judgment summarily dismissing the Felician Sisters' administrative appeal. State law gives historic district commissions authority over "industrial, commercial, business, home industry or occupational parking." The main issue in the case was whether that language included schools. Freed

ruled that it did, describing the language as "very broad so as to cover any type of enterprise or occupation." The school appealed Freed's decision to the Appellate Court, but the Supreme Court took the case instead, apparently because it presented legal issues not previously decided.[450]

Still determined to win their case, parents and sisters met to plan a writing campaign to "Protect Our School." Strategies included talking to Enfield residents, handing out fliers, and contacting politicians to support the school's need for new parking.[451] Early in August, Mr. Slater notified the Felician Sisters that a court trial involving discussion on the Enfield Montessori School parking lot was calendared for September 11, 2006, at 10 a.m. in Hartford Superior Court. Slater encouraged the sisters to be present to hear *The Enfield Planning and Zoning Commission et al v. the Enfield Zoning Board of Appeals.*[452]

Enfield v. Enfield

Sister Francine Mary, Sister Mary Anastasia, several other Felician Sisters, and some parents were present for the hearing rescheduled for September 12.[453] The docket read *Enfield v. Enfield* as the town boards faced off over the dispute about the EMS parking lot. Matthew J. Willis, attorney for the PZC and zoning enforcement officer, argued that by putting down the gravel, the school changed the use of the grassy area. That change required a permit, he argued. "It comes down to the integrity of the zoning regulations." The school claimed it had used that area as a parking lot for nearly fifty years—before the special permit regulations were established—and graveling it was a matter of maintenance, which they said did not require a permit.

The sisters and their attorney Kenneth Slater said they considered the issue, which was raised more than ten years after the graveling was completed, a threat to the school's existence. Slater said, "It's apparent to me that the motivation in this dispute cannot arise from the simple displacement of gravel on a parking area fourteen years ago," and added, "The actual motivation doesn't always appear on the record of the zoning hearing." Sister Francine Mary asked, "How do you bring young children into the area without parents getting out of the car to walk them out?" After hearing from lawyers on all sides, Judge Richard M. Rittenband did not rule in the case, and the school continued to use the gravel lot. But Sister Francine said she feared that if the school lost the suit, it would create an unsafe traffic situation. "It is a threat to the school because it is a threat to the children."[454]

In his fifteen-page decision against the Planning and Zoning Commission on September 26, Judge Rittenband wrote, "This is not a complex case." (Docket No. CV 05-4008771) He said the court could not find that the ZBA acted "unreasonably, illegally, arbitrarily, or in abuse of its discretion." He wrote, "The court also found that the ZBA made an honest judgment, which was reasonably and fairly exercised." He continued, "There are no regulations requiring site plan or special permit approval to maintain and use an existing area. The parking lot of the defendants does not have new or expanded parking area. Suffice it to say that the existing unpaved area does not require a special permit." Consequently, Rittenband dismissed the lawsuit. According to the ruling, the Enfield Montessori School could use its gravel parking lot along Route 5, Enfield Street.[455]

PZC Chairman Anthony DiPace said that the commission would discuss how to move forward at its meeting on October 5 or at a special meeting. He said those discussions would take place in executive session, adding that he wanted to ensure that Rittenband's decision was not made from sympathy, but was based on zoning regulations or precedent that had been set in previous cases. Slater said he hoped school officials could now concentrate on educating their students. "Hopefully this will be the end."[456]

Both children and the sisters at the Montessori School celebrated on Wednesday upon hearing about Rittenband's decision, according to Sister Mary Anastasia. She said, "We are delighted," adding, "This has been a very serious concern. We need to do something about the safety issue. With our hands tied, we couldn't go backward or forward." And as parents and students arrived at the school on Thursday, they were greeted by a sign that read, "Nuns Won."[457]

However, legal issues involving the school's parking situation were not settled. The Felician Sisters were appealing the Hartford Superior Court ruling that upheld the Historic District Commission's denial of a proposed new parking lot at the school. The sisters wanted to eliminate the gravel parking lot at the front of their Enfield Street property and expand a paved lot at the back of the property. That appeal was pending in the state Appellate Court in Hartford. To gain support for their cause, the sisters planned to go ahead with a rally on the Town Green on Monday, October 16.[458]

Rally on the Town Green

More than 200 supporters, including Felician Sisters, Little Sisters of the Poor from St. Joseph's Residence in Enfield, parents, alumni, and students crowded the Town Green on Monday evening, October 16, 2006, praying peacefully. Several carried signs reading, "SAVE OUR SCHOOL." When the doors to the council room opened, the crowd packed the room. Sister Mary Anastasia was the first to speak, expressing gratitude to the council members for their interest, asserting that, "We come in peace. We also like you to know we come with determination." Sister Francine Mary enumerated the numerous large, blacktop parking areas in the neighborhood, and wondered aloud about why EMS was being held to a different standard from other properties on Enfield Street. Sister Carol Marie Saladin said the school wanted to work with the town to address the need to improve its parking lot. "We would be happy to work with an individual or individuals to better facilitate this," she said.

After many people spoke on the school's behalf, Mayor Patrick L. Tallarita said, "I don't think there is a person up here who is happy about what happened to the Montessori."[459] The *Journal-Inquirer* reported that Tallarita said he supported the decision not to appeal Rittenband's decision. "I think that's the right direction for the commission to head in. This was a very divisive issue. We need to move on to things that unite us instead of divide us." The Town Manager was commissioned to investigate how the matter could be resolved amicably.[460]

As a follow up to the promise of help from the Town Council, Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Francine Mary, Sister Mary Anastasia, and Sister Carol Marie met with Town Manager Matthew Coppler, along with Kelly Kasheta, EMS parent, and Brendan Begley on November 2, 2006. After touring the annex, the need to expand EMS's physical plant was evident to Coppler. He requested

the history of the problems regarding the EMS driveway and parking lot for a meeting with his staff to discuss the facts and needs. Town Council Member Kenneth Hilinski met with the same group on November 21 to learn more about the school's needs and to see how he could be of help.[461]

On his return visit on November 27, Coppler reported that EMS neighbors Anthony and Lillian Troiano were "the most serious issue" in their expansion plan. He said they perceived the physical addition to the annex as less of a problem than the driveway. Coppler suggested that the school consider what is essential for the addition and contact Architect Jon Brayshaw regarding modifying the driveway and decreasing its size now that the front parking lot had been upheld as legal.[462]

Sister Francine followed up with Brayshaw regarding downsizing the original plan for the EMS addition,[463] and things seemed to be moving along until the spring of 2007 when former Democratic Town Chairman Jack Mancuso, whose son and daughter attended EMS, filed complaints with state and federal prosecutors over what he considered "unfounded" zoning action that the town had taken over parking at the Enfield Montessori School.[464] He said, "All I know is that what is being done to the sisters is wrong, and it is being led by the mayor."

Mayor Tallarita vigorously disputed that he had anything to do with the zoning actions at issue. Unfortunately, Tallarita was at the center of an investigation by the chief state's attorney's office. According to the *Journal-Inquirer,* Tallarita's critics suggested that the mayor was part of a land grab, either to gain access through the Felician Sisters property to landlocked property behind it or even to buy land belonging to the sisters. They further suggested that actions taken against the Montessori School by the Planning and Zoning Commission on parking issues were part of a campaign of harassment designed to achieve those goals. Tallarita said that his family's only real estate in the area was his wife's partnership in a two-lot subdivision in the Yale Court area that had been developed and sold. Jeanette Tallarita owned the property with Diane Frederick. He maintained that the property was neither landlocked nor abutting the Montessori School and that development of the lots required installation only of a common driveway, not a street. Further, Tallarita stated that neither he, his wife, nor Frederick had ever approached the Felician Sisters about acquiring any of their land.[465]

State Supreme Court Hears Arguments

On Friday, September 21, 2007, the state Supreme Court heard arguments in Hartford in the Felician Sisters' dispute with the Enfield Historic District Commission over its plan to reconfigure the Enfield Montessori School's parking lot. Listening to the arguments were Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers and Justices Flemming L. Norcott Jr., Richard N. Palmer, Christine S. Vertefeuille, and Peter N. Zarella. Kenneth R. Slater, Jr., represented the Felician Sisters. Senior Assistant Town Attorney Maria Stavropoulos Elsden argued the case for the Enfield Historic District Commission and Joshua Hawks-Ladds represented the school's next-door neighbors, the Troianos.[466]

In his legal brief, Slater said "it is obvious that the term occupational parking was intended as one of several types of parking that could be associated with business and industry." During his oral argument, he told the justices,

"No one would look at an elementary school and say, 'That is a business' or 'That is commerce.'" But in her brief, Elsden wrote, "Regardless of whether the Montessori School Inc. operates for profit, it is a business registered with the secretary of state. Moreover, the parking lot in question is part of a revenue-generating concern which would qualify it as either commercial or business parking, thus placing it squarely within the statute."[467]

Among Slater's claims was that even if the Historic District Commission did have jurisdiction over the school's parking, it abused its authority by rejecting the plan. "The Historic District Commission's decision to deny a plan that would improve the safe operation of the school while improving the historic character of the site is a study in arbitrary and capricious decision making," he wrote. But Elsden argued that the commission based its decision on the factors set forth in state law. In his decision the previous year, Connecticut Superior Court judge Samuel Freed agreed that the commission "had before it ample evidence that the additional parking and driveway were not appropriate for the historic district."[468]

Court Rules in Favor of EMS

On Monday, December 24, 2007, the Connecticut State Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Enfield Montessori School, stating the trial court abused its discretion denying the school's application for a certificate of appropriateness, thus approving the school's plan to replace a gravel parking area on their property with a newly constructed blacktop driveway and parking lot. The headline in the December 25, 2007, edition of the *Journal-Inquirer* dubbed the good news 'a nice Christmas present.' With the new ruling, the school planned to clear off the gravel lot and landscape the area with trees and grass and, according to Sister Francine, was continuing to plan on constructing its much-needed all-purpose room.[469]

The heated legal entanglement focused on whether historic district commissions had authority over school parking issues. State law says historic district commissions had jurisdiction over "industrial, commercial, business, home industry or occupational parking." The Supreme Court decided that schools fit under "occupational" establishments, broadening those commissions' authority. Despite that, the court ruled against the Enfield commission, noting that there was not substantial evidence in denying the school's plan. For instance, the court found the commission wrongly believed the school would increase its parking space when it would actually decrease, thanks to landscaping over the gravel area of the lot. The court also found that although the parking spaces would be closer to adjacent buildings, the vehicles would be less visible from historic Enfield Street, balancing out those factors. Finally, the court found that the commission improperly relied on comments from two nearby landowners, whose statements lacked factual support or were irrelevant.[470]

FELICIAN ADULT DAY CARE

The Felician Adult Day Care (FADC), whose motto was "Sharing the Caring," continued to offer a safe and engaging environment for older adults. The center provided a structured setting in which frail or chronically impaired seniors and disabled adults could safely participate. The program provided stability and consistency in the lives of participants and their families. In fact, families

frequently told Director Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso that they had peace of mind while their mother or father was at the center and expressed gratitude for the support and respite it afforded them as caregivers while acknowledging the calming influence it provided for their family life. The clients themselves referred to the FADC as "my home away from home."

Through mentally and physically stimulating activities, the program enhanced the clients' quality of life and increased their independence. Music frequently accompanied group activities, including arts and crafts, or clients enjoyed live music and dance performances, as well as fitness and exercise, and celebrations of special events like holidays and birthdays. FADC also provided field trips, nutritious meals and snacks, and transportation to and from the center.[471]

While the center began as a medical model, in 2002, it became certified to operate as a medical model adult day center, enabling it to provide more hands-on medical care including health screenings, nursing services, and medication management. The program also offered podiatry and beautician services.[472]

Each September, Sister Patricia took advantage of National Adult Day Care Week to raise awareness of the availability and accessibility of FADC and to showcase the programs meeting the needs and enhancing the lives of the clients through the services offered. Dignitaries from the State of Connecticut and Town of Enfield, Felician Sisters, caregivers, and friends were on hand to celebrate the week with an Open House, celebration of the Eucharist, special events, and a celebratory meal.[473]

In 2004, public access television, COX Channel 15, highlighted the FADC program on Monday, September 27, and October 4. Hosted by Chris Casey of Chris Casey Concepts Marketing Solutions, the program featured Director Sister Patricia Marie, Terrance Kuzman, executive director of Parkway Pavilion in Enfield and a board member of the Felician Adult Day Care, and Mary Lou Romano, family member of an FADC client.[474]

Earlier that year, Father John Gatzak, executive director, Archdiocesan Office of Radio and Television, visited the center. The crew filmed several activities involving the clients, staff, and volunteers for a segment of *Crossroads Magazine.* The "Good News" magazine-style program broadcast every other Sunday focused on the good things that were going on in neighborhoods around the archdiocese and the people who were making them happen. While it was ecumenical in nature, *Crossroads* maintained a Catholic perspective, with priority given to church events on a diocesan and local parish level. It was designed to inform, enlighten, educate, and entertain. An episode featuring Easter activities at FADC aired on Palm Sunday, April 4, on WTXX, Channel 20, and again on Easter Monday, April 5.[475] Sister Patricia said the archdiocesan Office of Radio and Television was a faithful promoter of the care-center's program and one of its best forms of public relations.[476]

One of Sister Patricia's most memorable experiences from her ministry at Felician Adult Day Care involved American journalist and author Maria Shriver. With special insight derived from her own father's struggle with Alzheimer's, Shriver wrote a children's book offering a touching and optimistic story about the disease in 2004. Titled *What's Happening to Grandpa?* the book encouraged awareness, acceptance, and dialogue among family and friends. After watching a post-publication television interview, Sister Patricia wrote to Shriver,

commending her for her interest in and acceptance of the disease. On May 21, Holly Mann, Shriver's administrative assistant, telephoned Sister Patricia and, speaking for Shriver, commended the FADC staff and volunteers for all they were doing to maintain the dignity of their Alzheimer's clients while providing quality care. She said Shriver hoped to visit the center someday. Additionally, Shriver sent the FADC an autographed copy of her book which Sister Patricia recommended to all caregivers.[477]

Funding, while critical to strengthen the center's infrastructure and assure long-term viability, continued to be a challenge. Grants, fundraisers, annual appeals, memorial gifts, donations, as well as contributions from local companies and corporations helped defray the center's operating costs. To expand financial support, Sister Patricia hired a director of development. Working together for FADC, Sister Patricia and Mary Josephine Guerriero formed relationships with local organizations, especially the Enfield Rotary Club and the North Central Connecticut Chamber of Commerce, both of which offered assistance and support. In turn, these groups gained the support of various businesses and corporations in Enfield and the surrounding towns for FADC.[478]

Other assistance came in the form of direct gifts. Immediately following the Thanksgiving holiday in 2006, the center received $49,000 in state funds to purchase a new handicapped-accessible van to replace the facility's old vehicle. When State Senator John A. Kissel, R-Enfield, who secured the funding, presented the check to Sister Patricia, she said, "Everyone at the day care appreciates this wonderful gift from the state, which will help so many of our clients." Approximately fifteen to twenty seniors were transported from their homes to the facility each day.[479]



S Patricia Marie Iagrosso, director of the Felician Adult Day Care in Enfield, accepts a check from Connecticut State Senator John A Kissel to purchase a handicapped-accessible van for the center. At right is Terry Kuzman, member of the FADC Board of Directors.

To enable the center to become a more self-sustaining and financially secure program, FADC announced its endowment-fund campaign during its annual "Snowflake Raffle" event in January 2002. The campaign was designed to run through May and had a goal of $250,000. When an anonymous donor made a commitment of $25,000 to the fund, the FADC Board named it the Robert B. Berger Endowment Fund. Berger, a respected attorney who had a distinguished legal career in Enfield for many years, was a strong supporter of the Felician Sisters, the province attorney, and a longtime FADC Board member and advocate of the program.[480]

Young help for FADC

Even Enfield's youngest residents became involved with supporting the center. A month after 9/11, a young St. Bernard School student made a very big sacrifice for her sixth birthday. As a result of guidance from her parents who instilled in their daughter a strong sense of generosity, she decided that guests invited to the party celebrating her birthday would bring a gift for a client at FADC. Sister Patricia said, "It was like Christmas in the fall for some special people," adding that, "It is good to know that there is love for others in the heart of at least one young girl in Enfield."[481] A fifth grader at St. Bernard School suggested to her classmates that they give up their Christmas grab bag gifts and instead donate the money to FADC. The student, who volunteered her service at the center during the summer, proudly handed Sister Patricia their gift of $130.[482]

The Felician Adult Day Care was blessed with volunteers. In the spring of 2002, a group of good-hearted people, organized by the social justice committee of St. Patrick's Church in Enfield, connected volunteers with AmeriCares Homefront. On Saturday, May 4, the group worked on major renovations to the Felician Adult Day Care building. The day care operated out of the Longview mansion, built in 1832 by Orrin Thompson. The volunteers refreshed the building with a new coat of paint and exterior repairs.[483]

Paul Harris Fellow Award

Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, Felician Sisters, staff, caregivers, clients, benefactors, and friends of the Felician Adult Day Care were on hand as Sister Patricia accepted the prestigious Paul Harris Fellow Award for FADC. The ceremony took place at the Radisson Hotel in Enfield on May 21, 2003. Given annually to recognize outstanding citizens in the community, the presentation is the Rotary Foundation's way of expressing its appreciation for a substantial contribution to its humanitarian and educational programs. It is named for the Rotary's founder, Paul Harris, a Chicago lawyer who started Rotary International with three business associates in 1903. According to Rotary Club leaders, a world of peace and good will comes closer to reality with more people who demonstrate the qualities of a Paul Harris fellow. Sister Patricia said she was happy that the Town of Enfield recognized the center and felt it would benefit the Felician Community as well.[484]

The definition of success often comes down to one central question: "Did we achieve our mission?" More than that, though, did we reach the people we set out to serve, and did we do it in a way that enables us to serve well into the future? Sister Patricia's answer to these questions was a resounding" Yes!" She and the center had touched the lives of hundreds of clients, always encouraging

staff and volunteers to continue the mission of the Felician Adult Day Care, which is quality care of the clients, following the charism and compassionate service of the Felician Sisters' Foundress, Blessed Mary Angela.

NAVIGATING THE SHIFTS

St. Stanislaus Parish, Amsterdam, New York

In the Felician Congregation, visitation has always been considered one of the most important responsibilities of the major superior—to be first in the ministry of unity and vitality in the province. Annually, Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, visited each local house, where she engaged in personal dialogue with each sister who wished to do so, offered her support to the community, and encouraged the sisters to carry on with their ministries, the work of the province and the Congregation, being "Eucharist, Sister, and Servant to all." The visitation generally included meeting with the pastor as well and, upon returning to Enfield, Sister Laureann shared information and her insights with the provincial council.

In the fall of 2001, there were seventeen local communities in the province, so Sister Laureann began her visits to some of the more distant convents before autumn eased into winter. Two elderly sisters comprised the community of St. Stanislaus Convent in Amsterdam, New York, where Sister Mary Bernice Pikul served as local minister and principal of the school and Sister Mary Irene Faszcza served as a house aide. The 74-year-old pastor of St. Stanislaus Parish, Father Walter G. Czechowicz, was facing mandatory retirement in two years but declared his great appreciation for the work of the sisters and expressed his determination to keep the school open to maintain stability in the parish.[485]

Through the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Amsterdam was a magnet for immigrants from Europe: Irish, Italian, Polish, and Lithuanian peoples, among others, who found work in the factories. Shortly after World War II, however, manufacturing in general began to move to the southern United States, where labor costs and taxes were lower. The mills of Amsterdam also shifted their jobs to the South. Additionally, the second and third generations of the city's immigrant families often left to go to college and did not return, as there were few jobs to attract college-educated citizens. The city attempted to re-create its industrial base, but these efforts were not particularly successful.[486] In the early 21st century, post-industrial Amsterdam was still trying to re-invent itself while the population declined 11.4% between 1990 and 2000, with almost a quarter of the population living below the poverty line.[487]

When Father Czechowicz retired in September 2003, Father David W. Mickiewicz was appointed pastor. He met with Sister Laureann in April 2004, to share his considerable concerns regarding the parish school.[488] He strongly believed that Catholic education for school-age children in the region was not viable due to demographic and economic shifts in the area or, for that matter, throughout the Northeastern United States. He cited loss of industry in upstate New York cities and loss of population, decreasing numbers of religious to serve as teachers, and difficulty in paying lay teachers a living wage as factors making parochial education increasingly difficult to provide. The parish was subsidizing 81% of the school budget, and he noted that health issues did not permit Sister Mary Bernice Pikul to maintain a full-time position as principal. He reported that due to the small number of students in each grade, classrooms

were being reconfigured. Finally, he said, the school would be open at least one more year during which time merger/refounding was being planned with St. Mary School.[489]

Shortly after Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa agreed to succeed Sister Mary Bernice as principal, the assistant superintendent to the Amsterdam area from the Diocese of Albany Catholic Schools, along with Father Mickiewicz, Sister Mary Laureann, and Sister Mary Angelia, met on April 28, 2004. They discussed budget planning, teacher contracts, and the reconfiguration of the school in 2005. Both Father Mickiewicz and the superintendent assured the sisters that the plans would be continually revisited for the best resolution of strengthening and preserving Catholic education in Amsterdam.[490]

In mid-March 2005, after a year-long process that involved principals, pastors, and parents working together with St. Mary's to examine the challenges and possible solutions, the parish school board recommended closing St. Stanislaus School. Once the decision was accepted by the Catholic School Office of the Diocese of Albany and Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Sister Mary Angelia notified Sister Mary Laureann. Low enrollment and insufficient finances were the principal reasons for the closure, effective at the end of the 2005 school year. For the 2004-2005 school year, the enrollment was 114 students, down from 173 just five years earlier.[491]

Described as "A small school with a big heart and a Christian family environment," St. Stan's was dedicated to nurturing the wholistic development of each student. The parish complex, including the school, had the distinction of being listed in the National Historic Register. The Felician Sisters had staffed St. Stanislaus School in Amsterdam since its opening in 1897. Originally, the sisters from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Province in Buffalo, New York, were assigned to teach at the school. When the Buffalo province was subdivided, and the Immaculate Conception Province was formed in Lodi, New Jersey, the sisters in Lodi took charge of the school. In 1932, when Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield was established, sisters from Enfield staffed St. Stan's.[492]

Because Father Mickiewicz wanted the presence of the Felician Sisters to continue, both Sister Mary Edna Korona and Sister Mary Evangeline Lupinski remained in the parish, becoming the hands and feet of Jesus in homebound ministry. According to Sister Evangeline, Father Mickiewicz recognized the fact that in today's world, it was impossible for him to meet everyone's needs. He said, "We're defining new ways to gather God's people. We need to find new ways to minister to them."[493] The sisters' ministry involved weekly, biweekly, and monthly visits to the homebound who were no longer able to attend Mass or services. Their visits brought joy and peace as they prayed with the parishioners and brought them Eucharist. They did their grocery shopping and ran errands. Sister Edna said, "We brighten their day by sharing parish news and patiently listening to their concerns." The sisters recognized that the homebound still needed to feel a part of the St. Stan's family, to be nurtured in their faith and supported in their daily living. As the two sisters extended love, comfort, and the compassion of Jesus Christ to the homebound, they came to know that they were the ones blessed.[494]

On June 5, 2005, Father Mickiewicz and Father Water G. Czechowicz, pastor emeritus, concelebrated a Mass of Thanksgiving to mark the teaching and nurturing of the Felician Sisters for over a century. In attendance were Sister

Mary Laureann, provincial minister, as well as Sister Mary Angelia, principal, Sister Mary Edna, Sister Mary Evangeline, Sister Theresa Mary Gondek, Sister Mary Bernice Pikul, and Sister Mary Esther Sibiga. A reception followed immediately after on the convent lawn. Later that day, the sisters and parish clergy enjoyed lunch at the Windmill Diner in Amsterdam. On Sunday, June 19, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard was the presider for the Eucharistic celebration marking eighth-grade graduation. In his homily, he referred to the occasion as "bittersweet."[495]

The old parish school was quickly transformed into the Saint Stanislaus Center for Learning and the Arts, housing two pre-schools, a Pre-K, a dance studio, and a thrift shop. Father David said, "We are, like many parishes, a parish in transition and transformation, challenged as to how to sustain our cultural and religious traditions while embracing new expressions of the faith thereby creating a vibrant Catholicism for the 21st century."[496]

St. Joseph School, Rockville, Connecticut

When Sister Mary Laureann's travels took her to St. Joseph Convent in Rockville, Connecticut, in early December 2001, she was happy to hear that the pastor, Pauline Father Joseph M. Olczak, was pleased with the ministry of the sisters.[497] The following spring, he reaffirmed his satisfaction and requested that the Felician Sisters remain in the parish and continue their school ministry. When Sister Theresa Mary Gondek retired as principal because of health issues, Sister Joan O'Connor, CSJ, succeeded her for the 2002-2003 school year, leaving three Felician Sisters in ministry at the school: Sister Marianne Los, Sister Mary Alexa Oleszczuk, and Sister Mary Alexander Mazur.[498]

In early May 2003, Father Olczak met with Sister Laureann to inform her that the Pauline Fathers intended to send three clerics from Poland and a priest from Doylestown, Pennsylvania, to establish a formation house of studies. Because the Pauline Fathers were considering Father Olczak's offer of the convent as a residence for the clerics, he suggested transferring the sisters' residence to the rectory but noted that the decision was pending until he received further communication from the provincial of the Pauline Fathers. Father showed Sister Laureann the layout of the rectory, and she agreed that the building could prove feasible for convent living, especially as it had a chapel where Mass could be celebrated and serve as a sacred space for the sisters to pray and meditate.[499]

By early August 2003, the sisters had received no definite word about a decision regarding a change of residence.[500] Finally, on July 20, 2004, Father Olczak welcomed Sister Marianne, local minister, Sister Mary Alexander, and Sister Mary Alexa to their new residence in the former rectory. Sister Laureann visited and approved of the sisters' new residence. Father Olczak celebrated the first Mass for the sisters in their new chapel on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 2004, and praised Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela for instilling the love of the Eucharist in all the Felician Sisters. Unfortunately, a year later, the sisters moved back to the convent as the Pauline Fathers chose to return to their former rectory.[501]

When Sister Joan O'Connor, CSJ, completed three years as principal at St. Joseph School in 2005, she was appointed interim superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Norwich in Connecticut. Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa succeeded

her as principal. The school year was barely underway when the pastor summoned Sister Mary Laureann to a meeting to discuss "several concerns relating to reported problems at school." Sister Angelia was also invited "to address the concerns and clarify misunderstandings." The meeting concluded with Father Olczak requesting that the Felician Sisters withdraw from St. Joseph Parish/School since their services would no longer be required.[502]

Feeling that a grave injustice had been done to the Felician Sisters, Sister Mary Laureann contacted Most Rev. Michael R. Cote, bishop of Norwich, to request a meeting. On October 20, 2005, Bishop Cote met with Sister Laureann, Father Olczak, Sister Joan O'Connor, and Sister Mary Angelia. While Bishop Cote repeatedly stated that he did not wish to lose the presence of the Felician Sisters in the Norwich Diocese, he also indicated that the pastor had the authority and responsibility to make decisions affecting the parish. The pastor, therefore, could decide to request the withdrawal of the sisters from the school. Following a lengthy discussion during which the pastor presented his case, it was Father Olczak's unrelenting decision that the sisters leave St. Joseph Parish. The withdrawal date was set for November 11, 2005.[503]

The sisters were stunned when, at the end of the school day on Thursday, October 27, Father Olczak held a meeting at the rectory with the faculty of St. Joseph School to officially inform them that the Felician Sisters would be leaving the parish and school. Without the prior knowledge of the sisters, Father told the teachers that this day was the sisters' last day in school. After informing Sister Marianne Los, who was with the after-school children, that this was her last day in school, Father Olczak went to the convent and relayed this same message to Sister Mary Angelia.[504] He told the sisters that on October 24, the School Board voted unanimously that the services of the sisters were no longer needed and indicated that there were suitable replacements in place for a principal, second-grade teacher, and co-directors of the after-school program. That evening, the sisters retrieved their personal belongings from the school.[505]

Following an emotional and exhausting day of packing and cleaning on Saturday, October 29, Sister Angelia, Sister Mary Alexander Mazur, and Sister Marianne Los welcomed Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann and the provincial councilors, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish to St. Joseph Convent. After viewing all the rooms in the convent, Sister Laureann invited the sisters to the chapel for a closing prayer service.[506]

The sisters offered prayers of reparation for any offences they may have committed, followed by prayers for the deceased sisters, their friends and families, the clergy and benefactors who shared in the life of St. Joseph Parish. In a spirit of trust, gratitude, and thanksgiving, the sisters lifted their hearts and prayed the "Act of Self-Surrender to Mary" before renewing their vows. Sister Laureann, Sister Frances Marion, and Sister Mary Angelia processed through the convent, blessing all the areas so that the sisters could leave in peace. Sister Angelia's final act as principal was to bless the exterior of the school building, invoking blessings upon the students, their families, and the faculty. The prayer service concluded with the singing of the traditional Felician hymn of thanksgiving, the *Magnificat*. Sister Laureann closed the convent doors and turned over the keys to the convent to Father Olczak, thus

ending an era of nearly one hundred years of ministry at St. Joseph Parish and School in Rockville, Connecticut.[507]

In the parish bulletin prepared for the Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time dated October 30, 2005, the pastor wrote, "After much soul-searching and prayer and with knowledge of Bishop Michael Cote, our Diocesan Ordinary, it is agreed that the Felician Sisters will leave our parish and school. By the middle of November, the transition will be completed, and we will have suitable replacements to our school." That same bulletin also included Sister Laureann's note to the parishioners. She wrote, "It was determined by the pastor that there is no longer a need for the services of the Felician Sisters. It was also decided that the Felician Sisters withdraw from their ministry in St. Joseph School as of November 11, 2005." She continued, "We embrace you all with gratitude and affection for the privilege of sharing our lives with you for so many, many generations. We hold a myriad of treasured memories, and we promise you continuous remembrance in our prayers."[508]

Sister Bernardine, Sister Alexander, Sister Marianne, and Sister Alexa attended the farewell liturgy and reception at St. Joseph Parish in Rockville that took place the following year on June 8, 2006. The parishioners expressed their appreciation to the sisters for their eighty-seven years of service at St. Joseph School.[509]

Immaculate Conception School, Indian Orchard, Massachusetts

During her visit to the sisters at Immaculate Conception Convent in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, from December 10-12, 2001, Sister Mary Laureann also met with the pastor, Father Adrian J. Benoit, whom she described as a good administrator. He, too, conveyed his satisfaction with the ministry of the sisters in Immaculate Conception School (ICS). At the time, the school enrolled 161 students and Father Benoit expressed his desire to see that number increase to meet operating expenses.[510]

A year later, Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, principal, reported that officials in the Springfield Diocesan Schools Central Office had discussed a possible merger between Immaculate Conception School and St. Matthew School, also in Indian Orchard. An option proposed by the Diocese of Springfield was to close Immaculate Conception School and retain St. Matthew as the area Catholic school.[511] As early as the fall of 1997, the Diocese of Springfield had studied the situation with the Catholic schools in the diocese and proposed this plan.[512] Father Benoit's meeting with the parishioners on January 7, 2003, to discuss this issue resulted in his announcement to close the school in June 2003. He cited the decreasing enrollment at the school, deterioration of the physical plant, budget issues, and dwindling parish income with a concurrent inability to continue to support the school as the main reasons for this drastic step.[513]

The announcement of the school's closing was a source of great sorrow for students, their parents—some of whom were graduates—teachers, parishioners, and alumni. For months, parents, alumni, and friends of the school worked diligently but unsuccessfully to reverse the decision to close their beloved school. After 94 years of offering Catholic education, Tuesday, June 17, marked the closing of Immaculate Conception School. Dedicated Felician Sisters faithfully served this small school since its inception in 1909. Originally

part of the Buffalo province, the school was absorbed into the Lodi province and then the newly established New England province. Several Enfield sisters were graduates of the school.[514]

Along with members of the Diocesan Schools Central Office, parents, parishioners, and friends, Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, Sister Mary Edna Korona, local minister, and Sister Mary Evangeline Lupinski celebrated a special liturgy of thanksgiving on Friday, June 6. The dedication and blessing of the Commemorative Perennial Garden followed. The garden contained three large boulders and many plants donated by students, families, and friends. A bronze plaque inscribed with the words *Immaculate Conception School 1909-2003, Always in our Hearts,* was affixed to the largest boulder as a testament to all who had been a part of the ICS Community. At the conclusion of the ceremony, a parent representative of the Home School Association presented Sister Laureann with a monetary gift to express gratitude for the many years of service provided by the Felician Sisters.[515] On July 5, Sister Laureann led a closing prayer service with the sisters of Immaculate Conception Convent. Together they thanked God for graces received during the past 94 years of ministry to the parish and school. The sisters ritualized and finalized the closure with the blessing of the home.[516]

St. Stanislaus School, Lowell, Massachusetts

To administer the Church's schools, effective leadership is needed from the pastor and the principal in guiding the parish school toward academic excellence and faith development. The shared leadership between these two key players, pastor and principal, is essential for the life and future of Catholic education. The basic assumption in this critical relationship is that the two collaborate for the effective operation of the school. However, this is not always the case. In fact, the tension between the pastor and the sisters at St. Stanislaus School in Lowell, Massachusetts, drove the decision of the provincial minister and council to withdraw from Holy Trinity Parish/St. Stanislaus School in a unanimous vote on January 22, 2001. The decision was effective as of July 30, 2001.[517]

However, the two sisters, Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, principal, and Sister Mary Bernadette Swist, local minister, stayed for an additional year. Perhaps the death of Sister Janice's father reversed the earlier decision. Immediately following the Thanksgiving holiday in 2001, Sister Laureann, accompanied by Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, provincial councilor, visited the sisters at Holy Trinity Convent. When they met with the pastor, Father Stanisław Kempa, Sister Laureann directly confronted him with the question, "Do you want or not want the services of the Felician Sisters?" Father Kempa ignored the question, saying instead, he did not wish changes every two years.[518] Sister Laureann and Sister Rosalma also met with Carol Roncari, the eighth-grade teacher who substituted as principal during the absence of Sister Janice Marie Gaudette due to her father's illness. She stated that the pastor did not want the sisters, adding that he told her to pursue courses in administration and that she was willing to replace Sister Janice as principal. She noted that the school, with its declining enrollment of 144 pupils, was slated to close.[519]

After reviewing the situation again, on March 9, 2002, Sister Laureann and the provincial council once again voted to withdraw the two sisters from

the parish, effective July 31, 2002. Sister Laureann and Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial vicar, met with Father Kempa on March 13, 2002, to inform him of the decision to withdraw the sisters at the end of the school year.[520]

That same day, Sister Laureann shared this "painful decision" with the sisters in the province. She wrote: "As a province we have expressed and agreed that criteria for remaining or withdrawing from a parish and/or school ministry would be determined by the support, acceptance, respect and appreciation of the sisters by the pastor/administrator and those for whom and with whom we minister." She went on to say that the parishioners and children of Holy Trinity Parish and St. Stanislaus School "have always been most gracious, generous and respectful to the Felician Sisters." However, she said, the parish administrator has not shown "that same support, acceptance, respect and cooperation." After expressing her concern for the health and well-being of the sisters, she commended the sisters for giving "their all with love, dedication and service."[521]

Sister Laureann and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, provincial councilor, attended the Farewell Mass for the Felician Sisters and the appreciation luncheon that followed on May 30, 2002. Msgr. John Abucewicz, who served as pastor of Holy Trinity Parish for twenty years, was the principal celebrant for the Mass, assisted by Father Louis S. Bilicky, who also served at the parish for six years, and Father Andrew T. Grelak. The parish recognized the service of the Felician Sisters for ninety-two years. A musical presentation by the children concluded the event.[522]

On June 25, Sister Laureann and Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, plant manager at the provincial house, traveled to Lowell for the canonical closing of Holy Trinity Convent, completing the ministry withdrawal procedures at St. Stanislaus School. Following a prayer service in the convent chapel, Sister Laureann, Sister Mary Bernadette and Sister Janice Marie presented the keys to the convent to Father Kempa at the rectory.[523]

St. Stanislaus School continued its educational ministry for two more years. On January 9, 2004, the Archdiocese of Boston announced that, due to rising costs and decreasing enrollment, two Catholic schools in Lowell, including St. Stanislaus School, would close at the end of that academic year. Meghan Dorney, reporting for *The Pilot,* the official newspaper of the archdiocese of Boston, said that the closure of the schools was the result of more than six months of discussion among the principals of the city's nine Catholic schools to determine how "to secure the future sustainability and visibility of the Catholic schools in Lowell."[524]

St. Adalbert Convent and School, Enfield, Connecticut

In the early hours of the morning on Sunday, December 19, 1999, corroded plumbing in St. Adalbert Convent in Enfield released water in the building and caused flooding that affected all three floors of the convent. Light fixtures and ceiling tiles hung heavy with water. After the 9:30 a.m. Mass, parishioners, who helped clean up, suctioned seventy-two gallons of water from the floors and carpets.[525] The devastating effects of the water damage created dangerous living conditions for the sisters. After Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, along with provincial councilors Sister Joan Marie Swierzb and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, reviewed the condition of the convent, they determined that the

sisters would reside at the provincial house until the problems were addressed and the safety of the sisters secured.[526] When they attempted to speak with the pastor, Father Adam C. Subocz, he refused to address their concerns.[527]

On December 23, 1999, Sister Laureann, accompanied by Sister Frances Marie Kos, principal of St. Adalbert School, and Sister Mary Felicita Zdrojewski, local minister of St. Adalbert Convent, met with Sister Helen Margaret Feeney, CSJ, director of the Archdiocesan Office for Religious, to apprise her of the emergency and to inform her that the sisters had left their canonically established convent and were now residing in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House.[528]

When Sister Laureann met with the newly appointed pastor Father Edmund M. O'Brien in January 2000, he explained St. Adalbert's difficult financial situation stating that there was no hope of repairing the convent on Alden Avenue.[529] Consequently, the sisters continued to reside in the provincial house. During a second meeting with Father O'Brien on May 5, 2000, he regretfully informed Sister Laureann that since repairs to the convent would cost a minimum of $250,000, the convent would not be renovated. The sisters agreed to remove the items belonging to the Felician community and their personal belongings by the end of July 2000. Items belonging to the parish would remain in the convent and be disposed of according to the wishes of Father O'Brien.[530] By the end of May 2000, Sister Laureann and the council agreed that the sisters of the St. Adalbert local community would continue to reside in the provincial house in a designated area on the third floor of the north wing. Though the decision to close the convent as a local house was made in May 2003, the sisters continued to commute to their apostolate at St. Adalbert School until 2006 when the school closed.[531] In March, the Archdiocese of Hartford announced that St. Adalbert's K-Grade 8 program would be consolidated with St. Bernard's and St. Martha's Schools and be replaced with a preschool program.[532]

Restructuring the Enfield Catholic Schools

In March 2006, Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell, archbishop of Hartford, approved the recommendation of Dr. Dale Hoyt, superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Hartford, to consolidate St. Adalbert School with St. Bernard and St. Martha Schools. These mergers of kindergarten through eighth grade were supported by the school principals and by the Enfield pastors whose parishes supported these three schools. Beginning in September 2006, St. Adalbert School became the site of the Enfield Catholic pre-kindergarten facility serving three- and four-year-olds and became known as the SS. Adalbert-Bernard-Martha Pre-School.[533]

The restructuring came about after an extensive viability study conducted by Shea Consulting Services from Dallas, Texas. The study was designed to provide an objective, diagnostic analysis of each of the three Catholic elementary schools, with recommendations for strengthening Catholic education in Enfield. Meetings were held with parents, school board members, parishioners, faculty, staff members, and students explaining the reasons for reconfiguration. Personnel from the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools conducted Open Houses, facilitated student registrations, and offered employment packages to teachers and staff to prepare St. Adalbert School for its new mission—the education of the very young.[534]

With declining enrollment and financial difficulties, the archdiocese's decision was no surprise. St. Adalbert's, which began as kindergarten classes that the Felician Sisters conducted, welcomed its first students in the 1955-1956 school year. Of the three schools in town, it had the smallest enrollment—109 pupils with eight instructors teaching nine classes.[535] Still, closing a school is always difficult, and the St. Adalbert's School community organized events to recognize the sadness in each heart, the inevitability of change, the pain, and the courage to go forward in faith. On Sunday, June 4, 2006, the Home School Association hosted a Family Mass followed by a cookout on the parish grounds to celebrate the school's history of quality Catholic education. The following Thursday, the school community gathered on the church lawn to plant a dogwood tree and to bury a time capsule commemorating important events in the life of St. Adalbert School. During the tree-planting ceremony, Father O'Brien invited participants to extend their right hand over the tree in blessing. On the last day of school, June 20, the school community gathered for a special farewell Mass. Students were dismissed following the distribution of report cards and final hugs.[536]

The SS. Adalbert-Bernard-Martha-Pre-School Program hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony and open house at St. Adalbert School on August 29, 2006. Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell, archbishop of Hartford, blessed the facility along with the recently created development office of the Catholic Schools of Enfield. Archbishop Mansell and Dr. Dale R. Hoyt, superintendent of Catholic Schools in the archdiocese, cut the ribbon in the ceremony, marking the formal opening of the new pre-school program. Local pastors, school principals, students and parents attended.[537] Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz, and Sister Rosemary Zawada represented the sisters from Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House. The Open House was an opportunity for new and prospective students, their families and community members to learn more about Enfield's Catholic schools, especially the new pre-school facility and program.[538]

St. Joseph Parish, Suffield, Connecticut

Since 1946, Felician Sisters had offered their services teaching and serving the spiritual needs of the parishioners of St. Joseph Parish in Suffield, Connecticut. In late spring 2004, Sister Mary Laureann met with Father William L. Baldyga, pastor, to discuss ministry assignments for the year and learned that he felt the sisters were no longer needed to serve the parish. It was decided to withdraw the two sisters from the convent and to have Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz continue her ministry to the parish, providing part-time assistance with religion classes and as sacristan while commuting from the provincial house. The formal closing of the convent took place on July 31, 2004,[539] but Sister Seraphine served until 2014.[540]

TOWN OF ENFIELD DAY CARE CENTER

While administrators for the Town of Enfield Day Care Center continued to seek a town-owned facility that could serve as the center's future site, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, worked with the Town of Enfield while relentlessly pursuing compensation for damage to the building formerly occupied by Our Lady of the Angels Academy/Longview Catholic High School. On the advice of financial advisor Edward Kulik, in mid-November

2001, the province raised the rent from $3,000 to $3,500, effective March 1, 2002. The letter to Town Manager Scott Shanley also requested notification of the date that the Town planned to evacuate the building.[541]

By the end of December 2001, the province had received no response from the Town Manager, but in January 2002, newly elected Deputy Mayor Patrick Tallarita contacted Sister Laureann about having the Enfield Day Care remain in its present location. Sister Laureann shared the concerns of the Felician Community regarding neglect of the property, poor or inaccurate communication that led to misunderstandings, and breach of contract. She advised Tallarita to contact Robert B. Berger, the province's attorney, for additional information regarding the Enfield Day Care.[542]

Shortly after Attorney Berger reported that Tallarita interpreted his conversation with Sister Laureann to imply that the day care could remain in its present location, Sister Laureann informed Tallarita that the Felician Sisters had not changed their decision and advised him to continue to aggressively pursue a new location for the Enfield Day Care.[543] When Town Attorney Christopher Bromson sent a letter requesting renewal of the lease for the Enfield Day Care until 2007, Sister Laureann reiterated the province's position on not renewing the lease[544] and Attorney Berger sent a letter to that effect,[545] adding that the Felician Sisters expected the use of the property no later than June 30, 2003.[546] Near the end of the summer, Ray Warren, director of development services for the Town of Enfield, informed Attorney Berger that the town was searching for a new location for the Enfield Day Care, considering the deadline.[547]

Since consultants advised documenting the condition of the building, Sister Laureann and Sister Mary Stella Motyl accompanied videographer Joseph Kaminski through the Enfield Day Care Center near the end of 2002, as he filmed the condition of the building. This record of evidence of the building's neglect was considered vitally important to the Felician community in holding the Town of Enfield responsible for damage and repair costs to the building.[548]

In a letter dated April 2, 2003, Town Manager Scott Shanley requested an extension of the lease for the Enfield Day Care through September 2003. The Felician Sisters agreed to allow the Enfield Day Care to remain on Felician premises throughout the month of September.[549] When Attorney Berger, attorney for the province, wrote a letter responding to the Town Manager's request later that month, he asked for a definite timetable for relocating the Enfield Day Care to its new site. His letter also referenced a report documenting serious neglect cited during an inspection on March 13, 2003, by Sister Laureann and Kevin Bielanski, property maintenance manager.[550] After the letter was sent, Edward Shirley, Enfield deputy fire marshal, inspected the boiler room and found serious violations needing correction. This notice was also forwarded to Mr. Shanley.[551] On July 15, Attorney Berger again communicated with Town Manager Scott Shanley, citing areas of the Enfield Day Care Center still in need of repair or maintenance. In the letter, Attorney Berger noted both his and Sister Laureann's availability to discuss the Town's plans for honoring its lease agreement before the day care vacated the premises.[552]

During the summer of 2004, Sister Laureann learned from Enfield's Social Services Director Dorothy Allen, that the Enfield Day Care expected to move by August 1, 2004. However, after she learned that the proposed site had not been issued a certificate of occupancy, she followed up with the province's attorney

Robert Berger.[553] In fact, the former Longview Catholic High School building was not evacuated until August 31, 2004. At that time, Sister Laureann, accompanied by Kevin Bielanski and David Tuttle, supervisor of Enfield's buildings and grounds maintenance division, once again did a walkthrough of the building to determine areas still needing maintenance or repair.[554]

After more than a month passed and no action had been taken, Sister Laureann discussed the situation with Attorney Berger who recommended that the Felician Sisters hire plumbing, heating, and electrical contractors to examine the extent of the damage incurred at the day-care center and determine cost of repairs. All Seasons Contractor documented code violations regarding the new boiler installed by the Town of Enfield. In early November, the province hired Fire-Tech, Inc., to assess damage to the building incurred by the use/abuse of the Enfield Day Care.[555]

Meanwhile, Enfield Mayor Patrick Tallarita accepted an invitation from Sister Laureann to tour the former Enfield Day Care Center facilities on January 22, 2005. The purpose of the visit was to point out serious damage to the building incurred during use by the day care. Kevin Bielanski indicated the considerable and dangerous problems with the boiler room, and Tallarita was advised of the studies of the building by Fire-Tech, Inc., and All Seasons Contractor.[556] When Sister Laureann met with Robert Berger on February 1, 2005, she discussed Mayor Tallarita's visit, and she shared with the province's attorney the billing statements amounting to almost $15,000 for the repair or replacement of the boiler, which was the responsibility of the Town of Enfield.[557]

After the province's attorney, Robert Berger, notified the Town Attorney,[558] Maria Stavropoulos, assistant town attorney responded, requesting a priority listing of the damage and repairs. The boiler continued to be a major concern, particularly after the Enfield Fire Department responded to four separate alarms and found the building filled with smoke and soot resulting from the malfunctioning boiler. After Sister Laureann provided the prioritized list to Attorney Berger, he followed up, scheduling a meeting with the appropriate parties from the Town of Enfield and the Felician Sisters to review and propose a resolution to resolve and meet the conditions of the lease. The deputy fire marshal agreed to communicate with the authorities regarding the boiler situation.[559]

On Monday, June 13, 2005, Sister Laureann, the province's attorney, Robert Berger, and Kevin Bielanski met with Mayor Patrick Tallarita, Town Attorney Christopher Bromson, and Public Works Director Geoffrey R. McAlmond in Berger's office where they discussed the Town's responsibility regarding correcting or compensating for the damage at the former Enfield Day Care Center. After a lengthy discussion, the Town of Enfield proposed a payment of up to $60,000 to compensate the damages to the building and grounds leased. After the provincial council approved the offer, Mayor Tallarita presented the proposal to the Town Council.[560] The town agreed to pay the Felician Sisters of the Order of St. Francis of Connecticut, Incorporated, the sum of $60,000 "in connection with the building and grounds leased by the Town of Enfield from 1989 until 2004 in accordance with . . . the Town's lease of said building and grounds for a day care facility."[561]

As *Response to Love* notes, "Temporal goods are God's gifts to us. As stewards of his bounty, we use the world's goods for his greater glory . . . to assure the support of its members, to realize the apostolic end of the Congregation, and to be able to share with the poor and the needy. . . ." The road to recovery from near bankruptcy in 1972 had been a long one, marked by financial struggles and hardship. But working with their financial advisor Edward J. Kulik, the sisters conservatively managed their assets and the province's portfolio began to see growth. The Enfield Felicians were grateful for God's goodness to them.

As noted in the *2005 State of the Province Report, s*tewardship at the provincial level was a complex process of many service areas, including caring for monetary and property resources, practicing justice to employees and staff, providing resources to assist in the realization of the mission and apostolic endeavors of the province, and sharing with the poor and needy.[562] The stewardship of these resources was under the purview of the provincial minister and her administration, with the provincial treasurer providing the information and care needed for wise decision-making and accountability.

In the Enfield province, Sister Mary Florentine Myjak was a "treasured treasurer." Appointed provincial treasurer in 1984, she held the position until 2009 when the reconfiguration of the North American Provinces took place. With courage and foresight, she provided prudent stewardship of the province's resources in a spirit of caring service to all who expressed a need. In a spirit marked by simplicity and humility, Sister Florentine trusted wholeheartedly in God's providential care. She often repeated," God cannot be outdone in generosity . . . God is good, God is so good."[563]

Responsibility for stewardship and accountability of provincial assets was also shared by all the sisters and began in the practices of the sisters at the provincial house and in the local houses. The sisters lived in a spirit of renunciation and detachment from material goods and creature comforts. Even before the concept of sustainable living became popular, the sisters were reusing what could be recycled and eliminating waste, which went against the grain of a materialistic and consumerist culture.

During this second term of office, Sister Mary Laureann oversaw extensive improvements to all facilities and areas of the provincial complex. In the provincial house, a dishwasher and garbage disposal were installed in the scullery, the ceiling above the main altar was repaired, a combination washer/dryer was installed in the sacristy, and carpeting was replaced in the treasurer's office. Replacement of the boiler included asbestos removal. In addition, an automatic standby generator was installed as well as air conditioning in the chapel. Floor tiles in a major portion of the basement hallway, including the social room were replaced, and the provincial house maintenance staff painted the gym and replaced crumbling ceiling tiles.

In the infirmary, the large dormitory was converted to a reception/gathering room and bedroom walls were repaired and repainted. Because the porches on the rear of St. Felix Center were in poor condition, they were demolished. Reconstruction resulted in a first-floor porch that was practical, safe, and attractive since it blended with the décor of the building.[564]

Stewardship extended to maintenance of the Felician Sisters plot in St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Enfield. The sisters were shocked to learn that on

Friday evening, November 8, 2002, vandals desecrated St. Adalbert's Cemetery in Enfield.[565] More than 300 headstones were toppled or damaged, requiring extensive repairs, especially the Felician Sisters cross-shaped grave markers that made them popular targets.[566] After Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, was notified of the damage, she and Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, provincial treasurer, went to the cemetery to assess the damage.[567] Sister Laureann said, "I was stunned to see our sisters hurt in this way. We've watched them grow old, suffer through sickness and sat by their death bed. We accompany our sisters as far as we can. We just can't understand why it was done." Most of the grave markers were put back up within a day by Rogers Memorial Studio. But twenty-four crosses still needed to be replaced or repaired.[568]

The Enfield Police investigated the vandalism, and two business owners, who were distressed by the desecration, offered financial rewards they hoped would lead to the arrest or conviction of those responsible for the damage. If the vandals were not found, the money would be used to defray the cost of the damage.[569] Joe Ravalese, co-owner of The Country Diner in Enfield, presented Sister Laureann with a check in the amount of $2300, contributions from his business patrons, along with a $100 gift from an anonymous donor for the restoration of the cemetery monuments. Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, sent a message expressing concern on behalf of the Felician Congregation and forwarded funds to help restore the headstones.[570]

A new financial consultant

At the invitation of Sister Mary Laureann, Daniel P. O'Connell succeeded Edward J. Kulik as the financial consultant for the Felician Sisters of Enfield as of May 2003. Mr. Kulik had retired after being diagnosed with a brain tumor and died in late 2002. Dan was well known to the Felician Sisters since he served as chairman of the board of the Enfield Montessori School.[571] Dan came to this role well qualified, having earned his MBA at the University of Connecticut Storrs and having served at United Technologies as Corporate Director of Compensation and Benefits. In addition, Dan was chairman of the Board of Directors of Saint Francis Hospital, a member of its Foundation Board and co-chairman of the Valencia Society of the hospital. Dan was a Knight of Malta, and original founder and director of the Malta House of Care in Hartford, which delivered primary healthcare directly to the Hartford neighborhoods where it was needed most, in a van that traveled to safe sites close to patients' homes and jobs. At his parish, St. Augustine Church in South Glastonbury, Dan was an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, served as a lector, and taught Bible Study for more than forty years. He was also a trustee, a member of the Financial and Parish Councils and a recipient of the Archdiocesan St. Joseph Medal.[572]

Sister Laureann continually expressed deep gratitude for the guidance, support, and recommendations Dan offered on behalf of the province. She marveled at his good sense of market opportunities, always providing the best possible investment opportunities, and acting in the interest of the sisters. Drawing on his experience, he also shared his expertise regarding medical and benefit plans for the province's employees.

Fundraising

The province continued its efforts to raise funds by sponsoring traditional fundraisers, including the summer Lawn Festival, the spring Polish Supper, and the Pre-Christmas Fair. Apart from their financial benefits, these annual fundraising events strengthened the sense of togetherness and involved the sisters as well as their dedicated helpers—family members, associates, friends, and supporters. They raised the sisters' visibility in the community, united the sisters and their helpers in a common goal, built awareness in the community about the sisters, and attracted new supporters. Income from the *babki (*bread) that Sister Mary Apollonia Niksa baked and the annual May Calendar raffle helped the sisters maintain themselves and supported their lives of prayer and service.[573]

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEATIFICATION OF BLESSED MARY ANGELA

On April 18, 2003, the Felician Congregation celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Beatification of Blessed Mary Angela. The entire Congregation began the spiritual preparation by walking with Our Lady and Blessed Angela for nine months before the anniversary, and using the booklet entitled "Marian Reflections," which was compiled in preparation for the beatification in 1993 by the sisters of the general administration.[574] Since the actual anniversary fell on Good Friday, celebrations throughout the Enfield province took place on Friday, May 16, Mother Angela's birthday. [575]

Perhaps Sister Mary Angelora Floryan, local minister at Holy Family Infirmary, best captured the spirit of the day when she said, "Blessed Mary Angela's greatest gift to her congregation was daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in our provincial house(s). Therefore, it was only fitting that the sisters in the infirmary, as part of the 10th anniversary celebration of the beatification of Blessed Mary Angela, spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, thanking our Lord for the gift of our beloved foundress."[576]

Sister Theresa Mary Gondek, local minister at St. Adalbert Convent in Providence, Rhode Island, captured another unique aspect of Mother Angela when she said that because of Mother's love for flowers, a special arrangement decorated her picture at the convent. Most celebrations in the local homes included flowers.[577]

Blessed Angela's dedication to serving the marginalized in the world as well as educating unschooled women and children also figured prominently in most commemorations. Desiring to follow in the footsteps of their foundress, sisters residing at the provincial house in Enfield contributed to the Walk for Cystic Fibrosis. This organization came to the sisters' awareness because three children who attended the Enfield Montessori School had been afflicted with this illness.

Other examples of what sisters in various communities did to honor Mother Angela included a personal donation from each sister at St. Joseph Convent in Webster, Massachusetts, supplemented by the house fund, to the Felician Sisters in Przemyśl for their work with children. Sisters at St. Hedwig's Convent in Manchester, New Hampshire, donated part of their monthly budget to purchase a gift certificate from the local supermarket, which they donated to a poor family. The sisters of Mother Angela Residence in Enfield put together a "basket of goodies" that included practical items for mother and baby as

well as the home, which they gave to a needy person known to them. The sisters at St. Adalbert Convent in Providence, Rhode Island, visited two elderly homebound parishioners and shared flowers with them.[578]

At St. Stanislaus Convent in Adams, Massachusetts, the celebration featured an intimate dinner, lovingly prepared by Sister Mary Amandine Zdrok, blessed with the presence of two special people, Frank Urbanek and Monica Wojcik, relatives of the late Sister Mary Aniela Urbanek. Frank, at eighty-three, had just been diagnosed with lung cancer, and Monica, at age ninety, was doing more than forty hours of volunteer work per week for St. Stanislaus School.[579]

In keeping with the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of Mother Angela's beatification, the sisters also worked to extend interest in the Felician Foundress. At Sts. Cyril & Methodius School in Hartford, Connecticut, students in grades 5 through 8 viewed the slide presentation prepared for the anniversary, posted on the Felician Congregational website, and the school's principal, Sister Dolores Anne Mary Ungerer, made available throughout the school, information printed from the website for students, teachers, and parents. At St. Joseph's School in Rockville, Connecticut, Sister Marianne Los had her second-grade class color pictures from the Mother Angela coloring book after she read them Blessed Angela's life story.[580] Sister Mary Bernice Pikul, local minister at St. Stanislaus Convent in Amsterdam, New York, summed up the day when she wrote: "Throughout the day, our thoughts and hearts were united with our holy Mother Foundress, Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska. In all cases, Morning and Evening Praise, special prayer services, and Eucharistic liturgies were the crowning points of a day designed to honor our foundress."[581]

The high point of the anniversary was the special early morning Eucharistic liturgy at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield celebrating the beatification of the Felician Foundress, followed by Morning Praise honoring Blessed Angela. The chapel altars, especially the side altar with the statue of Blessed Angela, were artistically decorated. Chaplain Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, Vincentian Father Julian A. Szumilo, chaplain, St. Joseph Residence; and Father William L. Baldyga, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Suffield, joined the sisters for the celebratory noon meal. Evening Praise in honor of Blessed Mary Angela and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament closed the day.[582]

THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE FELICIAN CONGREGATION

It is time for Jubilee—it is time to build a promising future for others.
It is now time for the gifts that have been received to become gifts that are given.
It is time for us, in celebrating our year of jubilee "to read the signs of the time . . .
and collaborate in the mission of human advancement."

(*Response to Love*, Apostolic Mission)

We, the Felician Sisters . . . in our own simple way
enflesh our desire to renew the world. It is time for jubilee!

During the 2002 Biennial Assembly, Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, called the sisters to begin preparations for the 150th Jubilee of the Founding of the Felician Congregation. November 21, 2005, would mark the anniversary of this important event.[583] Sisters gathered for the 2004 Biennial Assembly proclaimed, "We the Felician Sisters of the world come together to

celebrate a year of Jubilee. We celebrate as a Congregation by lifting our eyes of faith to embrace new horizons in proclaiming the Kingdom of God."[584] Sister Raymond invited the sisters as a Congregation to celebrate the jubilee in the biblical sense, that is, with a focus on "building a promising future, not so much for ourselves as for others."[585]

The celebration became an opportunity for the sisters to deepen their knowledge and love for the charism that their Blessed Foundress bequeathed to them. The entire Congregation prepared itself spiritually for this celebration in various ways: rediscovering the *Memoirs of the Congregation,* which contained the essential norms of Felician spirituality, praying together the Litany to the Blessed Virgin Mary on the 21st day of each month, and spending the day of November 20, 2005, as a time of prayer, reflection, and thanksgiving before the Blessed Sacrament. To share the joy of the anniversary with others, the Congregation printed holy cards of remembrance of the anniversary featuring a photo of Blessed Mary Angela and a greeting selected from her writings. These cards were printed in four languages—English, Polish, Portuguese, and Spanish—and distributed to various constituencies.[586]

The general administration also proposed that "Each province undertake a Jubilee Project that would specifically address an evangelical, spiritual, or physical need of a particular group of persons." The project would be something "extra," something "in addition to the many corporal and spiritual works of mercy already being done," that would help to build a promising future for someone.[587] Late in November 2003, four sisters who comprised the initial planning committee in Enfield—Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz—met with Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, to present their proposal for Enfield's Congregational Jubilee Project 2005. Sister Christine reported on her meeting with Priscilla Brayson, director of the Enfield Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen. The soup kitchen provided meals and fellowship to the poor, hungry, and disenfranchised within the Enfield community. The sisters proposed joining their efforts with this already established program.[588]

Soon after, the Congregation provided seed money for the project from its Solidarity Fund, whose purpose was to reach those in greatest need in the name of charity and justice. The provincial council appointed Sister Marie JoAnn and Sister Christine along with Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, council member, to coordinate the project, which ran one Sunday each month from January through December 2005, the actual Jubilee Year.[589] Teams of seven to ten sisters from the provincial house and local homes were responsible for purchasing the food, preparing the meal, serving the dinner at the soup kitchen, and cleaning up. Interaction with the dinner guests was an integral part of the endeavor.[590]

Feeding "God's Hungry People"

In his article on this anniversary celebration, *Catholic Transcript* correspondent Jack Sheedy wrote, "It should come as no surprise that a province of a religious order dedicated to performing works of mercy should celebrate the order's sesquicentennial, not by drawing attention to itself but by finding one more way to fulfill its mission of serving others."[591]

January 9, 2005, marked the province's first Sunday dinner celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the Felician Congregation's existence. In her article

written for the province's quarterly newsletter, *News Bits,* describing the province's generous response, Sister JoAnn wrote: "No one really knew what to expect as the van and two cars filled with Enfield Felicians headed off to Loaves and Fishes in Enfield. However, the 'TLC' that went into preparing the feast could not be mistaken."[592]

Sister Christine Marie, assistant chef manager at the provincial house, and Sister Mary Stella Motyl, who for years had been feeding the hungry, whether her Felician Sisters or young people at the Town of Enfield Day Care, along with their prep crew, Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, Sister Mary Bernard Skrocka, Sister Jeanne Marie Akalski, Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek, and Sister Mary Magdalen Pytelewski, prepared a menu that included fresh salad, roast chicken, creamy mashed potatoes, glazed carrots, and chilled cranberry sauce. For dessert, there were peaches or cheesecake garnished with strawberries. Sister Mary Apollonia Niksa's homemade *babka* rolls helped make the meal even more enjoyable. To quote one of the guests, "The aroma was divine."[593]

Sister JoAnn wrote that the Felician work crew arrived in plenty of time for the meal preparation, but locked doors, hidden keys, unfamiliar kitchen surroundings and "just not knowing what to do made the experience a real challenge," yet within minutes, the set-up crew got it together. Back at the provincial house, Sister Christine, Sister Stella, and Sister Francine were putting on the finishing touches and packing the meal for transport. After welcoming the guests and thanking them for coming to share Sunday Dinner during this Felician Jubilee Year, Sister Mary Laureann offered a prayer of thanksgiving. With the emphasis on homemade, the meal won high praise and eager requests for seconds. In all, the sisters served more than seventy dinners from 4 to 6 p.m.[594]



The Felician work crew at Loaves and Fishes. Enfield's Jubilee Project 2005, providing Sunday dinner and fellowship to the poor, hungry, and disenfranchised within the Enfield community, celebrated the 150th Anniversary of the Felician Congregation's founding.

Priscilla Brayson and her husband Murray, director and president of the Enfield Loaves and Fishes Soup Kitchen board, were pleased with the turnout and thanked the sisters. After dinner, the guests relaxed and spent time sharing

conversation and stories with the sisters. Repeated compliments and promises to "see you next month" ended the evening.[595] Sister JoAnn concluded, "Without a doubt, the dinner was a success, and the celebration had just begun." Because the need remained and the willingness to help as well as the enthusiasm of the sisters continued to run high, the Jubilee Project continued each month until the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) a global pandemic on March 11, 2020.[596]

'Thank you for continuing to be God's marvelous deeds'

Sister Mary Raymond encouraged each province to plan a festive Eucharistic celebration to commemorate the 150th anniversary, noting that, "While times, places, and dates may differ, the unity of the celebration will come through our unity of purpose." Referencing the *Memoirs of the Congregation,* she noted the significance of the Congregation's founding on November 21, the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple:

> The fact that this Foundation began on the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin is proof that God willed to show the sisters how their lives should be linked *with the immaculate life* of this supreme Model of souls desiring greater perfection. Jesus wanted to teach the sisters, that just as the Most Blessed Virgin dedicated Herself without reserve to His service and totally resigned Herself to His Holy Will, so, too, they, by dedicating themselves to His holy service, should be ready for everything."[597]

The sun smiled on Enfield on November 20, 2005. On that mild fall Sunday afternoon, it seemed to know that it was a day to celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice. More than 300 sisters, priests, women and men religious, friends, and guests gathered at St. Adalbert Church in Enfield to join in the Eucharistic liturgy to



St. Adalbert Church in Enfield was the site for the Eucharistic Liturgy commemorating the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice. (Photo by Ann DeCristofaro)

commemorate the century and a half that the Felician Sisters had helped the poor, educated the young, and tended to the needs of the sick and elderly. Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell, archbishop of Hartford, was the principal celebrant and homilist for the 2 p.m. Mass. The sisters present participated in the entrance procession, with Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, carrying a picture of Our Lady of Częstochowa and Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, former provincial minister, carrying the picture of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska.[598]

In his introduction, Archbishop Mansell reminded those present that they "represent the millions of people whose lives have been touched by the Felician Sisters." During his homily, he recalled the life of Blessed Mary Angela and the "long, beautiful trail going back to 1855." He directed attention to the symbols carried by Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek: a copy of the Constitutions, *Response to Love;* a copy of the Franciscan Rule; a cincture; a Franciscan chaplet; and a crown of thorns, all part of the Congregation's heritage. He acknowledged the contribution that the sisters made to the religious and cultural growth of Poland. "No one was ever able to steal the heart, the soul of the Polish people," he said.[599]

The Archbishop noted that it seemed fitting to be celebrating this anniversary on the feast of Christ the King. "We think of Christ the King in contrasts," he said, as he made the distinction between our understanding of "kingdom," and the world of Mother Angela, the two world wars since her passing, and the various evils that continued to plague society. He reminded his audience to keep before them "the image of Jesus as King of mercy, goodness, love, and compassion," adding, "The final word is love." The Archbishop concluded his homily by thanking the Felician Sisters who have "taught us what love means, witnessing the Spirit's action in your lives. I thank you for continuing to be God's marvelous deeds."[600]

Following the Communion Rite, the sisters prayed the *Act of Dedication of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Felix to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.* This *Act of Dedication* was the prayer first offered, on August 28, 1864, by Blessed Honorat Koźminski to consecrate the Congregation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Members of the combined choirs of St. Adalbert's and St. Bernard's parishes provided the music throughout the liturgy.[601]

A joyful thanksgiving dinner, served in St. Adalbert's auditorium, followed the Eucharistic celebration. After Sister Mary Laureann warmly welcomed the sisters and guests, Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, provincial house chaplain, offered grace before the meal. Father Ron Zepecki, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Enfield, recalled his experiences in Baltimore, Maryland, as well as at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Parish in Hartford, Connecticut, and in Krakow, Poland, with the Felician Sisters. Speaking of the provincial house in Enfield, he said, "I know that the Blessed Sacrament is exposed there all day. I always find peace and quiet in your convent." He concluded his remarks with the words of the late John Paul II: "We need to realize our responsibility for the face of Christ in others." In her remarks, Sister Laureann said, "We are grateful for a glorious past, grace-filled present, and a hope-filled future."[602]

Archbishop Mansell imparted his final blessing with these words: "That you may continue to hold fast, maintain, be rooted, and dig deep wells." The singing of the traditional hymn of gratitude, "Now Thank We All Our God,"

accompanied by Sister Sophia Wanda M. Stapor, provincial house organist, concluded the celebration.[603]



Banners representing the Evangelical, Ecclesial, Eucharistic, and Marian aspects of the Felician Congregation's spirituality adorned St. Adalbert's Auditorium. (Photo by Ann DeCristofaro)

Enfield Celebrates the Felician Sisters Sesquicentennial

To recognize the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the Felician Sisters Congregation, Enfield's Fourth of July Committee invited the sisters to lead the 2006 town parade as Parade Marshals. Held on Saturday, July 8, the parade stepped off promptly at 11 a.m., led by Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, and provincial councilors Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish. While the sisters lined the Enfield Street corner to cheer and to enjoy the more than fifty participating units in the parade, Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell stopped by to greet them.[604]

ONGOING PROVINCIAL CHAPTER IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

During the preparations for the provincial and general chapters of 1999 and 2000 respectively, the idea of an Ongoing Provincial Chapter Implementation Committee (OPIC) developed. The Biennial Assembly of 1998 delineated its responsibilities that included the following:

- Develop with the sisters the plan to implement the Focus Statement and Action-Direction Statement of the Province for 1999-2005.
- Cooperate with the International Implementation Committee in realizing the goals of the general chapter.
- Develop educational programs to internalize the Vision Statement and keep alive the spirit.
- Communicate with the provincial administrations and keep them apprised of the progress of the committee.

- Report annually to the provincial administration and the province.
- Devise means for the sisters to communicate their suggestions for conversions and the continuance of the process.
- Make a summary report at the next provincial chapter.

The 2000 General Chapter determined that there would not be an International Implementation Committee because this role would be filled by the general administration.[605]

OPIC in Enfield

According to Enfield's *State of the Province Report 2002,* the first year of implementation of OPIC was characterized by confusion and misdirection. As a result, the province decided to continue using the provincial assembly structure established prior to the introduction of OPIC as its forum for all members of the province to exchange ideas and discuss important issues. Since the provincial assembly met the needs of the sisters and this configuration worked well for the province, the model was adapted to include OPIC. As such, the Community and Ministry Commissions were reactivated.[606]

Each year, chairpersons planned workshops, study days, and other programs that related to the specific focus or theme for the year. These included Advent and Lenten days of recollection; reflections for house meetings during Advent and Lent; a Community Day celebrating giftedness; recreation days at the Portiuncula on Hammond Pond in Goshen, Massachusetts; and the creation of an awareness examen booklet based on the focus and action-direction statements.[607] The group also considered sponsoring a Chapter of Mats.[608]

The following sisters volunteered to lead the implementation of the focus statement and action-direction statements from the provincial and general chapters.

Year	***Core Group Leadership***
1999	Sister Theresa Mary Gondek, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, Sister Mary Peter Valliere
2000	Sister Dolores Ann Mary Ungerer, Sister Francine Mary Sousa
2001	Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, Sister Mary Edith St. Jean
2002	Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz
2003	Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, Sister Carole Marie Saladin, Sister Mary Julia Janas
2004	Sister Susan Adele Marie Tippett, Sister Joanne Marian Kaminski[609]

During the provincial assembly held on October 14, 2000, Co-Chair Sister Dolores Anne Mary Ungerer presented the goal for the year to the sisters:

> As Felician Franciscans, we rekindle the fire and ignite the flame of love and compassion by appreciating the diversity among us and focusing on positive attitudes.

She called each sister to commit herself personally and publicly to participating in community events, strengthening local community, promoting open and honest dialogue, and striving to develop positive attitudes. She reminded the sisters that conversion must begin within themselves. Co-Chair

Sister Francine Mary Sousa presented the *Covenant Statement,* asking each sister to pledge to:

Trust in God's Providence and the good will of my sisters
Engage in open, respectful and honest dialogue
Exercise my right and responsibility to participate in community events
Nurture community in my local house
Foster my own positive attitude

Sister Dolores Anne led the prayer service during which each sister signed the *Covenant.* Sister Francine explained that each sister would receive a copy of the *Covenant* as a reminder of her personal responsibility to support its tenets.[610]

'Everyday Creativity'

Two particularly memorable study days that unpacked Ongoing Provincial Implementation Chapter Committee's goal for 2002-2003 took place during the provincial assemblies held in November 2002 and March 2003. The goal for the year: Face the challenge of change and expand our circle of relationships within our ministry as we deal with the discernment of the appropriateness of our ministries within the framework of our charism.

As co-chair, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko introduced the sisters to the powerful, energizing video, "Everyday Creativity." Narrated by Dewitt Jones, a photojournalist for the *National Geographic,* it was widely used with people in the workplace seeking alternative solutions to enhance productivity. Using his love for photography to inspire creativity, Jones took viewers on a phenomenal, magical journey. While visiting breathtaking locales, he taught skills and techniques for using one's imagination to overcome day-to-day challenges. Many believe creativity is a talent that one is born with; however, Jones showed his viewers that it was a skill that could be learned. The sisters used the reflection materials to apply to their personal life, community, ministry, and/or future. After sharing their reflections on key concepts that impressed them from the video, the sisters shared with the large group.[611]

The sisters revisited the video during the March 2003 assembly. Key concepts they learned from it included:

- There is usually more than one right answer.
- We need to become more comfortable with reframing a problem into an opportunity.
- Unquestioned patterns can become our prisons.
- We need to put ourselves in the place of most potential.

They applied these new learnings to the most salient issues facing the Felician Congregation, membership, vocation, finance, and ministry.[612]

Involvement in the North American Province Group and preparation for the 2005 Provincial Chapter occupied the sisters' time and energy so that by summer 2005, the provincial council decided to restructure OPIC and reestablish the Provincial Assembly Coordinating Board.[613]

PROVINCIAL CHAPTER CALLS SISTERS TO 'START AFRESH WITH CHRIST'

Preparation for the Provincial Chapter of 2005 began at the 2004 Biennial Assembly held in Rome, Italy, from March 21-31. Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general, opened the assembly with her State of the Congregation Address in which she identified four fundamental challenges sisters across the Congregation faced as they struggled to remain faithful to the Felician way of life and to live out the charism of Blessed Mary Angela. These were community life; ongoing formation especially after tertianship; areas of governance; and the fundamental difficulty of "praying always and not losing heart" (Luke 18:1).[614]

Sister Raymond recognized the need for the sisters to "reclaim our prophetic impulse," the title of a publication of the International Union of Superiors General. She principally referenced an article by Father Benoit Fortin, OFM, Cap., that noted how age curves and forecasts were haunting our chapters, with Sister Raymond adding, and "many of our gatherings and meetings." Father Fortin wrote, this "runs the risk of leading us to a kind of tranquil euthanasia if we do not risk a new audacity faced with the challenges of a new culture and a world where human dignity and life itself is threatened." He continued, "We must have the prophetic courage to dare to take new steps for other generations who will live our charism."[615]

Simultaneously, Sister Raymond pointed out, this was also the message of the forthcoming International Congress on the Consecrated Life, planned for November 2004 in Rome, whose theme was, "With a Passion for Christ and a Passion for Humanity." The Vision Document for the Congress promoted it with declarations such as "God is speaking to us through new situations and challenges," and "New realities need new answers." Sister Raymond said, "These are the words and thoughts of those who are prophets," and once again she referred to Father Fortin and his description of prophets as the ones who "set the people on the road toward hope. . . . Prophets show God's paths in history." Once again, she cited Father Fortin who exhorted his readers to "resituate ourselves in the provocative breeze of the prophets who always dared to be faithful to God."[616]

She reminded the sisters of the exhortation of Pope John Paul II in *Vita Consecrata* (no. 110), who wrote, "You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things." She concluded her remarks to the Congregation's leaders, asking, "When all the reports will be written for the provincial chapters and the general chapter, will we be able to say, 'The sisters have begun to reclaim their prophetic impulse?' Let us live a religious life that calls on God to make prophets of us all for 'it was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit'" (John 15:16).[617]

A recommendation of that Biennial Assembly was that each province adapt the Minister General's Address to appropriate components in the preparation phase of its provincial chapter. The Assembly also recommended that the goal for the provincial chapters and general chapter be, *To live more deeply our Vision and Mission by starting afresh with Christ so that we may give witness to Him by our lives.*

Preparing for Enfield's 12th Provincial Chapter

As the coordinator for Enfield's 12th Provincial Chapter, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar immediately pursued planning for the event.[618] Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, chapter president, along with the council members, approved the following sisters as members of the planning committee: Sister Francine Mary Sousa, Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, Sister Joanne Marian Kaminski, and Sister Janice Marie Gaudette, secretary.[619]

The next important matter to be decided was the method of election of delegates to the 2005 Provincial Chapter. The 2004 Biennial Assembly allowed the provincial minister, who also functioned as the chapter president, to design a Method III for choosing delegates to the chapter by June 2004, subject to approval of the minister general and her council. After the method was submitted and approved,[620] Sister Mary Laureann disseminated this information to the sisters for their consideration on July 1.[621] When the three methods were presented at the provincial assembly held on August 14, 2004, the sisters overwhelmingly voted for Method III, which contrasted significantly with Method I and II in that it allowed all sisters to be involved as delegates, supportive members, or prayer members. Additionally, all sessions of the provincial chapter were open, allowing non-delegates to participate in all discussions or to audit the sessions.[622]

In her letter of July 12, 2004, Sister Mary Laureann officially convoked the 12th Provincial Chapter of Our Lady of the Angels Province and announced that it would take place from July 10-16, 2005. Sister Laureann asked the sisters to put on "a common mind, a common heart, a common will to enable us to internalize the charism of Blessed Mary Angela." She also encouraged the sisters to steadfastly focus on the provincial/congregational goal: *To live more deeply our Vision and Mission by starting afresh with Christ so that we may give witness to Him by our lives.*[623]

During the August provincial assembly, the sisters decided to participate in a three-pronged preparation program. The first part consisted of a nine-month-long novena of prayer included in Morning or Evening Praise. Each sister was also encouraged to choose a day of fasting in the broader sense, that is, not just from food, but from any possible behaviors that might hurt. Finally, each local house chose one day during the nine-month period to help the poor by preparing a meal for someone in need or buying clothing for children.[624]

The first meeting of the Chapter Planning Committee took place at the provincial house the weekend of October 15-16, 2004, with Father Richard L. Conboy as facilitator. Father Conboy had served as chaplain to the Felician Sisters at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Provincial House in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, since 1996. He earned an M.Ed. from Duquesne University in 1965 and completed graduate studies at the University of Notre Dame where he earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy. His grasp of research on systemic change and policy process led to yet another form of service—facilitating complex organizational meetings for churches, religious orders, and groups of lay ministers, and he brought these gifts to the service of the Felician Sisters.[625] During this first meeting, the committee members came to know Father Conboy and his style of facilitating chapters with his preference for arriving at consensus rather than by voting.[626] The committee met again the weekend of March 11-13, 2005.

Sister Mary Laureann designed the simple and memorable logo for both the provincial and general chapters that encapsulated the main elements of the goal of both chapters: *To live more deeply our Vision and Mission by starting afresh with Christ so that we may give witness to him by our lives.* Principal elements in the design were the towel and basin, embodying **Our Vision,** to Be Eucharist, Be Sister, Be Servant. They represented the call to address the needs of those within the community as well as those with whom and to whom the sisters minister. Another central element of the design was the globe with its outer circle. Surrounded by the vastness of space, they demonstrated **Our Mission**. The cross imposed on the globe recalled Christ's redeeming grace, empowering the Felician Sisters who serve and cooperate in the spiritual renewal of the world. Finally, the unseen water within the basin—water, which was used, spent, depleted—was replaced by the water of Christ's life and love, a reminder that **Our Witness** comes through Another: "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me."[627]

During his meeting with the delegates on Sunday morning, April 17, 2005, Father Conboy told the sisters it is "in the nature of privilege to be with holy people in holy moments of their history, and chapter is one of those." He assured them that he was eager to be of service to them in the process of chapter. He reminded the sisters that they are the legislative authority for the province during the chapter and that decisions to be made are especially significant; consequently, they would be submitted to prayer. Father Conboy discussed the role of the chapter planning committee, topics for chapter, the concept of open space, resistance, and theological reflections. After answering additional questions from the sisters, Father Conboy said, "I'm really looking forward to this. It's a joy."[628]

Sisters encouraged to develop discerning hearts

Another proposal from the 2004 Biennial Assembly, regarding the provincial chapter, directed each province to educate the sisters to the extent possible, in the process of discernment. To that end, Sister Elaine Marie Frigo (Lodi), conducted a workshop in the provincial house auditorium on Saturday, April 16, 2005, to provide a more balanced understanding of the discernment process. Since the discernment process would be used at both the provincial and general chapters, Sister Elaine, who was very knowledgeable about the process, brought her experience as a spiritual and retreat director for more than fifteen years to the presentation.[629]

Sister Elaine began by discussing the nature of spiritual discernment. Simply put, she said, "it is a sensitivity to what pleases the Lord at that moment in my life." During the remainder of the morning session, she outlined principles involved in discerning a personal decision as well as dispositions for a communal process of discernment. She began the afternoon session reviewing the movements of the spiritual life known as spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. Offering real-life examples, she modeled how to move through the phases of the decision-making process.[630]

Reflecting on the day-long workshop, Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski said,

> Two feelings arose in my heart. First of all, I am filled with gratitude to God and our province for inviting Sister Elaine to beautifully

> deliver the 'Way of Spiritual Discernment.' Though we have employed many of the elements at chapters and meetings over the years, at our soon-to-be chapter, the principles will be in the forefront of our minds and hearts in an organized way. And secondly, my level of confidence in 'our' ability to find a way to be viable in these times has significantly increased. The charge given to us by NAP—to discern what reconfiguration of the North American provinces should be—is somewhat less overwhelming after the spiritual discernment workshop day.[631]

Following Sister Elaine's presentation, Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, led the ritual for the Commissioning of Delegates to the 12th Provincial Chapter of Our Lady of the Angels Province.[632]

With the completion of the Handbook of Procedures, the collation of proposals and issues, the theological reflections on the themes of Community, Government, and Mission, and the completion of the prayer services and liturgies by Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, all was in readiness for the opening of the 12th Provincial Chapter on July 10.

THE 12TH PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

The 12th Provincial Chapter of Our Lady of the Angels Province took place at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House from July 10-16, 2005. A retreat day preceded the work of the chapter, which called the sisters to "Live more deeply the Felician Vision and Mission by starting afresh with Christ," the goal of the chapter.[633]

In his remarks to the participants, Father Richard L. Conboy, the chapter facilitator, reflected on what it means to come together in a configuration called "chapter." He referred to the experience as a "mutuality of prophecy," defining it as "a gathering of interdependent prophets, coming together in mutuality, witnessing, celebrating." He affirmed chapter as "an opportunity to be and do the mission that holds us together," and reminded the sisters that the Spirit speaks through one another. Father Conboy urged the chapter body to listen to the Spirit while cultivating "a willingness to be surprised." Finally, he exhorted the group to reflect on the question: "What dream do you bring?"[634]

In her role as chapter president, Sister Mary Laureann, provincial minister, formally opened the chapter on Monday, July 11, immediately following the procession into the chapter hall, the large social room. Fifty sisters constituted the body of delegates. After the delegates accepted the Handbook of Rules and Procedures, they elected three tellers: Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski, Sister Mary Ann Papiez, and Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz, alternate. In presenting the State of the Province report, Sister Laureann acknowledged the work of the councilors in their daily and generous service to the province. In turn, the chapter body affirmed the provincial administration for their work of the past six years, reflected in the report. The sisters also affirmed Sister Mary Apollonia Niksa, master baker, for her work in the bakery and Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz, who was the catalyst for the Jubilee Project.[635]

During the chapter, the delegates heard presentations on the province's corporate ministries. Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, president and CEO of St. Joseph Hospital, Bangor, Maine, presented the hospital report, focusing on future development of programs and facilities. Sister Mary Anastasia Holak,

director of the Enfield Montessori School, reported on the school's operations over the past six years. Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, director, Felician Adult Day Care, spoke about the growth and development of the center.[636]

Chapter sessions on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday focused on discussion of Community, Mission/Ministry, and Government issues. Each day's well-planned celebrations of Eucharist and rituals complemented and enhanced the theme for the day and moved the delegates into contemplative space where they pondered the chapter's challenging tasks. On Monday, the sisters shared bread with one another as a reminder of their calling to "Be Eucharist," the theme for that day. During Tuesday's service, "Be Sister, Be Servant, Would You Mind If I Wash Your Feet?" each sister washed her hands in a basin of water as a sign of her availability to minister in the Church through a life of joyful witness and loving service. On Saturday, the final full day of the chapter, the sisters beheld the Christ in each other and honored that sister with a profound bow, part of "Our Witness," leading to greater growth and wholeness.[637]



Provincial Minister SM Laureann Alexandrowicz offers a towel to SM Edith St. Jean during a ritual at the provincial chapter. Each sister washed her hands in a basin of water, signifying her availability for ministry in the Church through her life of joyful witness and loving service.

On Friday, the delegates reflected on the Action Direction Statement written by Sister Frances Marion and the ad hoc committee involved in its formulation. The statement read:

Starting afresh with Christ by being Sister
We call each other to nurture a vibrant community through
Acceptance
Affirmation
Appreciation
and

We witness the Felician-Franciscan Mission by our
Joy
Harmony
Openness
as we journey together toward
the spiritual renewal of the world.[638]

The afternoon session was devoted to election of delegates to the 2006 General Chapter. Sister Mary Norberta was elected first delegate; Sister Frances Marion, second delegate; Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, chapter liturgist, first alternate; and Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, coordinator of secretaries, second alternate.[639]

In the closing ceremony on Saturday morning, the chapter delegates expressed their appreciation for "the inspiration and movement of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of our skilled facilitator, Father Conboy," along with "the commitment of the chapter delegates and their contributions to the community," and "the opportunity to share hopes and dreams for the future." Following the singing of the traditional *Magnificat,* each delegate signed the Chapter document and accepted a remembrance from Sister Laureann after which she closed the proceedings of the 12th Provincial Chapter of Our Lady of the Angels Province. On Sunday morning, the sisters participated in a Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving offered by Father Conboy, who blessed the elected delegates and alternates to the 2006 General Chapter.[640]

The Enfield sisters agreed on five Affirmations during this chapter, expanding communication, particularly providing for and training sisters to use email; making progress on the provincial website; creating options to select their local minister; expanding efforts at orientation of board members for the sponsored ministries; and addressing future planning for St. Joseph Hospital.

Issues resulting from the chapter included:

- Providing a variety of retreat opportunities to meet the sisters' spiritual needs.
- Having each sister make community building a priority in her daily life.
- Including discernment between each sister and the provincial minister during the ministerial assignment process.
- Forming a task force to study establishing and/or expanding ministries and making major renovations on the provincial complex, especially upgrading the infirmary.
- Establishing a program to acquaint the sisters with the generic information concerning board members.
- Adjusting the monthly living allotment, the monthly personal budget, and the vacation allotment.
- Initiating a study on personal budgeting.
- Employing a development person for the province.
- Reviewing and revising the Provincial Policies Handbook.

- Reestablishing the Coordinating Board to implement the provincial chapter enactments.

The delegates also considered proposals to send to the general chapter:

- That current NAP Steering Committee members continue serving or remain as a consultative group.
- That the 50% + 1 requirement relating to board membership in Felician-sponsored ministries be eliminated.
- That a different method of recording the monthly house meeting be used.[641]

Speaking about the chapter experience, Sister Mary Laureann said, "I am most pleased and grateful for the experience and outcome of the chapter. The facilitator directed the chapter process with sincere respect and in gentleness and peace." She added, "The sisters were genuinely, wholeheartedly, immersed in the sacredness of the chapter." Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski said, "I experienced a reality resulting from the generous giving of 'our gifts' for the building up of the body. Together we can make something truly beautiful."[642]

THE 22ND GENERAL CHAPTER

Preparations for the 22nd General Chapter of the Congregation of the Felician Sisters began in 2002 with the appointment of the Chapter Planning Committee, comprised of four provincial ministers, three from North America and one from Poland. They were Sister Mary Ambrose Wozniak (Buffalo), Sister Mary Aquinas Szott (Lodi), Sister Mary Jean Romanowicz (Canada), and Sister Mary Elwira Nieradka (Przemyśl). Sister Mary Rosita Brennan, general councilor, was appointed general chapter coordinator and Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, minister general was an *ex officio* member. The Chapter Planning Committee developed the process to be used for both the provincial and general chapters of 2005 and 2006 respectively. Participants of the 2004 Biennial Assembly reviewed the process along with the discernment method for the election of the minister general and council and recommended their use to the minister general and her council.[643]

To provide even broader participation in leadership and collaboration among the sisters of the provinces, four ad hoc chapter planning committees were appointed: Election Process, Handbook of Rules and Procedures, Theological Reflections, and Liturgy/Rituals. Sisters from the various provinces comprised these committees and their input, the fruit of their expertise and experience, as well as cultural diversity, proved valuable in planning the various chapter activities. Father Richard L. Conboy was appointed the general chapter facilitator in March 2004.[644]

In her letter of June 1, 2005, Sister Mary Raymond formally convened the 22nd General Chapter at the Felician Generalate in Rome, Italy, from June 5 to 25, 2006. She noted that the chapter would be preceded by an orientation program for delegates from June 1 to 3 and set June 4 as a Day of Prayer and Reflection for all chapter participants and support staff. She invited each sister of the Congregation to join in the spirit of the chapter as well as the spiritual preparation.[645]

The three-part spiritual preparation included a reflection prepared by the Preserving the Heritage Committee. As *Response to Love* states, "The prime

responsibilities of the general chapter are **to protect our Felician patrimony,** to promote renewal in accordance with the spirit of our Foundress, and to elect the superior general and her councilors" (Art. 91). The reflection consisted of three parts:

I. Selected readings and questions for personal reflection.
II. Suggested questions for mutual conversation and group sharing.
III. Transformative action: a resolution or plan for personal and/or communal action

Additionally, each local home was asked to pray in some particular manner for the forthcoming general chapter. This activity began on September 28, 2005, and concluded on June 4, 2006. Finally, each sister received a prayer card designed by the Chapter Planning Committee that reminded her to join her prayer with those being said for the 22nd General Chapter around the world. Sister Raymond concluded her letter enunciating the focus for the chapter, writing, "As we decipher the signs of our times, may we truly seek to reclaim our prophetic impulse, the impulse that guided Blessed Mary Angela to found the Felician Congregation 150 years ago."[646]

By the fall of 2005, the planning committee had determined that the daily proceedings of the chapter would be available online throughout the chapter.[647] The link to the general chapter became operational on May 1, 2006, through the Congregational website.[648] Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, who had been elected as one of Enfield's delegates, was added to the General Chapter Planning Committee, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, also an elected delegate, was appointed to the committee preparing the Acts of the General Chapter.[649] Sister Joan Marie Swierzb was appointed to serve as secretary, and Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz to assist with food services.[650]



Enfield's delegation to the Felician Congregation's 2006 General Chapter included (from l): SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister; and delegates S Frances Marion Bonczar and SM Norberta Malinowski. S Christine Marie Stankiewicz was a member of the food services staff and S Joan Marie Swierzb served as secretary.

To engage each sister in the matters of the Congregation, by mid-April 2006 the sisters received a summary of the proposals without their rationales. The forty-seven proposals addressed every aspect of Felician life, especially apostolic mission, formation, and government.[651]

PASSION LIVES AT THE 22ND GENERAL CHAPTER

The Turin 2006 Olympic Winter Games held earlier in the year had as their theme *Passion Lives in Torino.* Extrapolating to the 22nd General Chapter, in her opening address, Sister Raymond exhorted the sisters to let the spirit "be also one of passion. Let us say that *Passion Lives at the 22nd General Chapter in Rome.* May there be a passion for Christ and a passion for His people. May we feel a passion burning in our hearts that calls us to live our consecrated lives more completely, our Vision and Mission more deeply. May there be seen a passion that impels us to start afresh and give witness to Christ by our very lives!"[652]

Immersed in a context of spiritual experiences prepared by the Liturgy/Rituals Committee, the delegates undertook the first major work of the general chapter, the study and discussion of the *State of the Congregation Report 2000 – 2006.* The members of the Review Committee included Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch (Chicago), Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski (Chicago), and Sister Mary Laureann. The overall positive response on the part of the delegates to the comprehensive document indicated that it was an honest reflection of the realities of each of their respective provinces. The strengths highlighted in each section and the challenges presented were accepted without hesitation since the report accurately revealed the lived reality of the Felician Sisters over the last six years. The Review Committee expressed gratitude to Sister Mary Raymond and the sisters of the general administration for their servant leadership since 2000. It further noted that, "By their inclusion of the strengths of the sisters and the challenges that face the Congregation, they have given the report a quality of truthfulness that respectfully acknowledges the human condition of the sisters struggling to incarnate the Paschal Mystery in their day-to-day Felician life."[653]

The delegates listened, reflected, and dialogued about sixty-one proposals during the chapter, resulting in revision of two articles and twelve statutes in *Response to Love*. They generated directives in the areas of Felician Heritage, Charism, Life of Prayer, Apostolic Mission and Ministry, Formation, Government, and Temporal Goods. Perhaps the most important was the formulation of a clear and concise statement of the charism of Blessed Mary Angela:

> The Charism of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice is to imitate Blessed Mary Angela's boundless love of God and surrender to God's Will in
>
> - Compassionate service
> - Total availability
> - Concern for the salvation of all people[654]

The delegates revised Appendix 2 in *Response to Love,* "Methods of Election." The "Promulgation of Acts" also included several Recommendations and Affirmations. Because the delegates felt strongly that the theological reflections used at the chapter spoke to their minds and hearts and "called forth from us to

start afresh with Christ so that we may give witness to Him by our lives through living more deeply the vision, mission and charism today," they recommended that the theological reflections be incorporated on the provincial level for the prayer and reflection of all the sisters of the Congregation.[655]

Traditionally, each province brought small material gifts that they shared with the participants as well as staff at the general chapter. At the suggestion of the general administration, the sisters made a monetary donation to a specific charity in the name of the Felician Sisters. On its assigned day, each province gave each participant a card indicating the charity and purpose for which their donation was given. The Enfield Sisters made its donation to the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry in Hartford, Connecticut, which supports a shelter for homeless women and provides daily meals for homeless families.[656]

The fruit of the deliberations of the delegates and the prayer of sisters throughout the Congregation was the Action Direction Statement:

Starting afresh from Christ,
we embrace our Felician Charism, Vision, and Mission as we

- Strengthen our Franciscan identity
- Deepen right relationships
- Promote a culture of life

and become a living Gospel to ALL.[657]

The last stage of the general chapter was the election of the minister general and the general councilors. In a solemn moment of intense prayer and discernment, the delegates chose Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch (Chicago) who, along with her team of five elected councilors, would lead the congregation in implementing the Spirit-inspired direction set by the chapter delegates. Sisters called to the service of authority and leadership as general councilors were Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio (Coraopolis), vicar and first councilor; Sister Mary Ambrose Wozniak (Buffalo), second councilor; Sister Mary Inga Borko (Warsaw), third councilor; Sister Mary Reginalda Gągała (Przemyśl), fourth councilor; and Sister Janet Marie Kurgan (Lodi), fifth councilor.[658]

Reflecting on the general chapter experience, Sister Mary Laureann said, "I believe the whole Congregation made this chapter with us. It was a holy experience. Whatever happened was a 'God event,' and everyone at the chapter went back to share this spirit with the sisters in their provinces."

Speaking of her role as a delegate, Sister Mary Norberta said, "It became very clear that our role as delegates was to represent the needs and concerns of the entire Congregation, not just our respective province. Meeting our sisters from Canada, Poland, Brazil, Kenya, and Russia was a moving experience."

Sister Frances Marion said that the presence of the Holy Spirit was "strongly felt, the unity among the sisters was evident, and there was PEACE!"

Sister Joan Marie described her experience in these words:

> From the minute we arrived in Rome and the gate opened to the generalate grounds, through the preparation period, and during the chapter itself, I felt a spirit of unity, a spirit of prayerfulness, and deep respect for each delegate and staff member. The liturgies were the foundation of this atmosphere. Everything was done with and in prayer. Beautiful words can be placed on banners and put to music,

but to actually live those words is a reality that I witnessed during the Chapter of 2006.

As a member of the Food Services Staff, Sister Christine Marie said, "We offered 'service with a smile,' helped with needs, wants, and preferences. Whenever possible, and when invited to attend the General Chapter events, we would participate. It was rich in symbolism, rituals, and enlivening song. Being a part of the 2006 General Chapter—the entire experience—will never be forgotten."[659]

Post-General Chapter Provincial Assembly

When the sisters from throughout the Enfield province gathered in the community room on August 12, 2006, for the Post-General Chapter Provincial Assembly, Sister Mary Laureann welcomed the sisters home and thanked them for the trust they placed in the delegates as well as their prayers, sacrifices, fasting, and loving concern for the sisters and for "being such a powerful, prayerful and loving force that moved us forward."[660] In her role as chapter facilitator, Sister Frances Marion explained the day's purpose to the sisters as deepening their knowledge of what took place at the general chapter.[661] Following her remarks, each delegate shared information from the chapter. Sister Laureann read excerpts of the letter from Archbishop Leonardo Sandri that prefaced the "Promulgation of Acts of the General Chapter." He wrote, "His Holiness [Pope Benedict XVI] encourages you all to live ever more deeply your vocation to radiate joy and to be transformed into the likeness of Christ as you dedicate yourselves to the service of the Gospel."[662] Sister Laureann also cited the address of Sister Mary Raymond, minister general.

Sister Frances Marion presented the *State of the Congregation Report* and then reviewed the directives formulated at the chapter. Sister Norberta spoke about the proposals, discussions, voting process and Open Sessions before presenting a running commentary on the two revised articles and twelve revised statutes. Sister Laureann reviewed the changes to Appendix 2, "Methods of Election" and spoke about the "symbolic gifts" made by each province to a charity of its choice.

After sharing provincial business, the assembly adjourned with the singing of "A Journey in Hope."[663]

Chapter 6
Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, 2007 – 2009
A Journey of Hope to a New Tomorrow

The reconfiguration process, now in its tenth year, brought with it challenges for the sisters and leadership. The ground was shifting dramatically, and everyone struggled to embrace the challenge to shape, adapt to, and eventually, to thrive in a single province. The eight provinces in North America were beginning their "Journey of Hope to a New Tomorrow," being reshaped into a new entity, one North American province. As the sisters moved into the final phase of the reconfiguration process, they found themselves caught up in a profound experience of the Paschal mystery, and they looked for insightful leaders who would walk with them as they journeyed to recommit sharing their religious life in a larger, more diverse united province.

In her role as provincial minister, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz began the election process for the next provincial minister and her council. During the Post-General Chapter Assembly held in Enfield on August 12, 2006,[1] she briefly reviewed the methods of election for provincial leadership found in Appendix 2 of *Response to Love* and reminded the sisters to consider potential methods for the upcoming election in April 2007. She also spoke about developing a third option and hoped to have the draft of a model for presentation based on models from other provinces, at the provincial assembly in October.

At the assembly on Saturday, October 28, 2006, the Enfield Felicians gathered at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House to begin the process of choosing a new leadership team. A substantial portion of the October assembly was devoted to the methods of election for the provincial minister and provincial council presented in Appendix 2—the Nominative-Appointive Procedure and the Elective-Confirmative Procedure. With the assistance of the provincial leadership team, Sister Laureann reviewed the current methods of election and briefly analyzed differences in the two methods. Following small and large group discussion, during which the sisters posed thoughtful and meaningful questions, Option 3 clearly emerged as the choice of the sisters. This option enabled them to conduct a direct election of the provincial minister and provincial council with the approval and confirmation of the minister general and council.[2]

Provincial councilor Sister Francine Mary Sousa served as chair of the Elections Committee. Appointed members included Sister Mary Alexander Mazur, Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa, and Sister Christine Marie Stankiewicz.[3] Reflecting on the day, Provincial Councilor Sister Mary Rosalma Fish said, "The provincial assembly on October 28 was another open and sincere meeting of the sisters of the province. The method chosen focuses on our willingness to allow the Spirit to guide us as we discern God's will for our province in the years ahead. It provides ample time for personal reflection on the qualities of leadership, enables us to call forth individuals who are willing and able to lead, and identifies the province's needs and goals. Through discernment guided by prayer, we will choose sisters who are the right choices for our 'Journey in Hope.'"[4]

On the same day that Sister Laureann announced that the election discernment process for the provincial minister and council would take place—February 10, 2007—Barack Obama, then junior United States senator from Illinois, standing before the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln began his political career, formally announced his candidacy for President of the United States. Obama became the first African American in history to be nominated for president on a major party ticket. He presented himself as an agent of generational change who could transform a government hobbled by cynicism, petty corruption and "a smallness of our politics." Obama won the election held on November 4, 2008 and was inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States on January 20, 2009.[5]

As part of the province's discernment process, each sister responded to stimulating questions that helped her think seriously about the responsibilities of leadership in religious life in these times.

- What do you consider to be the priority issues/concerns of the province to be addressed within the next few years?
- How would you suggest addressing them? What might be the outcome?
- How do you view the North American Province (NAP) process, i.e., Where do you stand with the process? And,
- Where do you hope to see it lead us on the journey to a new tomorrow?[6]

A series of challenges confronted the sisters within this discernment, ranging from the personal to the corporate. Their responses showed their concerns about expanding their mission with the poor, the marginalized, and the elderly, especially their own aging sisters, while at the same time facing diminishing membership. And they were concerned about ways to develop vocations and to grow the associate program. Of major concern was financial viability, which necessitated strengthening the province's corporate ministries, and finding ways to collaborate interprovincially with a smaller leadership pool. A priority amidst all these challenges was to ensure that each sister continue her spiritual journey of conversion/transformation.[7]

Regarding the NAP process, Sister Dolores Anne Mary Ungerer wrote, "The NAP process has brought us together as a Congregation. It has made me more appreciative of the diversity of our Congregation, the ministries that we have, the dedication of the sisters, as well as the difficulties we face as we move into reconfiguration." Sister Carol Marie Saladin responded, "The NAP process has been enriching for me personally. Being in touch with sisters from other provinces has connected and bonded us. I look forward to continuing the journey with my sisters. With renewed hope for North America, I envision Felician Sisters to be risk takers, willing to do whatever, and open to the Holy Spirit." Finally, Sister Janice Marie Gaudette summed it up when she wrote, "The NAP process is our future."[8]

When the sisters gathered in Enfield on March 10, 2007, they began the day with prayer in the provincial house chapel. After moving to the large social room, each sister completed nomination forms for provincial minister and provincial council. Those sisters nominated by secret ballot had the option to accept or refuse the nomination. A list of nominees accepting the nomination for provincial leadership along with their curriculum vitae was forwarded to Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch and the general council

for their approval. Prior to the April 21, 2007, election assembly, the sisters received for their prayerful discernment the approved list of nominees for provincial minister and provincial councilors.[9]

Enfield sisters choose new leadership team

Saturday, April 21, 2007, dawned with warm sunlight and breezes. The author of the article for the province's quarterly newsletter wrote, "One could almost hear the voice of this birthing season." As the sisters gathered once again in the large social room, this time to begin the election of the new provincial leadership team, the words of the Risen Jesus as recorded in the day's gospel by John— "It is I. Do not be afraid"—resonated in their hearts and minds.[10]

Choosing from the list of approved nominees, the sisters selected Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha as provincial minister to lead them along the "Journey of Hope." Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz was elected provincial vicar and Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, and Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko as provincial council members.[11]

Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha served on the previous leadership team from 2001-2007 as provincial vicar and secretary. She had also served as provincial secretary from 1982 to 1989 with Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski and from 1989 to 1995 with Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko. Prior to her leadership as a council member, she spent eleven years as a junior high and high school teacher and five years as an elementary school principal in schools staffed by the Felician Sisters including St. Joseph in Webster, Massachusetts; St. Mary in Torrington, Connecticut; St. Stanislaus in Fall River, Massachusetts; and St. Bernard School and Our Lady of the Angels Academy, both in Enfield. Within the province, she had served as formation coordinator, director of sisters in temporary vows, and director of ongoing formation. She was also a member of the North American Province (NAP) Policy Task Force.[12]

One image of leadership that many people have is that of proficiency. Email and calls need to be answered, office work organized, meetings scheduled and attended, and all the sisters, members of the leadership team, heads of ministries and their staffs, engaged in the constant buzz of business that is the lifeblood of a functioning institution. Sister Bernardine brought her knowledge of the sisters and their giftedness as well as her ability to listen and an understanding heart to her ministry of leadership. She seemed to know instinctively that leadership was not a skill set and that her role as a leader was not simply to make decisions, but to build cooperation and consensus, to welcome people and to collaborate, and that the biggest and most profound impact that she could have was nothing she did on her own, but instead was the result of encouraging, affirming, and constructing a true team with others.

Someone once said that the best leaders are in the back of the room. That person might have been speaking about Sister Bernardine, who was guided by her definition of leadership as the ability to mobilize people towards a vision or goal and to influence others to achieve worthwhile results. Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, a member of the leadership team who had served as the director of nursing for both the infirmary and provincial house for many years, said, "Because of her gentle spirit, people felt comfortable speaking with her, including the staff who shared their struggles with her," and added, "She is good at keeping a confidence."[13] Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski,

who was in the same *grono* (group) with Sister Bernardine, reflected on "the cancer chapter" of her own life and credited Sister Bernardine with allowing her to advocate for herself, since, she said, she was fully capable of doing so. She asserted that it "had everything to do with my recovery. I will be forever grateful."[14] The community's younger members found her gentle demeanor and aura of peacefulness attractive, maintaining that it helped them to trust her. A sister in temporary vows described her as accepting, even though, "She had seen me at my best AND at my worst."[15]

Sister Bernardine understood that fundamental to the Felician leadership style is the concept of servant leadership, focusing on the needs of others, and loving and serving as Jesus did. She said that living out of a life filled with gratitude helped her to fully realize how God was working in her life.[16] The sisters found her easy to live with because she always treated them with dignity and respect, but she admitted that being tolerant of self and others, especially when making mistakes, took patience and flexibility. On her "Election Discernment Process" form, the issue she identified as a priority for the province to address was witnessing "Gospel living to each sister and to all people that we encounter." In conclusion, she wrote, "Let us go forth on our 'Journey in Hope' with faith and trust in Divine Providence."[17]

Enfield province installs new leadership team

Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell, archbishop of Hartford, was the principal celebrant and homilist at the Eucharistic liturgy for the installation of the new provincial leadership team for Our Lady of the Angels Province. The celebration took place on June 29, 2007, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles, in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel. Joining Archbishop Mansell were Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, provincial house chaplain; Father William Baldyga, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Suffield, Connecticut; Father Dariusz Gosciniak, pastor of St. Bernard Parish, Enfield; Father Michael Zielke, OFM, Conv., pastor of St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Basilica Parish in Chicopee, Massachusetts; and Abbott Damian Carr, OCSO, of St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. Assistant Chancellor Father John P. Melnick served as master of ceremonies.[18]

Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, presided at the installation of the new leadership team: Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister; Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, vicar and first councilor; Sister Mary Norberta, second councilor; Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, third councilor, and Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, fourth councilor. In her prayer for the new leadership team, Sister Barbara Ann used the words of Felician Foundress Sophia Truszkowska: "I bless you with all my heart and place you under the protection of Him who has called you to this service. . . ." While presenting each member of the leadership team with a candle, she said, "The flames symbolize the passionate God-energy that is in each of us." Other members of the general council in attendance were Sister Mary Ambrose Wozniak, secretary general, and Sister Janet Marie Kurgan, general councilor. Guests included Sister Mary Angelette Helak and Sister Jane Marie Kupniewski from Buffalo, New York.[19]

In his homily, Archbishop Mansell spoke about the importance of continuing to be "rooted," and reviewed the history of the Polish people as well as the Felician Sisters. He noted the oppression of the Polish people and said,

"No one was able to capture the Polish soul—a soul that is Catholic—and that is the roots of the Felician community." Following the liturgy, sisters, clergy, and associates enjoyed an elegant dinner in the social room. In her remarks following the meal, Sister Barbara Ann again thanked the new leadership team for responding to the "call to servant leadership that came from our loving God and through your sisters." She challenged the sisters of the province to participate fully in shared leadership. On behalf of the province, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, former provincial minister, wished the team "Hope . . . that brings an inner strength, . . . plans for tomorrow, . . . and offers vision for a changed future."[20]

Reflecting on the Rite of Installation and the day's events, Sister Bernardine said, "I firmly believe that with God's grace and the support of each sister, we will make every effort to carry out the duties and responsibilities that loving leadership requires following the exhortation of Blessed Mary Angela: "*there should be one authority—the authority of communal love.*"[21]



The provincial council, 2007-2009.
From l: S Marie JoAnn Lewko, S Nancy Marie Piecewicz, SM Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister; SM Norberta Malinowski, S Constance Marie Tomyl.

'May the Lord bless and keep you'

Following the dinner celebrating the installation of the new provincial leadership team, Sister Mary Bernardine publicly expressed appreciation to Sister Mary Laureann and her administration for their years of dedicated commitment and service. In the name of the sisters, she expressed sincere gratitude to Sister Laureann, council members Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, as well as treasurer Sister Mary Florentine Myjak. She invited each sister to join her, praying:

The Lord bless you and keep you.
May he let his face shine on you and
give you much peace, joy, and good health
as you continue to serve him
as faithful daughters of Blessed Mary Angela.[22]

Earlier that month, sisters came from throughout the province to participate in a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated in the provincial house chapel as part of an "Appreciation Day" for Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz and her council: Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, for their six years of dedicated service to the sisters of the province. Chaplain Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz celebrated Eucharist in their intention. The sisters enjoyed the festive noon meal prepared by the kitchen crew as well as the special "Thank You" cake. Bingo and an ice cream social concluded the day's festivities.[23]

Leadership team attends historic gathering

Several weeks after their installation, in Chicago, Illinois, on August 25 and 26, 2007, the Enfield province's leadership team joined sisters from North and South America as well as from Poland to walk "In the Footsteps of Francis ◊ In the Spirit of Angela." The orientation sessions for provincial leaders took place in Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House. Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler, general minister of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, facilitated "Leading in the Spirit of St. Francis." Sister Deborah Cerullo, SSND, presented "Canonical and Civil Obligations."[24]

Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, vicar general and congregational government coordinator, observed that the gathering together of all provincial leadership teams in one place was "a history making event in our Congregation." In her opening remarks, Sister Cabrini set the tone for the meeting, saying, "The words of Jesus remind us that even when we are doing His work, we must be careful that we serve by washing the feet of others, not by asking others to wash our feet. The 'greatest'—those in positions that involve leadership and visibility—must possess the largest heart, a servant's heart."[25]

In her introductory remarks, Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, reminded the sisters that their call to leadership, "which came through the prayerful and discerning voices of our sisters, is a manifestation of God's loving Will for us at this time in our lives, in the lives of our sisters, and in the life of our Congregation." She challenged the provincial leaders to respond "in total self-giving love to God's boundless love . . . compassionate service, total availability and concern for the salvation of all people, including our sisters. . . . " Sister Barbara Ann strongly urged the members of the leadership teams to "make time to speak and share the Word of God, Jesus, in Scripture."[26]

Sister Elizabeth explained that since Franciscans live "in *fraternitas,*" in relationship, Franciscan leadership must be grounded in relationship more than in position, power, or prestige. She noted that, according to the Third Order Rule, the "job description" of the Franciscan leader is to *visit, admonish,* and *encourage*, "to help create a dwelling place where each sister can become her true self." Sister Deborah spoke at length about conducting the affairs of the religious institute in council, maintaining the distinction between the affairs of the religious institute and the affairs of the ministry corporations. Discussion of case studies gave the sisters the opportunity to sharpen their understanding of issues in a real-life context. The ritual of the washing of hands that completed the concluding prayer service on the theme of "Servant Leadership" powerfully recalled Jesus as servant leader and his words to his followers: "I have given you an example, that so you also should do."[27]

Closing St. Bernard Convent

One of the first things that Sister Mary Bernardine and her new council had to oversee was the closing of St. Bernard Convent in Enfield. Father Dariusz Gosciniak, pastor of St. Bernard Parish, along with the St. Bernard Parish Council, had already made the difficult decision in May 2006 to sell the convent and property at 376 Hazard Avenue in Enfield. This decision was based on the gradual deterioration of the house, which necessitated costly repairs that the council, faithful to its fiduciary responsibility, found beyond the scope of the parish. Additionally, the group could not justify keeping the convent open for the two sisters currently living in a building that originally accommodated eight sisters. Father Gosciniak shared this decision with Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister and the members of her administration. At that time, he agreed to allow the sisters to live there for the 2006-2007 school year to prepare for the closing of the convent.[28]

Once Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, with the deliberative vote of her council, granted permission for the suppression of St. Bernard Convent, Sister Bernardine and her council planned to ritualize the closing. On the morning of August 1, 2007, Father Gosciniak, Sister Bernardine, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, Sister Theresa Marie Grochowski, and seven other sisters who had at one time called St. Bernard Convent "home" gathered to celebrate the years of faithful community and dedicated ministry with a prayer service prepared by Sister Constance Marie Tomyl. Father Gosciniak expressed his appreciation to the sisters for their service to the school and parish throughout the years. He noted that he and the parishioners were indebted to the sisters for their presence and expressed his desire to continue the relationship with them. The convent opened in 1962, and the sisters had lived there since then. Sister JoAnn and Sister Theresa relocated to Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House, where they were easily accommodated, and traveled to St. Bernard School by car each day.[29]

ENFIELD PROVINCE MARKS 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING

The year was 1932. The United States was in the grips of the Great Depression. "Brother, can you spare a dime?" became a popular song as the number of unemployed reached thirteen million and wages were 60% less than in 1929. President Hoover's popularity was failing as voters felt he was unable to reverse the economic collapse. That November, the Democrats, led by Franklin D. Roosevelt, won a sweeping victory, promising the American people a "New Deal."[30]

According to the history of the Enfield province (Ruda, 1998), the year 1932 was also significant in the Felician Congregation. The membership of the Lodi, New Jersey, province, founded in 1913, had nearly doubled and the province had forty-seven establishments in nine states. This rapid growth necessitated a division of the Lodi province.[31] In a circular letter to the sisters, Mother Mary Pia Schweda, superior general, wrote that, "Efficient management called for the formation of a smaller but well-organized unit."[32]

Consequently, the Tenth General Chapter, convened in Krakow, Poland, at the end of August 1932, adopted a resolution to found a sixth American province. The chapter determined the boundaries of the new province to include all the establishments of the Felician Sisters in the New England states

of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, as well as those in eastern and southeastern New York state. The general chapter also appointed a separate administration for the new province and named Mother Mary Annunciata Bretschneider as the provincial superior. Along with Mother Mary Angelica Pilarska, provincial superior of the Lodi province, Mother Annunciata immediately undertook the task of finding a suitable location for temporary administrative offices. Since the new province would encompass the New England establishments, they felt it was important to seek a centrally located site in New England.[33]

As early as 1929, Mother Angelica had sought suggestions and information about possible real estate purchases in New England. Father Joseph M. Tomikowski, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, manifested a steadily growing interest in the cause of the sisters. After learning about the availability of the Longview Estate in Enfield, the property of George H. Mifflin, a member of the Boston family of publishers, he notified Mother Angelica of the prospect and entered vigorously into negotiations to purchase the property for the sisters.[34]

On September 22, 1933, during her visitation of the American provinces, Mother Mary Pia arrived in Enfield to inspect the property. The scenic beauty of the property, its proximity to Felician convents, and the spaciousness of the former Orrin Thompson mansion itself prompted Mother Pia to remark, "This is an ideal place to establish the provincial house for the New England province." Orrin Thompson, founder of Thompsonville, Connecticut, built the spacious and ample brick mansion in 1832. This imposing building was the centerpiece of a beautifully wooded estate of slightly more than thirty-two acres.[35]

On December 13, 1933, Leon Tomikowski, Father Tomikowski's brother and an attorney, completed the business negotiations. Four months later, he transferred the title of the property to the Felician Sisters. The purchase enabled the sisters to establish provincial headquarters in New England under the religious title of Our Lady of the Angels Convent, legally incorporated on April 25, 1934, as "The Felician Sisters of the Order of St. Francis of Connecticut, Incorporated."[36]

'The Lord has done great things for us'

In May 2007, Our Lady of the Angels Province announced plans to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding. Reflecting on the plans for the year's celebrations, Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz said, "Jubilees are not only celebrated in remembrance of the past, but of new beginnings of what is to come. We raise our Felician hearts in thanksgiving for . . . a glorious past . . . a grace-filled present . . . a promising future. And, with strong, mighty voices, we proclaim our *Magnificat* . . . the Lord has done great things for us."[37]

A committee was formed to plan monthly activities to commemorate this important year in the province's history.[38] The Committee was in the able hands of Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, Sister Mary Rosalma Fish, and Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso To launch this special year, each local house received a special commemorative candle following the spring 'Journey

in Hope' Provincial Assembly held on Saturday, May 12, 2007. Sisters lit the candles at least once each day throughout the anniversary year, imploring God to continue to shower blessings on the Enfield province.[39]

The Jubilee Year formally opened with a Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving on August 2, 2007, the feast of Our Lady of the Angels. The special Eucharistic celebration also honored sisters celebrating their 60th and 70th anniversaries of consecrated life. They were Sister Theresa Mary Gondek, 60 years; and Sister Mary Alexander Mazur, Sister Mary Joseph Byczek, Sister Mary Magdalen Pytelewski, and Sister Mary Veronica Zacharczyk, 70 years. The sisters also recognized Sister Mary Evelyn Rybicki, who would have celebrated her 70th anniversary, but whom God called to her eternal home just five days earlier.[40]

A festive dinner celebrating both events followed the special anniversary liturgy. At an afternoon gathering, the sisters viewed a moving DVD that documented the history of the province, produced by Sister Mary Bernardine, Sister Mary Angelia, Sister Mary Laureann, Sister Frances Marion, and Sister Nancy Marie. As Sister Nancy, technical director for the project explained, the DVD consisted of three parts: the first part narrated the history of the province; the second part, *We remember, s*aluted those who had gone before us; and part three, *We rejoice,* celebrated current members. The presentation concluded with the singing of *Czego chcesz od nas Panie?* (What return can we make to the Lord?) and the *Magnificat,* the formal hymn of thanksgiving of the Felician Congregation. The sisters enjoyed the ice cream social coordinated by Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko and Sister Mary Stella Motyl that concluded the day.[41]

As part of the 75th Anniversary Project, earlier in the summer, gravestones in the Felician Sisters plot at St. Adalbert Cemetery were power-washed and two large urns were placed before the cross and the statue of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Members of the 75th Anniversary committee placed floral arrangements before each grave marker on August 1.[42]

The theme of the province's Lawn Festival celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the province. God's graces and blessings were abundant on Saturday, September 8, as sisters who came from far and near—joined by volunteers from Lodi, New Jersey—worked tirelessly throughout the day under the direction of Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, festival coordinator. The beautiful warm weather helped family, friends, and visitors to enjoy the day. People were appreciative of the small token they received to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the presence of the Felician Sisters in Enfield.[43]

Enfield sisters rededicate Peace Site

"Today we proclaim once more that Our Lady of the Angels Province of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice is holy ground." With these words, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, opened the service organized to rededicate Our Lady of the Angels Peace Site. The service marked the 20th anniversary of the Peace Site and was yet another in a series of activities marking the province's 75th anniversary. The celebration took place on Saturday, October 13, following the provincial assembly. Highlights included a reading from the prophet Micah, a hymn recalling Mother Angela's gift of self in joyful service, and the "Litany to the Lamb of God for Peace." After Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski shared the story of the strange old woman in "Changing the Face of the Mountain," the sisters planted flower bulbs that

were eventually replanted outside before the statue of St. Francis. Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, who prepared and coordinated the service, explained that the flower bulb was used as a symbol of planting love that brings forth peace, following in the footsteps of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela.[44]



Vandeth Cote adds the finishing touches to the peace flag used during the service held to rededicate the Peace Site on October 13, 2007.

Despite the cool afternoon, the sisters processed outside to replace the plaque marking the rededication of the grounds in 1987 and to raise the peace flag. Vandeth Cote, province seamstress, sewed the flag whose central element was an olive branch. The olive branch was chosen because, for thousands of years, it has represented peace and goodwill, symbolism likely related to the story of Noah and the dove found in the Book of Genesis. After praying "The Lord's Prayer" to conclude the service, the sisters signed one another with a blessing of peace. Apple crisp and ice cream, prepared by Sister Mary Stella Motyl and Sister Mary Apollonia Niksa, awaited the sisters in the dining room.[45]

Celebrating those who have gone before us

Felician Sisters, along with the parishioners of St. Adalbert Parish in Enfield, gathered at the Felician Sisters plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery early in the afternoon on Sunday, November 4, 2007, to remember the deceased Felician Sisters and members of St. Adalbert Parish. Father Edmund M. O'Brien, pastor, was the celebrant and homilist for the Eucharistic liturgy. In his homily, he reminded the sisters and parishioners, "This is not a sad day. We gather here to celebrate those who have gone before us and are surely in heaven enjoying eternal life." The annual memorial Mass paid special tribute to the contributions of the 336 deceased Enfield Felician Sisters as part of the 75th Anniversary activities of Our Lady of the Angels Province.[46] Throughout the month, the sisters prayed the 75th Jubilee Litany of Remembrance, invoking the patrons of the mission locations served by the sisters of the province in those years and praying that "God's grace, love, and wisdom will continue to grow and flourish in the minds and hearts of the people our lives have touched throughout the years."[47]

Come, Lord Jesus

The Advent Day of Prayer held on Saturday, December 15, 2007, in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House, kept sisters mindful of God's blessings and guidance throughout the past 75 years. In his conferences, Father Michael Zielke, OFM, Conv, who guided the day of prayer, focused on St. John the Baptist in his role as forerunner of Jesus, and of St. Francis in his compassion for Christ crucified. Sisters participated in the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy and had the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The day also afforded quiet time for private prayer. During the concluding service, Father blessed pocket copies of the 25th Anniversary Edition of the Franciscan Rule before presenting one to each sister.[48]

'That all may be one'

Joined by local clergy, Felician associates, and friends, the sisters at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House began the week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Friday evening, January 18, 2008. The celebration was unique in that it marked the 75th Anniversary of the Felician Sisters in Enfield as well as the 100th Anniversary of the prayer movement that began in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Angels in Graymoor, New York. The theme for the observance was "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 12a, 13b-18). The hymns, readings, and prayers illustrated the theme as did the sermon delivered by Father Anthony J. Bruno, director of religious services for the Connecticut Department of Correction.[49]

Father Bruno briefly explained the history of the Church Unity Octave. He said it was appropriate to pray for unity but reminded the group that while we are a Christian family, "families have division and need reconciliation." He acknowledged that the four deacons present were also prison chaplains, saying, "In our work, we meet people where they are. We work out of a belief that God is working in that person somehow, somewhere." He urged his listeners to have profound respect and tolerance for others. "We must realize that God is in that person and that from God's point of view, there is no difference in the totality of God's love." The lighting of candles, recalling the rite during the Easter vigil, followed the homily. Participants then committed to pray for Christian unity and "through gestures of reconciliation, to seek to bring forth perfect unity" in Jesus. A lavish buffet prepared by Shirley Markham of the provincial house dining services followed in the community room. The 75th Anniversary Committee organized the event.[50]

Leaders write history of Enfield Felician family

The Enfield sisters celebrated God's guidance and faithfulness in providing leadership over the past 75 years with a Eucharistic liturgy offered on February 21 during the annual retreat at the provincial house. Within those 75 years, nine provincials administered the province. At that time, six of the nine provincial leaders had gone on to their eternal reward.[51]

As noted above, Mother Mary Annunciata Bretschneider headed the new province in Enfield from 1932-1946. In *The History of the Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province,* Sister Mary Amadeus Ruda describes Mother Annunciata as "warmhearted" and notes that, despite "the various problems that challenged her attention," she kept the needs of the sisters in the forefront and "gave herself unreservedly to them." She radiated joy and sustained "a

warm family spirit. Her faith in Divine Providence and resilience in the face of adversity not only carried her through the difficult days but also provided a fresh impetus to the sisters."[52]

Mother Mary Catherine Bembenek, the second provincial superior of the Enfield province, served from 1946-1953. This era in rapidly changing post-war America saw the expansion of the community's apostolate into hospital work with the establishment of St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine. In her *History,* Sister Amadeus concludes that while "Six and a half years is a short time in the life of a human being, and a fleeting moment in the history of a religious congregation, yet Mother Catherine's stewardship in the Enfield province enriched the Felician heritage and its services in New England."[53]

On July 2, 1953, Mother Mary Simplicita Nehring, superior general, was in Enfield to announce Mother Mary Laura Sentkowska as the province's third provincial superior. Expansion became a dominant theme as the province met new challenges and Mother Laura's wholehearted attention focused on the task of addressing the need for a new provincial house.[54] Further on, Sister Amadeus wrote, "God's will was the strong motive in her life and she worked towards its accomplishment with a clearness of vision born of faith and courage."[55] During her ten years as provincial, Mother Laura "pointed the way to new growth for the Enfield Province . . . She left the image and legacy of a faithful servant-spirited personality."[56]

Chapter Nine of the *History,* which describes the provincialship of Mother Mary Viterbia Dyka from 1964-1970, is aptly titled "Challenging Times: Vatican II Challenges."[57] While this period was one of the most exciting in the history of the Church as well as in the history of the Felician Congregation, new challenges arose with the province's steady development. Having held every position of significance in the government of the community, Mother Viterbia brought religious competence, intelligence, good will, and zeal to the task at hand.[58] Concerned about the development of religious life, the future of the Felician Community, and the Church, Mother Viterbia was a religious woman of vision.[59]

Declared the sisters' choice for provincial superior, Sister Mary Landeline Ptasienski served the Enfield province for two six-year terms (1970 to 1976 and 1982 to 1988) interrupted by her election for a six-year term as a general councilor. Like her predecessors, she brought to her office a diverse background, rich in experience and education. She was well known for her efforts to build community, to inspire hope through personal contacts, and to talk easily with each sister. A woman of action and determination, she looked at every problem with good sense and a high tolerance for human foibles. Despite severely distressing events including loss of the proposed Longview Health Care Center and the closing of both Our Lady of the Angels Academy and Longview College, Sister Landeline's complete dedication to the person of Christ and her leadership skills preserved the integrity of Our Lady of the Angels Province.[60]

When Sister Bernarda Mary Jarosz assumed responsibility for the province on September 19, 1976, she accepted stewardship of the province in exceedingly difficult years distinguished by a fast-changing society at large and experienced proportionately by the sisters. The crises in vocations, the preponderance of aging members, and the closing of schools were challenges

she tackled with deep faith. Her trust in Divine Providence was unbounded because resignation to God's Will gave her the courage to face daily difficulties.[61]

Also honored with flowers and deep appreciation from the sisters were the three living former provincials, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko who served as provincial superior from 1988-1995; Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, who served from 1995-2007, and Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha who served as the province's last provincial minister from June 2007 until November 21, 2009, the date of the reconfiguration of the North American provinces into one, Our Lady of Hope.[62]

'Whatever you do to the least of these'

Donations from the sisters of the Enfield province to the Enfield Food Shelf constituted the March activity celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the province. The province matched the sisters' gift of $625, bringing the total to $1250. Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha acknowledged this gift, saying, "May the Lord bless your generous hearts!" When she delivered the check to the soup kitchen, the attendant who received it cried. The effects of the slumping economy increased the need for food assistance and the Food Shelf found itself overwhelmed as it prepared food every week, responding to requests from the 426 new families registered for services. This contribution helped to meet the increasing challenge successfully.[63]

In the spring, the sisters proudly wore pins or medals of their Mother, Blessed Mary Angela, as an external witness to her charism and presence in the province. A triduum of Masses was offered in the provincial house chapel for living and deceased benefactors. On May 19, the sisters began seventy-five days of thanksgiving, extending through August 1, incorporating intercessory prayers designed to commemorate significant provincial events into Morning and Evening Praise.[64]

Pastor 'took needs of the sisters to heart'

Every page of the beginning of the *Annals of Our Lady of the Angels Province* for the year 1933 records the name of Father Joseph M. Tomikowski, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts. He and his brother Leon, an attorney, were extremely helpful to the sisters who were entrusted with the task of establishing the new Our Lady of the Angels Province. On December 20, 1933, Father Tomikowski blessed the house and brought gifts of bread and salt. His wish for the sisters was that they "never be short of bread and salt." The sisters were so touched by his prayer for them, they were moved to tears. They found in Father Tomikowski a true protector and benefactor.[65]

Father Tomikowski and his parishioners built an altar, which he donated to the small group of Felician Sisters. The sisters expressed their delight with this gift because now Jesus would have "his own place." Father Tomikowski had other surprises as well: a monstrance, chalice, and a ciborium. Sister Mary Cunegunda Bucholtz, who recorded the story of Enfield's beginnings in the *Annals,* wrote, "How could the sisters not be touched by all the good he has done for them?" Father Tomikowski celebrated the first Mass for the sisters on June 5, 1934, the same day the cross was mounted atop the former Orrin Thompson mansion.[66]

To honor the memory of the generosity and support of Monsignor Joseph Tomikowski and the role parishioners of Immaculate Conception Parish in Indian Orchard played in the founding of the new province, the sisters gathered at Immaculate Conception Church on Sunday, June 8, 2008. During the special Eucharistic Liturgy of Thanksgiving, the sisters prayed for the intentions of the parish community and all benefactors of the Felician Sisters, living and deceased.[67]

As part of the entrance procession, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz carried a picture of Blessed Mary Angela. Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa carried a picture of Father Tomikowski, and Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso carried a bouquet of flowers, which she placed before the image of Our Lady of Częstochowa. Sister Mary Rosalma Fish proclaimed the readings, and Sister Frances Marion Bonczar offered the general intercessions. Sister Marianne Los, who entered the Felician community from Immaculate Conception Parish, and Lorraine Mastroianni, a parishioner who had a long association with the Felician Community, carried the offertory gifts. The parish choir sang "Blessed Angela, your light we want to be," as the post communion hymn. Parochial vicar Father Henry Kowalczyk, who was the principal celebrant and homilist, expressed appreciation to the sisters "for sharing this anniversary with us." Sisters and guests enjoyed light refreshments after the liturgical celebration in the church hall.[68]

Sister Mary Rosalette Janeczek, who celebrated her 75th anniversary of life in the Felician Congregation concurrently with the province's 75th anniversary, said she could not "even find the words to express how I felt" at the celebration. Immaculate Conception was Sister Rosalette's home parish and she remembered helping the sisters in the church. "It was a privilege to work there," and added, "We were very close to the sisters." Sister Rosalette teared up as she recalled that her mother was one of the parishioners who helped clean up the once-abandoned mansion to make it a warm, welcoming home for the sisters. "I am thankful that I was able to be part of the celebration," she said.[69]

Lodi sisters join daughter province in anniversary celebration

In response to the invitation from their sisters in Our Lady of the Angels Province, more than forty sisters arrived from Lodi, New Jersey, on Saturday morning, July 26, to celebrate Enfield's 75th Anniversary as a province. They came bearing gift baskets filled with angel cookies. They came extending good wishes and blessings. They came with hearts overflowing with love and prayers for "our beloved daughter province." In her welcome address, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, said, "We come to share our story," and from the moment the sisters exited the bus to the moment they left the property, sharing took place between the sisters of the two provinces.[70]

While the sisters enjoyed light refreshments in the dining room, Sister Mary Aquinas Szott, Lodi's provincial minister, conveyed greetings on behalf of the sisters from Lodi. She extended congratulations on the Enfield province's diamond jubilee of living the spirit of Angela in New England. She said, "Our Lady of Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut, reminds every Felician Sister of our rich Franciscan roots," and she spoke about the significance of the *Portiuncula* to St. Francis as recorded by St. Bonaventure. She also recalled the



SM Aquinas Szott, Lodi's provincial minister, extends greetings to the Enfield sisters on their 75th anniversary.

history of the division of the Lodi province in 1934, quoting from a circular letter of Mother Mary Pia Schweda, minister general, to the sisters of both provinces. She wrote, 'The division of the province is not a division of hearts and sisters can all be formally united in the heart of Jesus.'" Sister Aquinas continued, "Her words were realized over and over again with the ensuing years as the sisters of both communities have maintained close bonds and a sisterly love that finds its expression in reciprocal signs of caring." She concluded her remarks with the words of Mother Angela, "I place you completely under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin. I bury you in her heart." Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy in the provincial house chapel at 11 a.m. In his homily, he exhorted the sisters to continue to "be faithful to your vocation . . . be holy . . . be cheerful and smiling." The traditional Thanksgiving dinner seemed an appropriate way to celebrate, so the sisters dined on roast turkey, dressing, roasted sweet potatoes, and cranberry sauce.[71]



SM Antonia Popielarczyk (at l) enjoys the afternoon's festivities with SM Adrianna Gorski (Lodi).

Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz began the afternoon presenting the contents of the time capsule. Among the significant items included were a list of Enfield's 519 Felician Sisters, remembered and here in time; pictures of the corporate ministries; the story of Sister Mary Apollonia Niksa and her *babki* (bread); a copy of the "Litany of the Saints," which honored patrons of

the parishes and ministries served by sisters of the province over the past 75 years; a copy of the DVD created for the opening of the 75th jubilee year documenting the history of the province; and a copy of the picture designed to commemorate the 75th jubilee, depicting the provincial house superimposed on the image of Blessed Mary Angela. The time capsule was locked in the provincial heritage room, awaiting opening at a future date. Following a short program of entertainment, the guests toured the North American Felician Novitiate, the Heritage Center, and the Felician Adult Day Care, or watched the 75th Anniversary DVD. After enjoying dessert in the community room, the Enfield sisters gathered outside to bless the sisters from Lodi for their journey back home.[72]

'We salute you, O Mary, Queen of the Angels'

The 75th Anniversary celebration of Our Lady of the Angels Province closed as it opened: with a festive celebration on August 2, 2008, the feast of Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula. The Mass of Thanksgiving was also offered for Sister Mary Angelora Floryan and Sister Mary Alfreda Charzewski, who celebrated the 70th anniversary of their entrance to the Felician Community in 1938. The gospel for the Eucharistic liturgy for the feast of Our Lady of the Angels retells the story of the Annunciation. Reflecting on this passage during his homily, Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain and celebrant, said, "This gospel makes a great difference in our life. . . . Is Mary not saying, 'Here I am, Lord. . . . my life is in your hands.' God is with us now. What he did for Mary, he can do for us." Father Adolphe concluded his remarks, saying, "We remember all the wonderful sisters of the past 75 years—for what they have done for us—and who must be smiling upon us today. May God bless you and keep you and love you. We salute you, O Mary, Queen of the Angels. Pray for us."[73]

Sisters of the province as well as the sisters of the novitiate community and several associates enjoyed the festive dinner that followed the liturgy. Early in the afternoon, everyone gathered in the community room to reflect on the DVD prepared by Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, which recalled the events of the 75th jubilee year of the province. Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, expressed appreciation to each sister who contributed to the celebration and officially recognized the members of the 75th Anniversary Planning Committee: Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa, Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish. Sister Bernardine was also a member of the committee.[74]

As an expression of gratitude to each sister and in petition for continued blessings for the province, Sister Bernardine arranged for a Papal Blessing Parchment for the province. Each sister also received a prayer card with the picture of Our Lady of the Angels, the quote from the writings of Blessed Mary Angela—*I place you completely under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin. I bury you in her heart*—as well as the promise of a triduum of Masses in the sisters' intentions. Finally, during the singing of the traditional hymn *Królowej Anielskiej* ("Let us sing to the queen of angels"), each sister received a small pot of chrysanthemums, symbolic of the growth experienced by the province and the blessings showered upon it. As a further symbol of growth, Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, and the members of the general

administration, blessed the province with a crimson king maple tree. The tree was later planted on the front of the Enfield Street property.[75]

As the author of the DVD script to celebrate the province's 75th Anniversary, Sister Mary Laureann wrote, "It is certainly true that a few individual sisters and some particular events in the 75-year history of Our Lady of the Angels Province are more outstanding than others. It is also true that there is no Felician Sister and no one single event that fashioned the unique personality of the Enfield Province. All who were and are, all that was and is, are gifts of God's Divine Providence."[76]

ST. FRANCIS RESIDENCE

After the Town of Enfield Day Care moved out of the former Our Lady of the Angels Academy/Longview Catholic High School building on August 30, 2004, the Enfield sisters gave serious thought to repurposing it. During the 2005 Provincial Chapter, the delegates expressed concern about the utilization of space on the campus, referring to it as an "urgent priority." After Provincial Minister Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz asked the delegates to consider their expectations for the future, the chapter body recommended that a Task Force be established, comprised of sisters of the province and consultants, to complete a feasibility study to address urgent priorities of utilization of space. Sister Laureann assured the group that the Task Force would be formed by October 1.[77]

Through the North American Provinces Steering Committee, negotiations were already underway with the Milord Company to assess buildings and properties in each province. In 2006, representatives of the Milord Company visited the Enfield campus twice. They were disheartened with the condition of the former Enfield Day Care Center, which they said needed to be completely gutted.[78] During the provincial assembly of October 28, even though the Milord Company had not conducted its third and final visit or submitted its evaluation report, Sister Laureann asked the sisters to ponder the future of this building, suggesting that the next provincial leadership team consider affordable housing, a great need in the Enfield area.[79]

In December 2006, Sister Laureann and her council agreed to engage the F. J. Dahill Construction Co., Inc., of New Haven, Connecticut, to conduct a feasibility study to determine possible use of the building for affordable independent-living apartments.[80] Early in January 2007, Sister Laureann, along with Kevin Bielanski, director of maintenance, met with Dahill representatives to request the study to convert the original convent building into an apartment building. Thomas C. Smith, estimator/project manager, agreed to search out architects and prepare a proposal for the Felician Sisters.[81] When Dahill submitted its architectural proposal, it recommended Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects, LLC because much of their work had been with existing buildings, often with historical importance. Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects said, "While the back building [the annex] being considered is not, strictly speaking, an historic structure, it is handsome and attached to a building which is on the register and deserves consideration as such."[82]

Speaking about the scope of the work, Glenn H. Gregg, FAIA, noted that a percentage of the conversion of the present structure of "affordable housing" was required to be adaptable to ADA accessibility. At the time, he estimated

total cost of construction as $3,084,065, assuring the Felician Sisters that his team of highly qualified consultants would offer quality design and ample respect for the sisters' budget constraints and time schedules.[83]

On May 11, 2007, Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects presented its feasibility study to convert the original convent building to apartments. Their proposed floor plans showed that twenty-two apartment units could fit comfortably within the existing footprint of the building. These broke down into two efficiency units, seven one-bedroom units, and thirteen two-bedroom units. All the units were larger than Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Minimum Property Standards and larger than industry norms for this level of housing, i.e., moderate income, non-subsidized housing. Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects noted that the use of the building for the purpose of creating rentable apartments "appears to be a good and reasonable use of the property" for the following reasons:

- Renovating the property would preserve its value and its structural integrity.
- The creation of apartments served a community need.
- The cash flow . . . would be offset by the protection of the value of the property, which had begun to deteriorate rapidly, eventually requiring demolition.[84]

On May 31, 2007, Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch and the general council approved the extraordinary expenditure for the major renovation of the building. Sister Barbara said she was pleased that the building would "provide needed housing for the people in the Enfield area."[85] Both the Town of Enfield and the Enfield Historical Society had favorably endorsed the project.[86] On June 30, immediately following the installation of Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha as provincial minister and her council, Sister Laureann briefed the group on progress to date on the affordable apartment project. At this meeting, Sister Bernardine appointed Sister Mary Laureann coordinator of the project.[87]

Throughout the summer, meetings were ongoing and included consideration of and decisions about issues such as placement of a new elevator so that all units were accessible, replacing all fire hydrants on the site and upgrading the size of the fire service on the property, providing for new water service and new sprinkler service, asbestos removal, parking facilities, storage, awnings and signage, and building materials, including carpet, light fixtures, and countertops.[88]

Just before Gregg presented the plans at the Public Hearing held before the Enfield Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) on November 1, 2007, Sister Laureann updated the sisters on the progress of the process at the October 13 provincial assembly. Following her presentation, she added that, beyond the construction, further business would include consulting with an attorney regarding non-profit status, taxes, a contract/lease for tenants, maintenance and housekeeping staff, and fiscal management as well as oversight of the building. Sister Laureann said she engaged the service of Daniel P. O'Connell, the province's financial consultant, to assist with these matters.[89]

Enfield Planning & Zoning Commission

At the November 1 meeting, Glenn H. Gregg, representing the Felician Sisters, appeared before the Enfield Planning & Zoning Commission in the Council Chambers at the Enfield Town Hall regarding the application to allow the renovation of the building, originally the convent, to house twenty-two apartments on the Felician Sisters property. He presented the site plan showing the architectural details, a drawing of the building displaying the landscaping layout, a drawing indicating the four elevations of the building, and a series of photographs showing the existing surroundings and the context of the building. Ed Lally, civil engineer for Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects, reported that after surveying the site and assessing the soil, they had in place a soil erosion plan, a drainage plan, a parking plan, and a landscaping plan, as well as documents required by the Town of Enfield.[90]

Gregg maintained that the exterior of the building needed only minor work, such as work on the windows, adding that the project would preserve the stained-glass windows in the former chapel. "The entire character of the building is being preserved" he reiterated. "The building is very handsome. We'd like to keep it that way."[91]

Commissioner Charles Duren noted the unanimous approval for the project received from the Enfield Historic District, and Commissioner Larry Jones said he was impressed with the plan and felt it was a wonderful use for the building. When Chair Anthony DiPace opened the hearing to the public, no one spoke in favor of or against the application. After closing the public hearing, Commissioner Duren made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Jones, to approve the Special Permit Use and Site Plan Review to allow the renovation of the former convent/high school/residence building at the Felician Sisters Convent to house twenty-two apartments.[92]

Sister Laureann said, "The joy of receiving the approval of the project and good wishes of Sister Mary Barbara Ann and her council, the interest and support of the sisters of the province, the unanimous vote of the Town of Enfield Planning and Zoning Commission, were a blessing and encouraging sign to move forward with confidence with the construction."[93]

In an informal discussion with the PZC in April, Gregg said the plan was to create rental housing open to the public at market rates in a nonprofit endeavor and that the rental rates would be based on the expenses for building and maintenance. Gregg told the Historic District Commission that construction would take six to seven months and would be completed by spring 2008.[94]

Progress on the project

By the end of 2007, the demolition inside the building was completed, and the planning group directed its energies to applying for separate incorporation and filing an application for non-tax status with the Archdiocese of Hartford. At the spring provincial assembly held on April 26, 2008, Sister Laureann summarized what had been accomplished and explained that the presentation to Archbishop Mansell would include a comprehensive description of the project, a detailed financial report, and the lease conditions. She announced that the apartments were expected to be ready for occupancy by the first of the year 2009 and noted that sixteen people had already indicated an interest in

leasing an apartment. Following the conclusion of the assembly, she offered the sisters tours of the building.[95]

While not a LEED (Leadership in Energy Efficient Design) project, the renovation of the building, as opposed to new construction, had "green" value as new natural resources were not required. Additionally, the renovations included new roofing with added insulation, and new windows with insulating glass, which mimicked the appearance of the original windows while providing more comfort and energy efficiency. Chief architect Gregg also pointed out that finishes such as carpet, with high levels of recycled content, flooring in apartment entries, kitchen floors of cork—a 100% renewable product used throughout—and vinyl composition tile of recycled material in utilitarian areas, added to the sustainable footprint of the building.

"Our firm," maintained Gregg, "has a commitment to designing and building sustainable projects. We were pleased," he added, "to have the support of our client, the Felician Sisters, in turning our commitment into reality."[96]

The "Catholic Mission" of the St. Francis Apartments was an agenda item for the meeting of the planning group at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House on September 23, 2008. The group included Sister Mary Laureann, project manager; Daniel P. O'Connell, facilitator/consultant; Attorney Kenneth R. Slater, Jr., Halloran & Sage, LLP; Vincenzo Fini, Weinstein & Anastasio, PC; Glen Gregg, architect, Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects; and James D. Dahill, contractor, president, F. J. Dahill Co., Inc. They agreed that the St. Francis Apartments would be a not-for-profit organization, thus determining the direction for the articles of incorporation and the bylaws and that its "Catholic Mission" would be reflected in its primary statement of purpose: *The St. Francis Apartments are an activity to support the infirm and retired sisters as well as the broader ministries of the Felician Sisters of Connecticut with priority for occupancy given to religious and retired priests.*[97]

At the outset, the group clearly defined its concept of independent living as the lessee being capable of independently performing the normal, basic activities that are requirements of daily living. O'Connell emphasized that the language of the lease specify that no personal-care services would be provided so that no support would be expected. Other issues discussed included insurance, marketing, legal work, and job descriptions for persons who would oversee the entity and management pieces/finances.[98]

Regarding the date of completion of the apartment project, Dahill said that because of work that still needed to be done on the elevator, as well as the fire water system, he doubted that he could meet the January 1, 2009, completion date and that February 1 might be more realistic. After reviewing the overview of budget assumptions, income, and expenses, Gregg projected the cost amount for the project at $4.1 million, exclusive of the water system, and an annual return on investment of approximately 5.14%. The inflated cost was driven by changes made to comply with the Town of Enfield's building code requirements, additional material cost, and redesign by the design team. Operating income was intended to return investment capital to the Felician Sisters of Connecticut.[99]

By mid-March 2009, job descriptions for apartment manager and finance manager were completed. Sister Joan Marie Swierzb and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish respectively were appointed to these positions. Both sisters had indicated their willingness to take on the new roles.[100]

On May 27, 2009, the thirteen-page application for Inclusion in the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Group Ruling for St. Francis Residence (SFR) was filed with the chancery office of the Archdiocese of Hartford This was a significant step since approval of the application qualified SFR for exemption from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code ("Code") through inclusion in the USCCB group ruling. On its part, SFR had to demonstrate how it was designed to serve the needs of the elderly.[101]

The application explained efforts made to "operate exclusively for charitable purposes," including providing handicap accessibility and the benefits of the Lifeline Medical Alert System. In addition to renting at a price designed to be affordable for a sizable portion of the elderly in the greater Enfield area, the Corporation's charitable assistance program allowed any resident no longer able to pay to remain as a resident. The application described the opportunities available at the adjacent convent, Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House. These included social and religious events and periodic fairs and seminars. Residents could also join the sisters at their daily noon meal at a very reasonable cost. Sister Laureann said, "The sisters know that older residents may have days where they don't feel like cooking or may not have anyone else nearby with whom to spend the holidays."[102]

Enfield's Division of Building Inspection issued a Certificate of Occupancy on June 3, 2009, and shortly thereafter, six renters—couples and singles—settled into their new homes.[103] "We want to create community living and appreciation of each other as friends," Sister Laureann said. "Our hope is to make this a home, not just an apartment." Simple word of mouth brought in the first tenants, who not only thoroughly enjoyed their new homes, but the adjacent grounds and landscaping.[104] The twenty-two units had higher than normal ceilings and the apartments on the second and third floors featured expansive views of the 23-acre grounds of the campus. Residents could gather in the community space on the lower floor.[105]





At left, a view of the renovation of the former OLA convent chapel located in the annex. At right, SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, project manager, reviews the plan for the St. Francis Apartments with Ted Keating, foreman.

The two units occupying the former chapel space retained much of the original moldings, as well as the arched stained-glass windows, which gave these units distinctive character. The lower-level units were more spacious and captured daylight while being located close to common facilities. "Character is what defines and sets the units apart from what one commonly encounters in rental apartments," Gregg said. He added, "This structure, while not iconic, is well designed and proportioned, solidly built and we took great pains to retain its character and appearance, choosing to restore, not alter, its appearance."[106]

Blessing and Dedication of the St. Francis Apartments

About half of the twenty-one new apartments at St. Francis Residence were filled when Auxiliary Bishop Christie A. Macaluso of the Archdiocese of Hartford blessed and dedicated this newly established corporate ministry of the Enfield Felician Sisters in the early afternoon of October 2, 2009. "It's a marvelous exercise in good stewardship," he told the sisters, new residents of the building, and invited guests after presiding at the special ceremony prepared by Provincial Secretary Sister Constance Marie Tomyl. "Rather than have a building with no purpose or an empty building—we see plenty of them around our cities these days—you've used a lot of imagination, a lot of prayer and a lot of effort to put up something so beautiful here that will serve so many people," he said.[107]

Invited guests present included Msgr. John J. McCarthy, chancellor, Archdiocese of Hartford; Father Jeffrey Romans, secretary to Archbishop Mansell; Father William L. Baldyga, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Suffield; Father A. Waine Kargul, chaplain, St. Joseph Residence, Enfield; Mother Mary Bernard, lsp, and Sister Mary Agnes, lsp, St. Joseph Residence, Enfield; Attorney Kenneth Slater, Halloran & Sage, LLP, Hartford; James McAdam, F. J. Dahill Construction Co., Inc.; Glen Gregg and Jeanne Sanchez, Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects, LLC; and Mayor Scott Kaupin, Enfield.[108]



St. Francis Residence

Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha greeted the guests, Bishop Macaluso led the introductory rite before the rite of blessing the front door and the outside of St. Francis Residence with holy water. Everyone stepped into the building praying, "Make this house a home!" In the closing prayer, the bishop prayed that the "Holy Light of God's Presence shine forth brightly in this residence and be a blessing for all who shall live here and for everyone who shall come to this door."[109] Guests and residents gathered in SFR's activity room on the lower level for the informal reception that followed. As the chronicler for Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House wrote, "The occasion was exuberant with gratitude, joy, and pride in a ministry that will further the mission of the Felician Sisters, the Church, and the glory of God."[110]



Hartford Auxiliary Bishop Christie A. Macaluso visits one of the apartments in St. Francis Residence with SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, who oversaw the work that converted the former convent and school building into apartments. (Reprinted with permission from The Catholic Transcript*)*

Sister Laureann said her hope was that St. Francis Residence would achieve its three-fold goal: to help provide income for the support of the infirm and retired sisters, to provide an option to retired clergy and religious seeking residence for ministry, and to provide a safe, secure environment for independent living for persons/couples 55+ years old who no longer can maintain their own home. "What the future holds?" she asked. "We believe and trust that God is already there for us when the need arises."[111]

GENERAL VISITATION

Starting afresh from Christ, we embrace our Felician Charism, Vision and Mission, as we

- Strengthen our Franciscan identity
- Deepen right relationships
- Promote a culture of life
- And become a living Gospel to ALL.

Reflecting on these words of Action Direction Statement 1 from the 27th General Chapter, Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch informed Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha that the General Visitation of Our Lady of the Angels Province would take place from October 18 to

November 8, 2008. Other members of the visitation team included Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, vicar and councilors Sister Mary Reginalda Gągała, and Sister Janet Marie Kurgan.[112]

The topic for the theological reflection, a significant component of the general visitation, was *Our Precious Legacy: The Felician Charism.* The sisters reflected on the readings from Scripture, Church documents, Franciscan writings, and the writings of Mother Angela before coming together to share at the regional meetings that focused on walking into the future, the *Journey in Hope to a New Tomorrow.*[113]

The General Visitation formally opened with the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy in the provincial house chapel on Saturday, October 18. The novices and Felician Associates joined in the festivities. Following dinner, the sisters gathered in the community room where Sister Mary Bernardine warmly welcomed the members of the visitation team on behalf of the sisters of the Enfield province. In her remarks, Sister Barbara Ann observed that it was fitting to open the general visitation with Eucharist "where Jesus gives himself to you." She said, "We come to you in mutuality, . . . as your sisters. . . . During the visit we want to share with you your lived reality."[114]

After speaking about the special bond that Felicians have, "the gift of our Mother, Blessed Mary Angela," Sister Mary Cabrini unveiled an icon of Blessed Mary Angela, a gift to the province from the general leadership team. An artist at St. Joseph's Fine Art Studio in Mansfield, Pennsylvania, Mark Sassani, had been commissioned to write the icon. To commemorate the visitation, each sister also received a holy card with a picture of the icon on the front and the Felician Charism on the reverse side. Each visitator introduced herself and shared her personal story. Sister Reginalda received a round of applause when she assured the sisters that she felt very much at home in Enfield. Sister Janet "had the last word" and blessed the sisters with the words, "May the God within each of us leap with joy every time we meet in these next three weeks."[115]

Sister Jeanne Marie Akalski said, "I was touched by the simplicity and humility of Sister Barbara Ann and the visitation team." The visitators met with the sisters in three regional meetings held in Enfield and Hartford, Connecticut. Speaking of the regional meeting held at St. Hedwig Convent in Manchester, New Hampshire, Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko said, "Beginning with dinner and ending with the theological reflection, there was an atmosphere of joy, sisterly love, openness, and peace. The laughter, sharing, . . . were evidence that the sisters were experiencing genuine community."[116]

On November 1, All Saints Day, the sisters of the Enfield province celebrated the 50th anniversary of religious life of Sister Mary Barbara Ann and Sister Mary Reginalda. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated the late morning Eucharistic liturgy in the provincial house chapel. During his homily, he assured the jubilarians that their lives had, indeed, made a difference.[117]

During the three weeks of the visitation, the members of the visiting team met individually with the sisters for interviews, visited with them in their local homes, reviewed provincial documents, and met with the provincial leadership team. On November 8, the sisters gathered once again at the provincial house to mark the closing of the General Visitation. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy at 11 a.m. After the Communion

Rite, the sisters recommitted themselves to continue to enflesh the Felician vision by turning to the Lord *to be Eucharist, Sister and servant to all.* Following dinner, the members of the General Visitation Team presented a summary of the Visitation Report, commending the sisters for following in the footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela and offering encouragement for further action and implementation.[118] Recommendations included the following:

- That a professional group study the long-range use of the provincial house building for the purpose of making an informed decision as to whether it will be wise to create an up-to-date infirmary considering two factors: one, the nearby residence for the elderly [St. Joseph Residence], and two, the diminishing numbers of sisters who will need infirmary care. The results of the study may indicate remodeling for general living situations. In any case, this needs to be done immediately so that whatever is planned will be in process when the new province is established.
- An apparent division among the staff members of the Adult Day Care warrants the intervention of professionals such as Felician Services, Inc., who conduct Quality Review/Conflict Resolution.
- Sisters in ministerial transition are to be encouraged to investigate new ministry possibilities while they are in dialogue with the director of ministry.
- The issue of the expansion of the Enfield Montessori School needs to be resolved pending the receipt of definitive plans from the administrator.[119]

Affirmations were abundant as well. The visitators commended the sisters for:

- The celebration of the 75th anniversary of the province was a joy-filled expression of gratitude for the many blessings God has bestowed on this province.
- Sisters embrace the *Journey in Hope* with a readiness to be open to God's Will as it is revealed in our new reality.
- A true spirit of hospitality and a genuine welcome are extended to the many sisters who visit for interprovincial gatherings. This same hospitality was experienced by the visitators throughout the province. Associates, visitors, family members, and other guests are always welcome and made to feel at home both in the provincial house and in the local homes.
- Sisters are truly sister to each other and exhibit a readiness to be available to one another in day-to-day living.

The visitators encouraged each sister to care for herself in a wholistic manner, balancing prayer, community life, and ministry so that her health and involvement in community were not compromised. In closing, the visitators thanked each sister "for the gift she is to the Our Lady of the Angels Province, to the Felician Congregation and to the Church." Each sister received a copy of the report.[120]

SOUTH WING RENOVATION

As recorded in Chapter 3, a major concern of the general visitation team during the canonical visitation in the fall of 1991 was Holy Family Infirmary. The visitation team recommended that an assessment of the facility be undertaken.[121] An Action-Direction Statement that derived from the 1993 Provincial Chapter read: "We will restructure the physical environment of the infirmary to provide a wholesome, relaxed, and inviting atmosphere" (M2-c).[122] In fact, minor renovations were made; however, major work was still needed, so once again, this became a priority issue at the 2005 Provincial Chapter, which recommended that "A Task Force be established, comprised of sisters of the province and consultants, to complete a feasibility study including the areas of finance, personnel, facilities, etc. to address urgent priorities of utilization of space and potential ministries." The delegates agreed, recommending "That the upgrade of the infirmary be part of the feasibility study regarding utilization of space and ministry on the provincial house complex." But simply put, the province could not afford to finance such a major project.[123]

Finally, in the spring of 2008, the provincial leadership team invited Covenant Health Systems (CHS) of Lexington, Massachusetts, to Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House to conduct an initial site visit and to make recommendations to assist the older sisters living there, aging in place, as they retired from full-time ministry. Covenant Health was recognized as an innovative, Catholic regional healthcare system and a leader in values-based, not-for-profit health and eldercare. Additionally, St. Joseph Healthcare in Bangor, Maine, a sponsored ministry of the Enfield Felician Sisters, was an affiliate of CHS.[124]

Following their visit, the CHS representatives recommended the following, conforming to best practices and usability guidelines, to enhance the quality of life for sisters residing there.

- Move the infirmary to the first floor of the south wing. This move would provide several benefits, including improving the ability to evacuate residents in an emergency and providing easier access to other areas of the building, such as the first-floor porch.
- Combine two adjacent bedrooms to provide more space and enable staff to help residents with activities of daily living, as necessary.
- Add bathrooms equipped with a toilet and walk-in shower.
- Install a wireless emergency call system.
- Reconfigure toilet rooms and bathing rooms.[125]

Covenant had worked with DiGiorgio Associates, Inc., of Boston, Massachusetts, specialists in the design and construction management of healthcare-focused facilities, including infirmaries and nursing homes for religious communities, and recommended its services to the Felician Sisters. Additionally, in her role as president and CEO of St. Joseph Hospital, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski had worked with the group and recommended it as a resource.[126] As a next step, Sister Norberta suggested inviting CHS representatives to walk through the infirmary and south wing of the provincial house to determine whether enhancing housing for the elderly and infirm sisters was feasible, as well as to project the cost and to provide a timeline

for the project. She acknowledged that while the larger project would involve construction and approval of Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch and the general administration, smaller parts could be implemented now, such as the emergency-response system.[127]

At the October 2008 council meeting, Sister Nancy Marie, who, as director of nursing for the infirmary and provincial house, had become the point person for the project, reported the results of her meeting with the architect who was planning proposed renovations of the current infirmary. He noted the following:

- Overall, the building is very solid and in excellent condition.
- No supporting walls separate the rooms.
- The recent upgrade of the heating system and installation of a generator have affected the operation positively.
- The plan to merge two rooms to one could create 12 - 13 rooms complete with a bathroom including a shower.
- The project could be completed in phases.[128]

After Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha and the provincial council discussed the situation with the general visitators, Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch recommended inquiring whether sisters needing care could be accommodated at St. Joseph Residence, a sponsored ministry of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Located on the south side of the Enfield Street lot occupied by the provincial- house complex, the visitators saw this as a viable option for caring for the elderly and infirm sisters in the Enfield province. However, after further discussion, the Felician Sisters realized that their need did not align with the program at St. Joseph Residence The leadership team decided to move ahead with "Phase I" of the project and begin renovations to the infirmary. Phase II would encompass remodeling the remainder of the building for general living situations. [129]

The plan takes shape

During the early November 2008 council meeting, Sister Nancy presented the design for Phase I of the south wing renovation proposed by DiGiorgio Associates for the project. The council members discussed specifics and suggested having models of rooms to view as an aid to decision-making, particularly regarding furnishings.[130] After further review and discussion, in early December, the provincial minister and council unanimously approved moving forward with the project.[131] Later that month, DiGiorgio provided a conceptual construction-budget estimate and a revised conceptual layout floor plan with forty-one bedrooms, baths, community rooms, storage rooms, and laundry rooms.[132]

At the late January 2009 council meeting, Sister Nancy presented the rough budget proposal she received from DiGiorgio Associates. She pointed out that the construction industry had been severely impacted by the economic crisis and, as a result, construction projects nationwide were at a standstill. Financially, she said, this should be an opportune time to pursue this renovation project. After further discussion regarding total cost of the project, need to hire a general manager, and preference for using local contractors, the council once again unanimously approved moving forward with the project. Before making

a final commitment, Sister Norberta motioned for a more definitive plan and firmer figures from DiGiorgio Associates.[133]

Everyone was aware that life would be disrupted during demolition and construction, but the DiGiorgio Associates representative insisted that it was "doable." The leadership team decided to contact former DiGiorgio Associates clients to ascertain their level of satisfaction with similar projects and agreed that it might also be beneficial to speak with sisters who were involved with renovation projects at other Felician provincial houses, notably Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, and Buffalo, New York.[134]

Feedback drives design process

By mid-March 2009, Sister Nancy had discussed the renovation project with the sisters living in the provincial house, and she heard their strong recommendation for private bathrooms with fully accessible showers and toilets. She also held meetings with the nursing staff to get their input concerning patient well-being.[135] The architects working on the design mode assured the leadership team that the project could be completed in nine months. While the team was still awaiting a firm price on the cost of the renovation, Sister Nancy suggested that the total cost could be lowered appreciably if the renovation plan did not include using space in the east wing. Once the scope of the project was clearly defined and the cost solidified—excluding renovation of the east wing—the council requested approval from Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch and her administrative team.[136]

Meanwhile, Sister Bernardine sought information about how best to finance this project. Since the province's institutional relationship manager with Bank of America discouraged procuring a loan because of the loan application fee and accompanying paperwork, the council agreed to finance the project with community funds.[137] By early May, the architect from DiGiorgio Associates suggested using $3.5 million as the figure to present to Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann and the general administration.[138] Once permission was received, major renovations began on the south wing of the provincial house on October 20, 2009, one month before the reconfiguration of all the provinces.[139]

To prepare for the renovation, Kevin Bielanski, facility manager for the Enfield campus, worked with the local leadership team, nurses, and infirmary staff as well as the facilities and housekeeping departments, to create a makeshift care center. The larger rooms and dorms in the east wing were converted into four-bed units and sisters needing services were moved there.[140] Sister Nancy recalled that the sisters used hand bells because no call bells were available, and nursing staff responded quickly, checking to see who needed assistance. Sisters who resided on the first and third floors moved to the north wing with the assistance of the facilities and housekeeping departments as well as the novices from the formation house.[141] Laundry and other services were also moved to the north and east wings.

As the direct "go to" person between Sister Nancy, the sister project committee, and the contractors, Kevin Bielanski oversaw the project in its entirety, attending construction meetings at least once weekly. He noted that even while asbestos removal was going on, ensuring that the sisters' home remained safe during the renovation was "always a top priority." He attributed

"an abundance of communication" on all levels between the parties involved with helping to get the project done smoothly, making it possible for these sisters to age in place without having to leave the south wing.[142]

As promised, the renovation project lasted approximately one year and by the time of its completion in 2010, had become part of the newly reconfigured Our Lady of Hope Province. The sisters did a walkthrough of their new space, choosing their own rooms. They were especially pleased that the rooms were larger, and delighted at how the increased natural lighting improved the look, feel, and brightness of the space.[143] On Wednesday, September 22, 2010, the sister residents of Holy Family Infirmary moved from their temporary residence in the east wing to the newly renovated infirmary wing. Several sisters from Our Lady of the Angels Convent and St. Felix Novitiate helped, along with the infirmary staff, to make the move possible.[144] Sister Nancy said the move-in took one day and the sisters needed a few days to get acclimated, but "everyone was so happy!"[145]

Blessing their new home

The sisters celebrated the feast day of Blessed Mary Angela, October 10, 2010, with immense pride and joy since the day marked the blessing of the renovated south wing, including Holy Family Infirmary. At 2 p.m., sisters, distinguished guests, including key persons involved in the renovation project, associates, infirmary staff, and members of the novitiate community, assembled in the first-floor community room. Father Noel Danielewicz, OFM, Conv, chaplain, assisted by Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz and Father Jerzy Auguscik, OFM, Conv, former chaplains, blessed the newly renovated home and led the procession of sisters and guests through the three renovated floors.[146]

Father Noel prayed that "these rooms be sealed in the love of God" before Sister Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister of the reconfigured Our Lady of Hope Province, placed the Cross of San Damiano on the first floor. Sister Danat Marie Brysch, provincial vicar with oversight of the healthcare ministries, placed the picture of Blessed Mary Angela on the second floor, and Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, central-convent local minister, placed the Tau cross on the third floor. Assisted living residents occupied the first floor, sisters receiving skilled nursing care resided on the second floor, and fully independent sisters moved to the third floor. Following the blessing and tours of the new facility, sisters and guests enjoyed light refreshments and camaraderie in the convent dining room.[147]

CANONIZATION PROCESS, BLESSED MARY ANGELA

Several steps mark the road to canonization, and each can take many years. A "cause" cannot open until five years have elapsed after the candidate's death. Next, a scholarly biography of the would-be saint must be prepared with meticulous documentation to establish that the candidate possessed "heroic virtues" and led an exemplary life. Once this biography is accepted, the Servant of God is recognized as "Venerable." Beatification is the next step, and at least one miracle is required before the "Servant of God" becomes known as "Blessed." Canonization is the final step, and for this, at least one additional miracle is required before formal declaration of sainthood.[148]

The detailed examination of Mother Angela's life and holiness was part of the process leading to her beatification in 1993. The process had now moved

toward canonization with lengthy investigations of an alleged miracle in Enfield, Connecticut.

In late September 2001, after Felician Associate Pauline Staples learned that she had a malignant tumor, she underwent surgery on October 4. Following the surgery, Dr. John A. D'Alotto told Pauline's daughter and son that he had removed the tumor and twenty-four lymph nodes, but he had little hope for recovery since their mother's cancer was in an advanced stage. Ten days later, after her surgeon told her she was terminal, Pauline asked, "Do I have six months?" When the doctor responded, "You could, but it is only a guess," Pauline said, "Many people are praying for me."[149]

A member of St. Martha Parish in Enfield, Pauline, one of a family of eleven, had grown up on a farm in Maine. Raised as a Catholic, she married young, had three children, and lost her husband when he was just thirty-six. She remarried and for twenty-five years, she and her second husband happily added two children to their family. Pauline was active in her parish, serving as a Eucharistic minister. At the invitation of her friend, Felician Associate Joan Harding, Pauline sought admission to the program and was received as an active associate in June 2000.[150]

Because a CT scan at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut, revealed a mass in the region of the head of the pancreas, Pauline was referred to Dr. Jeffrey Gordon for a course of chemotherapy and radiation, beginning in November 2001 and continuing into December. When she was admitted to St. Francis Hospital on December 6 because of the chemotherapy as well as dehydration, a second CT scan showed fullness in the region of the head of the pancreas.[151]

On December 19, 2001, Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated a Mass for Pauline in Our Lady of the Angels Convent chapel, seeking healing through the intercession of Blessed Mary Angela. Sisters, friends, and associates came together to pray for Pauline, who was unable to be present.[152] She had gone to bed earlier that day, intending to say the rosary, but fell asleep. When she awoke at 8 p.m., she said she felt a burning sensation in the area where the surgery was performed.

> I couldn't stop it with water or ice chips. It was like I was on fire. About five minutes later, it stopped suddenly. I fell asleep and slept soundly, the best sleep I have had in months. The following morning, my friend Joan brought Communion to me. After receiving Communion, I said, 'I don't know what this cancer is doing to me, but it was strange last night. I was on fire. Suddenly it dawned on me, O my God, I am cured. I think I am cured. The cancer is gone.' [153]

Shortly after, on January 3, 2002, Pauline and her daughter saw Dr. Dennis Morgan, a hematology specialist at the oncology center in Enfield. When Pauline's daughter expressed her frustration about "not getting the full truth" regarding her mother's condition, Dr. Morgan told her, "I have been an oncologist for 20 years and have never cured your kind of cancer. It will kill you, but I don't know when. The chemotherapy will only help to prolong your life." As a result, Pauline began a round of chemotherapy that lasted three months.[154]

In February 2002, Pauline met with Dr. Steven R. Grossman, an internationally recognized expert in gastrointestinal cancers, at the Dana-

Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Massachusetts. After reviewing Pauline's original CT scan and biopsy, he concurred with Dr. Morgan that chemotherapy would only prolong her life until it eventually stopped working. But at the end of March 2002, Pauline's abdominal and pelvic CT scans were normal. However, since Dr. Morgan feared discontinuing treatment because he felt there might still be cancer cells in her body, Pauline resumed chemotherapy for another three months.[155]

A PET scan done on June 17 was normal again with no evidence of recurrent or metastatic disease, but Dr. Morgan still refused to believe that Pauline was cured and ordered three more months of chemotherapy. Pauline said, "I fought him all the way, but he insisted that chemotherapy was an insurance for prolonging the inevitable." Pauline said she finally relented, "[b]ecause of Dr. Morgan's concern and the concern of my family." Additional test results continued to be within normal limits. [156]

When Pauline met with Dr. James J. Matino, a colorectal-surgery specialist who had been on her surgical team in 2001, he said, "I can't believe it's really you! There is no medical reason for you to be here now." Pauline asked, "Do you believe in miracles?" Dr. Matino responded, "I had seen a few." When he followed up with a colonoscopy on November 6, 2002, he saw no indication of where he had sewn the colon together or of any scar tissue or polyps. "I can't believe it," he said, "I am looking at a new colon. I should have known better. You are my miracle lady." He told Pauline she would not need follow up or another colonoscopy for three years.[157]

Later that month, Dr. Matino offered this testimony:

> I write to you because of a truly miraculous recovery of a patient of mine, named Pauline Staples. As you know, she was operated on for a colon cancer that had metastasized, and it was the opinion of all of her doctors that she would not survive. As you know, she is still here with us today and free of cancer. All the doctors involved would consider this a miracle, considering the original presentation with her cancer. There is no other explanation for her surviving this disease. So, let it be known that it is my opinion that her recovery was truly a miracle.[158]

At this point, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, provincial minister, asked Pauline to prepare a written statement attesting to her cure.[159] This statement, along with her complete medical record including test and lab results, was forwarded to Felician Sister Mary Marta Zielinska, postulator for the Cause of Canonization of Blessed Mary Angela.[160] Nearly two years later, when Pauline's test results indicated that there was still no evidence of colon cancer, her exam and test results were once again forwarded to Sister Mary Marta. After studying Pauline's case, a year later Sister Marta requested additional information.[161]

By the fall of 2007, Pauline remained inexplicably cancer-free for five years and was in good health. In a letter to the sisters regarding Pauline's alleged cure through the intercession of Blessed Mary Angela, Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch wrote: "The many doctors who examined her both 5 years ago and recently are unable to explain, in the light of current medical science, why she is cancer free and why she is still alive since she should have died over 5 years ago."[162]

As postulator, Sister Marta had a key role in efforts to advance the cause of Blessed Mary Angela. If any alleged cure was reported, it was her responsibility to proceed with further examination of the case. In those instances where a case had considerable merit in terms of a possible favorable judgment by the *Consulta Medica,* a group of about 100 Italian and Catholic physicians, she conducted an onsite visit to collect necessary information, documentation, and further clarification that might be needed.[163] Sister Marta said she believed the prime duty of the postulator was to gather all the circumstantial evidence for the process of the alleged miraculous cure. On Tuesday, November 27, 2007, Sister Marta arrived in Enfield to open the investigation into the alleged miracle.[164]

Sister Marta met first with Most Rev. Henry J. Mansell, archbishop of Hartford, on December 10, 2007, to officially request opening the diocesan investigation into the alleged miraculous healing of Pauline.[165] She spent the next few months conferring with doctors, gathering the medical documentation, preparing the necessary documentation, and organizing significant materials. According to the Instructions of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, it was necessary for each diocese participating in the process to establish a local tribunal to conduct a careful investigation on pertinent matters. Sister Marta assisted with the establishment of the tribunal. The following served as members:

Father James F. Kinnane, Delegate of the Diocesan Bishop
Father Robert B. Vargo, Promotor of Justice
Rev. Msgr. John J. McCarthy, Active Notary
Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, CSSF, Adjunct Notary
Dominick N. Pasquale, MD, Medical Expert
Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, CSSF, Cursor[166]

Since each *positio*—miracle file—is a story told and retold through the testimonies of many witnesses, Sister Marta compiled a comprehensive list of all those who might have been able to contribute to the cause by their testimony. She spoke with Pauline and the witnesses—sisters, associates, friends, and medical doctors—and recorded their testimony verbatim in preparation for sending it to the Vatican for consideration. The official opening of the process took place on April 14, 2008. Regular sessions with the testimonies of witnesses were held followed by sessions with the *ex officio* witnesses on May 5. Two sessions with testimonies from the doctors took place on May 30 and June 6.[167]

Closing of the Archdiocesan Process

Blessed Mary Angela's cause for canonization took a significant step forward on June 19, 2008, with the formal closure of the diocesan phase of the investigation. During the ceremony at the Chancery Office in Hartford, Sister Marta presented the entire documentation to Archbishop Mansell, who then appointed Sister Marta as the Carrier of the Acts. More than 800 pages of witness testimony and medical data were packaged and sealed. The Delegate of the diocesan bishop placed the original copy in the archives of the archdiocese. Each member of the tribunal took an oath, that he or she had "faithfully fulfilled the office entrusted to me." This group of diocesan evaluators judged the materials strong enough to submit to Rome.[168]

Archbishop Mansell said, "It's a marvelous day in the history of the archdiocese, for the Felician community, and the Church at large. Mother Mary Angela has already been a tremendous edification to millions of people." Speaking in the name of Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, vicar general, thanked Archbishop Mansell and members of the Tribunal for "all you have done to bring us to this day."[169]

The ceremony to formally close the investigation was witnessed by representatives from the Felician community including Sister Mary Cabrini; Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, former provincial minister, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, provincial vicar; Sister Constance Marie Tomyl and Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, provincial councilors; and Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, provincial treasurer. Also present was Carol M. Hatten who served as copyist.[170]





At left, SM Marta Zielinska, postulator for the Cause of Blessed Mary Angela, packages the documents to carry to Rome. At right, Archbishop Henry J. Mansell signs Document of Closing.

On Friday, June 20, the sisters participated in the Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated in the chancery chapel by Father James F. Kinnane, who was assisted by Rev. Msgr. John J. McCarthy, chancellor of the archdiocese. In his homily, Father Kinnane spoke about several things that occurred to him about Mother Angela. He said he was impressed by her service and that of her community to the poor as well as the way she "put the whole thing together" with the balance of contemplation and prayer. "We have to be reminded of that balance," he said. He spoke of her witness to the sufferings of Jesus especially in her own physical suffering and noted that "The high point of spirituality for Mother Angela is the Eucharist, the heart and soul of the Church." In closing, he said, "We thank Blessed Angela for having been a public sign to the values of Jesus."[171]

At the provincial house on June 22, several sisters were in the audience to view the DVD prepared by Sister Marta documenting the actual closing of the diocesan phase of the investigation into the alleged miracle attributed to Blessed Mary Angela's intercession.[172] On June 23, Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House Chapel was the setting for another Mass of Thanksgiving for blessings received during the investigative process in the Archdiocese

of Hartford. Chaplain Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz was the celebrant and homilist for the Mass. The sisters, associates, and Pauline herself prayed for all who had contributed to the successful completion of the diocesan phase of the investigation and appropriately closed the celebration singing, "Blessed Angela, your light we want to be."[173]

Since her arrival at the end of November 2007, Sister Marta worked zealously for Blessed Angela's cause of canonization and shared her talents and skills with the sisters in Enfield. On June 26, she began her return journey to the Felician Generalate in Rome, Italy. Upon her arrival, Sister Marta personally delivered all the documentation to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Meanwhile, Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch reminded the sisters of their responsibility to be actively involved, offering prayer and sacrifices for this intention. "Further," she noted, "it is essential for us to recommit ourselves to the charism of our Congregation: boundless love of God and surrender to God's Will, compassionate service, total availability and concern for the salvation of all people."[174]

On June 14, 2010, Sister Marta updated the sisters throughout the Congregation on the progress of the process leading to the canonization of Blessed Mary Angela. She reported that after the Decree of Validity of the entire Diocesan Process was issued on November 7, 2008, the lengthy process of translation began. In July 2009, the first draft of the *Sommario,* that is, all the testimonies of the witnesses in the original language as well as the translation and the entire medical documentation partly translated into Italian, was finished and delivered to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to be reviewed. This incredibly detailed process took ten months. After inserting necessary corrections both in the order of the documentation and in some Italian translations, the document was approved and signed on May 22, 2010. This document detailed the chronological order of the events and had to provide each entry with a reference to the *Sommario.* The short biography of Foundress Blessed Mary Angela with the dates of decrees, beatification, and all stages of the process had to be prepared. Only when all 894 pages of the *Sommario* were finished was it finally printed.[175]

On June 10, 2010, Sister Marta delivered the requisite number of copies to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. After studying the documentation, two doctors chosen by this Congregation would express their opinion as to whether the healing was inexplicable in a natural way. If the opinion of one doctor is negative, Sister Marta, in the name of the Felician Sisters, could apply for a third opinion. If the opinion of both doctors is negative, the process would be discontinued. Sister Marta reminded the sisters "that everything would be according to God's will and to His greater glory."[176]

CONTINUING THE *JOURNEY IN HOPE*

The summer of 2007 was busy for the new council with retreat and vacation time in July, the opening of the 75th anniversary celebration of the province and the celebration of jubilees on August 2, a board meeting at St. Joseph Hospital in Maine the first week in August, and orientation for the provincial leadership teams in Chicago at the end of August. September brought a return to routine and from September 13 to 16, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, joined the members of the North American Provinces

Steering Committee (NAP) at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Provincial House in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, 2007, to resume planning for the reconfiguration. Significant items on the agenda included discussion of the findings of the Milord Company's independent Assessment Team, which had visited seven of the Felician Sisters North American Provinces. When the Assessment Team presented its report at the NAP Steering Committee meeting held from January 24-27, 2008, in Chicago, the Team acknowledged the wise decision of the Felician Sisters to begin the process of joining together "to best use their assets to sustain themselves while continuing to serve the Felician Order and the North American Community at large, through their ministries."[177]

Their report included the team's assessment of facilities in each province, considering numbers of sisters, operating costs, and housing capacity. Based on this information coupled with the decreasing number of sisters, they recommended that several provinces be closed, and the sisters relocated to other provinces. Factors considered were site location geographically in comparison to other provinces, neighborhood potential for the site to be sold or absorbed by a viable surrounding organization, value of the land, and number of beds available. The reviewers also noted that most of the ministries would not be able to be staffed and run on a day-to-day basis by the sisters themselves. Finally, the Team reminded the members of the North American Provinces Steering Committee that its report was "not the absolute final plan for action," but "one tool in the future planning process."[178]

Even before the Milord Team recommended selling or donating ministries located off-site from the main provincial property boundaries, the NAP group was discussing possible uses for the Polonia, Wisconsin, property, the "cradle" of the Felician Sisters in North America. After the discussion, the sisters agreed to engage Felician Services Incorporated (FSI) to do a viability study.[179] The NAP group was also informed that while the live-in feature of the Volunteers in Mission Program as it existed in Chicago, Illinois, had been suspended, the Volunteers in Mission Corporation remained viable and would continue as such. Students from Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan, and Hilbert College in Hamburg, New York, as well as sisters in initial formation, continued their engagement in the short-term volunteer program.[180]

At this meeting, the Steering Committee also established a schedule of noteworthy events relative to the reconfiguration:

November 2008	Celebrating the New in All Provinces
April 20 to 24, 2009	Chapter of Elections
November 21, 2009	Founding Date & Event/Installation of New Leadership[181]

'ONE VOICE' UNITES SISTERS IN *JOURNEY OF HOPE*

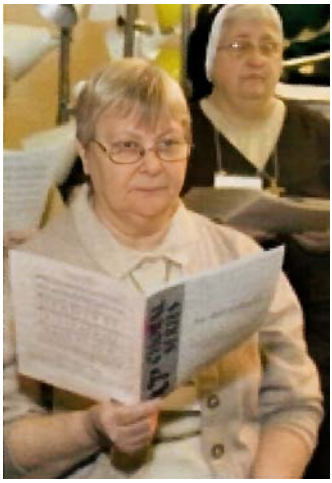
It was also during this meeting that the NAP group learned that all was ready for the actual production of the *Journey in Hope* CD to begin. The idea for the CD was developed during the NAP Assembly in Lodi, New Jersey, between October 28 and October 30, 2005, when four musicians—Sister Margaret Marie Padilla, Sister Rena Marie Romero, and Sister Veronica Marie Lucero, all from Rio Rancho, and Sister Marilyn Marie Minter from Lodi—met to "make music for the Lord."[182] During the assembly, many sisters suggested producing a CD by the Felician Sisters of North America. The musicians concurred, and, agreeing that "it is time to do a musical CD," presented their proposal to the

NAP Steering Committee. In their request, they maintained that this "would be a way to share our Felician Charism in the global community in need of spiritual healing and nourishment of God's unconditional love."[183]

On December 27, 2007, 48 Felician Sisters from all over North America walked up to the choir loft in Immaculate Conception Convent Chapel in Lodi, New Jersey, where they became "One Voice." The group spent four days, almost seven hours each day, practicing and recording what some sisters described as "one of the most exhausting experiences I've ever had having so much fun." Four Enfield sisters participated in the musical experience, Sister Carole Marie Saladin, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, Sister Francine Mary Sousa, and Sister



S Marilyn Marie Minter (Lodi) directs the choir during rehearsal of musical pieces for CD One Voice. S Marie JoAnn Lewko is in the forefront at right.





At left, S Carol Marie Saladin and S Francine Mary Sousa listen as S Marilyn introduces next musical piece during rehearsal. At right, S Constance Marie Tomyl and S Maria Magdalena Vallellanes (Lodi) enhance a musical piece singing descant.

Marie JoAnn Lewko. Under the direction of Sister Marilyn Marie and Sister Veronica Marie, the sisters soon learned that producing *One Voice,* the CD's title, involved practice and hard work. [184]

The title for the CD emerged from the group. After one long rehearsal, Sister Veronica invited the sisters to reflect upon the music and the experience of working together to see if a word or phrase surfaced—something that could be used as a title for the recording. After reflection, the sisters shared their thoughts. *One Voice* was on the list and the longer the sisters considered it, the more it felt "just right." As Sister Mary Aquinas Szott, Lodi's provincial minister, explained to the audience at the concert following the recording sessions on January 1, 2008, "*One Voice,* as it is called, captures an aspect of our *Journey in Hope.* The sound of the sisters blending as ONE represents our unity as Felicians. Singing, praying, and being together in community gave us an experience of our oneness in the Lord and this congregation."[185] Sister Marilyn said, "Coming together as a Felician family from across North America the week of Christmas was a gift of God being made flesh. There was such a unity in our diversity that was transformed into *ONE VOICE* for the praise of God as the Felician Sisters of North America."[186]

Sister Marie JoAnn, who provided the text for the CD cover, wrote:

> The reconfiguration process brought Felician Sisters together with an amazingly powerful result. The spirit of our foundress Blessed Mary Angela and of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose Rule we follow, enflamed out hearts and rekindled our resolve. With each meeting, assembly, and convocation, the fortitude of our convictions grew. Drawn together from the four corners of North America, our Felician Franciscan roots bound us as One—in Voice, in Heart, in Soul.
>
> The recording of *ONE VOICE* burst forth, from the energy and music of those convocations. To be of *ONE VOICE* implies mutuality, a single-hearted unity set afire by One Lord, focused on One Charism, readied for One Response. Our response is a Response to Love. Together as One Voice raised in praise, we are emboldened and seek to be heard for the sake of justice in a crippled world. We become the collective yes to God's call to go beyond the comfort of security and face tomorrow filled with hope.[187]

Musical selections for the recording came from a wide variety of styles as well as Felician themes, especially Eucharist. Seven songs were composed by Felician Sisters, and several expressed a Felician-Franciscan spirit theme. St. Francis praised God for all creation, and "Clare's Melody," composed by Sister Margaret Marie Padilla, is a fine example of a hymn celebrating God's artistry in creation. The CD was released for purchase in early June 2008.[188]

Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America

The newly established Communications Office was rapidly expanding the number of projects undertaken on behalf of the *Journey in Hope* process. In addition to preparing print and media materials for each convocation, the Office prepared live webcasts of proceedings for sisters unable to travel to the convocations and published the newsletter *Voices of Hope* to bring more information to the sisters. Director Sister Mary Francis Lewandowski (Livonia)

was also making every effort to facilitate the inclusion of the Felician Sisters of North America in the national traveling exhibit sponsored by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) originally entitled *Pioneers, Poets, and Prophets: Catholic Sisters in America.*[189] Shortly after, for funding and marketing purposes, the title of the exhibit was changed to *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America.*[190]

The project grew out of LCWR's desire to mark its 50th anniversary in 2006 by developing an exhibit for the Smithsonian, demonstrating how Catholic sisters had helped to shape America, building hospitals and schools, and even developing an early form of health insurance for loggers in the Midwest.[191] They wanted to tell the story of these women who founded new Orders, challenged stereotypes, stood their ground against injustice, and tried to change the world for the better. These women designed the prototype for the first incubator, aided in the discovery of DNA, and helped found the Mayo Clinic. The sisters wanted to share this message and developed clear purposes for the project:

- To document the significant leadership of Catholic sisters in social change, in building the social fabric of the country through education, healthcare, and social service.
- To tell the untold story of the leadership of Catholic sisters in developing and sustaining institutions of culture in the United States and broadening access to them.
- To demonstrate the leadership of Catholic sisters in the public arena at a time when few women occupied leadership positions in the United States.[192]

While raising funds for the project, LCWR asked every community of sisters in the United States to submit artifacts and photographs for the exhibit. Those artifacts included religious habits, diary entries, travel trunks, cutlery, prayer books, a harp, and even a piano that traveled with the sisters via ship and steamboat. There were also the braided cornhusk shoes worn by pioneer sisters, and a letter from President Thomas Jefferson, soon after the Louisiana Purchase, reassuring Catholics in the new territory of the freedom to practice their religion. There was a poignant note from a young mother as she left her infant son, Ernest Otto Smittz, with sisters at the New York Foundling Hospital. And there was a more recent statement from several Kentucky congregations, asking forgiveness for their early involvement in slavery.[193]

The three-thousand-square foot installation told the story of how these sisters contributed to the history and culture of the United States. Finally, on May 15, 2009, the exhibit opened at the Cincinnati Museum Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. While attending the annual conference of the Franciscan Federation in Cincinnati from July 10 to 13, 2009, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl and Sister Judith Marie Blizzard (Lodi), along with several other Felician participants, visited the exhibit there. They were inspired by the examples of the sisters' dedicated service to victims of poverty, oppression and exclusion.[194] Other cities that hosted the exhibit included Dallas, Texas; Ellis Island, New York; Dubuque, Iowa; Cleveland, Ohio, and Los Angeles and Sacramento, California. On January 15, 2010, the large exhibition arrived at its primary destination, The Dillon Ripley Center at the Smithsonian. As the exhibit traveled throughout the

country, visitors not only grasped a better understanding of the contributions of women religious, but also came to understand the essence of the vowed life and the values of prayer, community, mission, and responsiveness to the unmet needs of society.[195]

A historic chapter for the Felician Congregation

"I remind you to stir into flame the gift of God that you have,
for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice. . . ."

Using these words of St. Paul to Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6), Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, encouraged Felician Sisters of the North American provinces gathered at the Sheraton Detroit-Novi to continue their *Journey in Hope.* In her address, Sister Barbara Ann told the sisters, "We have a unique power which comes from being daughters of our beloved Mother, Blessed Mary Angela." She reminded the sisters that "It is essential that we . . . let Jesus be the norm for all our words . . . our shared wisdom at this Convocation." Sister Barbara Ann concluded her remarks with an excerpt from a letter of Blessed Mary Angela to Mother Mary Monica Sybilska, one of the five Felician pioneers, written in 1884. "Beginnings are always hard, especially in America; . . . be assured that as the mother of this Congregation, I will always keep in my heart deep love and gratitude for the North American province" (*SW*, vol 1, 208).[196]

Appropriately, *New Spirit, New Life* was the theme of the 2007 Convocation, attended by more than 400 sisters from November 9 to 12. Through the efforts of Sister Mary Francis Lewandowski, director of communications, sisters not in attendance were able to view the presentations in progress or watch previously recorded presentations by logging on to the congregational web site.[197]

Following Morning Prayer on Saturday November 10, Sister Mary Celestine Giertych (Canada) introduced Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, keynote speaker. A noted Franciscan lecturer, researcher, and scholar, Sister Margaret was president of St. Bonaventure University and held the distinction of being the first woman to receive a doctoral degree from the Franciscan University in Rome. Her address, *Reconfiguration: A New Pilgrimage to Peace,* unpacked two metaphors: that of moving to a new home and that of going on a pilgrimage. Moving "is not a pleasant experience," she told the sisters, but noted that especially as Franciscans, we are called to "be pilgrims and strangers." She explained that "the very word *pilgrim* means to come from foreign parts, to travel to another location. . . . You are becoming a new kind of itinerant through the work that you are doing," she said.[198]

Sister Margaret drew on the work of Harold D. Lasswell, who dedicated himself to fostering and achieving a commonwealth of human dignity for all to understand and urged the sisters to "pay attention to the very human values and concerns that affect every person involved in the process." She concluded her presentation with *A Message from the Hopi Elders:*

You have been telling the people that this is the Eleventh Hour.
Now you must go back and tell the people that this is The Hour.

. . .

Know the river has its destination.
The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off toward the middle of the river,
Keep our eyes open and our heads above the water.

All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. We are the ones we have been waiting for.[199]

'Now is a special moment of grace'

His Eminence Adam Joseph Cardinal Maida, archbishop of Detroit, was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Eucharistic liturgy on Saturday. In his homily, he thanked the sisters for their fidelity to the Church over the decades. He reminded them that "Now is a special moment of grace," and urged them to look at how they can have "a continuing impact on the life of the Church. . . . There is no clear light from above, yet there is a voice within." Cardinal Maida assured the sisters of his prayers that their "work will bear much fruit."[200]

Following presentations by the Governance Task Force and table conversation, the sisters indicated their three preferred choices for the number of regions in the new province from the six proposed models. Sister Mary Aquinas Szott (Lodi), task force chair, presented the results of these choices. Model 2 with two regions ranked first; Model 3 with three regions ranked second; and Model 5 with four regions ranked third. After further discussion, the sisters again indicated their preferences by weighted values from among these three models. Model 2 with two regions received the highest number of points in the second round. The closing liturgy on Saturday afternoon followed reports from the Policy Task Force, the Multi-faceted Ministry Center in Kingstree, South Carolina, and the Holy Week Immersion Experience in Mexico. Attendees also learned that Chicago-based Felician Services, Inc., (FSI) had been engaged to conduct a viability study of Felician-sponsored ministries in North America.[201]

During the concluding ritual following Sunday's Eucharistic liturgy, the sisters acknowledged the reality of their pioneer status as a "frontier yet undefined," blessed each other, and sang the traditional Felician *Magnificat.* Reflecting on the convocation, Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa said it was "A grace-filled experience. Calmness, peace, and openness were prevalent throughout the weekend. Anxieties and insecurities of the past were diminished and transformed into renewed energy to follow in the footsteps of our beloved foundress, Blessed Mary Angela." Sister Joanne Marian Kaminski felt that "the live web broadcast was a great way to have our sisters 'back home' join us in practically everything. The sisters at my table were quite friendly and we worked exceptionally well with each other." She added, "I felt very much at peace throughout the entire event."[202]

At the meeting of the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee that immediately followed the November convocation, the group reviewed the results of the sisters' choices regarding the number of regions for the new province: Model 2 with two regions, 849 points; Model 3 with three regions, 346 points, and Model 5, with four regions, 345 points. After the Steering Committee agreed to make a recommendation to Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch and her council regarding the number of regions, the group addressed two other significant issues, the process for choosing a site for the new province home, and a name for the province. The New Provincial Site Task Force, whose responsibility was to seek out available sites for the new province headquarters, began its task of developing criteria for the new province

"home" and/or "offices." Regarding the new name for the province, the Steering Committee asked the provincial ministers to forward names for the new province suggested by their sisters to Sister Mary Andrea Chudzik (Chicago) by December 7. The Steering Committee planned to review the list at its January 2008 meeting in Chicago.[203]

At the first meeting of the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee held in 2008, two issues stood out from among the almost two dozen items on the meeting's agenda: the name for the new province and the location of the new province headquarters. After reviewing the hundreds of names for the new province submitted by the sisters from all eight provinces, the Steering Committee agreed that those titles with fifteen or more votes would be offered for another round of voting by the sisters.[204] In Enfield, the sisters who gathered for the Provincial Assembly held on Saturday, April 26, 2008, brought their completed ballots with them. After the leadership team tallied the results, Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, announced the choices during dinner.[205]

Our Lady of Hope	30	Our Lady of the Eucharist	21
Our Lady Queen of Peace	9	Our Lady of Peace	7
Our Lady of the Americas	1		

Once the Steering Committee received the voting results from all the provinces, they recommended the top three choices to Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, and her council. Meanwhile, the New Provincial Site Task Force contacted other religious communities that had engaged in the establishment of new headquarters. The Steering Committee also shared elements they envisioned for the new province center. They felt it essential that it be a neutral site, have easy access to a major airport and public transportation, have the requisite number and types of rooms needed, as well as space for other provincial offices, and available spiritual and educational resources. The task force for the new site took these criteria into consideration and continued the requisite research before the Steering Committee settled on a location.[206]

Readying their hearts for reconfiguration

During the spring of 2008, sisters throughout North America were engaged in readying their hearts for the reconfiguration of the North American provinces. The sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province pondered the theme "Where Is My Heart?" relative to the reconfiguration process for the North American provinces during the afternoon of Saturday, April 26, 2008. The content of the day was based on the November 2007 Convocation keynote address of Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, "Reconfiguration: A New Pilgrimage to Peace."

In her introduction to the sisters that afternoon, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, a member of the Transitions Task Force, reviewed the work of the collaborative process since 1996. She explained that the Transitions Task Force was formed when the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee recognized that a critical component to success in the reconfiguration was providing a process for the sisters to integrate the experience spiritually, psychologically, and responsively. She reminded the sisters that each day, in the 'Journey in Hope' Prayer, they asked to be "catalysts for risk-taking." She continued, "I was surprised to learn that the word *catalyst* derived from the Greek *kataluein,* meaning 'to dissolve' or 'annul.' In the natural world, a *catalyst* works to

precipitate a process or an event without being consumed by the overall reaction. However, as human catalysts, we do not remain untouched by these consequences."[207]

During the opening prayer, the sisters asked that the Spirit of courage and strength "be with us today as we contemplate the transition we must make." As they pondered the pioneer spirit of the five sisters who journeyed to America from Poland as well as their own fears and resistance to making the journey, they engaged in a period of personal reflection as well as small group sharing. After returning to the Community Room, the sisters brought forward the prayers they formulated, indicating where their hearts were on this journey, and laid them at the foot of the cross. Each sister also brought forward a response indicating where she was in this transition and laid it at the feet of Our Lady. The sisters' responses spoke of trust in God and support from each other. Sister Mary Ann Papiez wrote: "I find hope in the fact that our sisters want to preserve Mother Angela's charism and continue her work with God's people. I see avenues opened up in opportunities for service beyond provincial borders. I already see new missions with a Spirituality Center and the expansion of Felician presence into South Carolina."[208]



SM Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, brings forward her response relative to the reconfiguration process for the North American provinces.

Another opportunity for readying their hearts for the reconfiguration took place in Enfield from January 16 to 17, 2009. Felician Sisters from Mississauga, Canada; Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, and Lodi, New Jersey, braving the cold temperatures and handling delayed flight schedules and luggage, joined their sisters from throughout the Enfield province, to continue reflecting on the new beginning in their lives, the move to one North American province, Our Lady of Hope. Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, general minister of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, facilitated the weekend Transitions Retreat planned by the Transitions Task Force. Sister Elizabeth's light-hearted and

spirit-filled approach served the participants well in guiding them to embrace the monumental and inevitable task of reconfiguration. The theme for the weekend was *Behold, I make all things new.*[209]



S Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, facilitates the Transitions Retreat to assist the sisters in embracing the monumental task of reconfiguration.

Sister Elizabeth challenged the sisters to be aware of where they were in the transition process and invited them to embrace their experience with its practical implications and aspects as they unfolded in the present moment. "We live our moment-to-moment transition with God always at our side," she said, "just as Francis chose to live a life of 'holy newness' by living in the here and now." She reminded the sisters that the seed of the North American reconfiguration was planted in Enfield. Further on in her presentation, she told them, "We are living in a period of transition, so we have a sense of homelessness, of 'houselessness.' This is our reality. This experience, much like 'hanging in midair,' requires trust, and invites us to let go, to embrace the new." She assured the sisters that they need not fear, "for God is with us on our *Journey in Hope.* God is with us as we plant seeds for a future we don't know." Finally, she recalled the Biblical story of Noah and the ark, saying, "What awaited Noah was that rainbow in the sky. When that ark lands on November 21, 2009, you'll be on holy ground." The sisters found the opportunities to share in large and small groups as well as the moving prayer services and rituals spiritually enriching.[210]

A historic moment for the Felician Sisters

The celebration of the "new entity" took place on November 1, 2008. In Enfield, the announcement of the new unified province occurred within the context of the general visitation. Sisters throughout North America watched the recording on DVD, but Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, celebrated the news of the province's name and location with the sisters in Enfield in person. Previously, Sister Barbara Ann had recorded the official

announcement of the new province on a DVD so that each sister in every province would hear the same message.[211]

Sister Barbara Ann began her remarks to the sisters with a memory from her childhood—her family's annual trip. She said, "It occurred to me that these excursions in my past might, in some small way, mirror our Journey of Hope." Eventually moving to weightier subject matter, the emotion was evident in her eyes as she called to mind the strong and dedicated women who helped make the Felician Sisters who they are today. She spoke for just over ten minutes, but finally, after much anticipation, announced the name of the new North American province: Our Lady of Hope—hope for the future, hope for the world, and hope for the Felician Sisters to continue their work, following in the footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska.

On this first day of November in the year two thousand eight—
2008 years from the birth of Jesus Christ,
183 years from the birth of Sophia Truszkowska,
153 years from the foundation of our Congregation and its consecration
to the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
134 years from the beginning of the Felician journey in North America,
109 years from the death of Mother Mary Angela,
15 years from the beatification of our beloved mother, Mary Angela . . .
with the recommendation of the Journey in Hope Steering Committee,
the approbation of the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life
and Societies of Apostolic Life,
and the unanimous approval of the sisters of the general council,

I, Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, Minister General, hereby proclaim
the establishment of Our Lady of Hope Province in North America,
based in Franklin, Wisconsin,
effective November 21st, 2009.[212]

In Enfield, the DVD was incorporated into a prayer service prepared by the Liturgy/Rituals Task Force. During the service, whose theme was "Behold, I Make All Things New," the sisters recalled Mother Angela and the pioneer sisters who "nurtured new realities" for the sake of the mission of Jesus. The sisters also reflected and shared on the practical realities inherent in the reconfiguration to one new province. The service closed with the singing of the traditional Felician *Magnificat,* but the celebration continued in the dining room with apple crisp and ice cream prepared by Sister Mary Stella Motyl, who said, "Joy prevailed everywhere." Some sisters even burst into song, singing: "And they'll know we're Felicians by our love."[213]

Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko reflected, "The announcement of the establishment of Our Lady of Hope Province was akin to stepping into the heart of history. The significance was electrifying. *Behold, I make all things new.* . . . During the singing of the *Magnificat* I couldn't help but feel that what I was feeling was no less than emotional, breath-taking expectations experienced by our pioneer sisters. God has much in store for us."[214]

Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz brought a unique perspective to the event. It was she who drafted the letter to Minister General Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski and her council in 1996, petitioning that "a vehicle for

interprovincial collaboration" be set in motion. She said that, after reflecting on the November 1 event,

> the unfolding of creation came to mind. . . . God in all his love and wisdom carefully, deliberately, and slowly brought forth the light, the waters, . . . man and woman . . . and saw that all was very good. And, as the story goes, God gave the command to 'Go, multiply, and fill the earth.' I believe and trust that God has empowered the Felician Sisters of North America to bring forth a new creation, to go forth in confidence to further his plan through the Felician Mission: 'feed the hungry, clothe, instruct, visit. . . . ' With God's blessings and with the loving support of Our Lady of Hope, we can, and we will.[215]

The sisters' joy regarding the new site for the provincial headquarters, however, was short-lived. On Christmas Day, December 25, 2008, they received a letter from the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee that invited the sisters to reflect on the journey of Mary and Joseph as the time of delivering the Christ Child drew near. Concerned about Mary, Joseph wanted to find a safe, comfortable dwelling for her. "However," the letter said, "this was not meant to be. In reality, they were homeless. They knew what it meant to be displaced." The letter continued, "Well, Sisters, in some respects we are now in a very similar situation," and went on to report that on December 22, the negotiations fell through when the Franciscan Friars decided not to sell their building in Franklin, Wisconsin, at the proposed bid. The Steering Committee assured the sisters that the New Provincial Site Task Force would be reactivated and encouraged to widen their search. The letter concluded: "we are disappointed in this outcome, but we are confident that God is with us. . . . We know that Our Lady of Hope is walking this journey with us and with her guidance the right location for our provincial site will become a reality."[216]

Mission Integration in the new province

In its effort to further the mission of the Felician Sisters in North America, the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee engaged Felician Services, Inc. (FSI), in November 2007 to conduct a viability study of Felician sponsored ministries in North America. According to Sister Mary Clarette Stryzewski, president and CEO, sharing the information was the first step in the process that would result in "a smooth transition of corporate membership for the ministries being entrusted to Felician Services, Inc., in November 2009."[217]

In Our Lady of the Angels Province, Felician-sponsored ministries included the Enfield Montessori School (EMS) and the Felician Adult Day Care (FADC). Early in 2008, the director of each of these ministries—Sister Francine Mary Sousa and Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, respectively—completed the "Felician Ministries Viability Assessment" provided by FSI, who reviewed their assessments considering whether each ministry

- Furthers the mission of the Felician Sisters in North America.
- Offers services or support in accordance with Felician values and is managed in a way that reflects Felician values, whether by Felician Sisters or lay people.
- Is financially self-sufficient and is projected to be so in the long term, without being a financial burden or liability on the new province.

The results of the assessments for all the provinces were shared with members of the Steering Committee during the June 2008 meeting held in Chicago when Sister Deborah Cerullo, SSND, and the Akin Gump Group offered canon and civil law considerations. During the Steering Committee's November 2008 meeting, Sister Clarette and Joseph Parrillo, CFO of FSI, presented a step-by-step overview of the role of FSI to the members of the North American provincial administrations as it would be exercised after November 21, 2009.[218]

Felician Services representatives met with members of the provincial leadership team on March 11, 2009, to learn about the Enfield province's ministries as early as possible. Attending the meeting were Sister Clarette, Joseph Parrillo, CEO James Lubawski, Andrea D. White, Ed.D., vice president of marketing, and Sister Mary Ramona Dombrowski, vice president for sponsorship. After the FSI team members introduced themselves and spoke about their roles as designees[219] for the Enfield ministries, Sister Clarette announced that Dr. White would be responsible for the Enfield ministries. As a member of the Enfield Montessori School Board, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl led the presentation on the school. Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, a member of the Felician Adult Day Care Board, led that discussion. At FSI's invitation, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, former provincial minister, updated the group on issues related to the St. Francis Apartments which were under construction.[220]

Enfield Montessori School

Sister Constance's presentation on the Enfield Montessori School board included notable strengths and areas of concern. While the school's director Sister Francine Mary Sousa, along with the board, managed the school as resourcefully and conservatively as possible, balancing the budget had become a challenge, and for the first time in its long history, EMS had no waiting list, an obvious red flag for every school administrator and board aware of the relationship between enrollment and finances. Working from a position of fiscal responsibility, the board tried to balance rising energy and healthcare costs, salaries and benefits for teachers and staff, while holding tuition prices and assisting parents who were having trouble meeting tuition payments.[221]

Other salient issues included stabilizing the board, which had experienced significant turnover in preceding years; in addition, the school was faced with students withdrawing before they completed grade six. Sister Francine once again suggested that the answer to these problems might lie in restructuring the levels of the school's program, but this would require another building with an all-purpose room for physical education classes as well as a gathering place for the school community for a variety of school functions. The building would also house a large classroom, a nurse's room, teachers' lounge, offices, and a warming kitchen.[222]

With the estimated cost of this addition at approximately $1.5 million, the board agreed that it would be necessary to hire a capital-campaign manager for the project, but some members questioned the prudence of undertaking such a project, given that the United States was just beginning its recovery from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Rather than build, the board began exploring other options, including use of the vacant St. Adalbert School in the Thompsonville section of Enfield.[223]

A bright spot in the year came in early summer 2008, when EMS received notice that the Commission on Independent Schools voted to grant full ten-year reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC). Because EMS met the standards set by NEASC, the Department of Education of the State of Connecticut notified the school of its continued approval as a nonpublic school. The NEASC letter commended the school for its excellence in academics and mission as well as the thoroughness of its self-study and action plan: "Both reports are examples of the care and attention to which Enfield Montessori School approached the accreditation process." Areas of concern included finance and personnel, specifically, increasing teacher salaries if the school is to position itself to attract high-quality teachers, and continuing to work toward cost-based tuition.[224]

Parking lot construction

Having successfully overcome the hurdles inherent in redesigning the parking area and paving it, the Enfield Montessori School was finally ready to begin construction on proposed improvements to the parking lot in spring 2009. The parking plan called for a large turnaround at the rear of the school property, increasing the capacity for more cars and alleviating the backup of cars and buses onto Enfield Street. The school also planned to clear off the gravel lot and landscape the area with trees and grass.[225]

The board selected Peter DeMallie of Design Professionals, Inc., of South Windsor as the architect for the project. He and his team had already met with Enfield town officials and cautioned the EMS Board that it could take three months to get town approval because of the project's many variables and the uncertainty as to how the town would approach these issues. DeMallie noted that the timing was important since the work on the parking lot would be done during summer vacation. He added that the work would be put out to bid only after all approvals were received. Sister Francine was delighted that the redesign of the lot could finally be completed. "We still need to present the plan to the town," she explained, "but there should be no battles involved with it."[226]

Construction finally began the last week of July 2009. The new driveway, engineered to meet all current standards for an educational facility, was large enough to accommodate emergency vehicles as well as school buses. An auxiliary roadway was constructed, leading to an overflow parking area behind and to the rear of the brown school building. Visitor and handicapped parking spaces were available adjacent to the loop portion of the driveway along with a drop-off area for students.[227]

Sister Francine, who watched the project take shape during the summer said, "It was exciting to watch the trucks come onto the property and help the plan come alive. The amount of earth that had to be moved was unbelievable." She added that she was "excited about seeing the parents' reaction," and expressed deep appreciation to the families, neighbors, and supporters for their efforts over the years, especially to "all our sisters who prayed us through this." She also recognized Sister Carol Marie Saladin, teacher, who was water bearer, watermelon bearer, and *babka* (bread) bearer to the workers during the construction.[228]

Felician Adult Day Care

Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, a member of the Felician Adult Day Care (FADC) Board, led the discussion on this ministry for cognitively impaired adults and their caregivers. She explained how its high staff/client ratio allowed safe, warm, individualized care in a "home away from home setting." Its program of therapeutic recreation and opportunities for socializing enabled clients to maintain their quality of life. "Sharing the Caring" was the center's motto and the staff consistently did an outstanding job of providing quality care to its clients, a significant percentage of whom had Alzheimer's and other dementia. The director, Sister Patricia Marie Iagrosso, had managed to assemble an effective board with interested and involved members.[229]

However, management issues and resulting conflicts often led to dissatisfaction and alienation among the staff, and, because of this stress, the 2008 General Visitation Report recommended professional intervention.[230] The resulting plan laid out steps to address the issues identified and included a mentor to help strengthen key areas. In addition, both Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha and Sister Nancy worked together to meet with staff, some of whom were not aware of how they were contributing to a negative atmosphere at the center.[231]

Financial issues also challenged the center. The Felician community received a small stipend for the services of the sisters on staff, but this was far less than the value of these sisters' services. While Sister Patricia made every effort to increase funding by applying for grants and soliciting donations, expenditures were continuing to outweigh income. However, Sister Nancy noted the province's commitment to the center and its acceptance of the reality of the sisters' donated services, convinced of the significance of the services rendered.[232]

While FADC did not employ a full- or part-time person in mission integration, the director diligently addressed the education and development of board members and employees, and living out the mission was evident in the center's daily operation. Despite these challenges, the Felician Adult Day Care continued to provide compassionate and professional service to the persons in its care.[233]

Felician Mission Integration

After Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz updated the Felician Services representatives on issues related to the St. Francis Apartments, Sister Ramona concluded the day with an update on the development of the Felician Mission Integration Process from the fall of 2003 to the present. The Mission Integration Task Force had recently invited each sister to review and respond to the proposed set of Core Values for Felician Sisters in North America. They are:

REVERENCE FOR LIFE

Our commitment to human dignity and the stewardship of creation.

COMPASSION

A sympathetic consciousness of others expressed in caring service.

TRANSFORMATION

The process of change that encourages an open mind and heart leading to conversion.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOR

Ensuring that the needs of poor and vulnerable persons are met through advocacy and action.

JUSTICE & PEACE

Creating an environment of fundamental fairness . . .
Forging right relationships . . .
Promoting the common good . . . In pursuit of peace.

Sister Clarette said, "Mission integration is what's going to make us different from everyone else," and she emphasized the role education would play in achieving a "total cultural change" in this area. "We are hoping that people will really get excited about this, because this is our viability."[234]

ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL

SJH wraps up 60th anniversary celebration

The "All Grownup Baby Shower" held in the Chapman Conference Room on October 24, 2007, was one of the final events to celebrate St. Joseph Hospital's 60 years of service to the Bangor community. The event was attended by folks who were born at St. Joe's, their spouses, and children, as well as many who gave birth there. Dr. Preston McLean, one of several obstetricians practicing at SJH when the hospital had a delivery unit, attended. Also present were former employees of the hospital's maternity ward, which served the community from the early 1960s until 1977.[235]

On Wednesday, November 21, St. Joseph's concluded its 60th anniversary celebrations solemnly with a Eucharistic liturgy of thanksgiving concelebrated in the hospital chapel by Father Richard O'Brien and Father Roland Nadeau, chaplain. A highlight of the special Mass was a procession during which sixty employees carried lit candles to place on the altar rail bordering the sanctuary. Following the conclusion of the liturgy, Father Nadeau blessed a plaque featuring the hospital's logo and engraved with the names of all Felician Sisters, living and dead, who served at the hospital. The plaque, a gift of the SJH employees to honor the contributions of the Felician Sisters in Bangor, was placed at the entrance to the chapel.[236]

After lunch, hospital officials including Sister Mary Norberta, Ron Skarka, vice president for business development, and Matt Flynn, chief financial officer, gathered at the front of the Center Street entrance to the hospital to bury a sealed aluminum time capsule containing historic photographs and stories about St. Joe's, medical memorabilia and artifacts, as well as programs, invitations, and newsletters about the events of the past year. U.S. Senator Susan Collins, home in Bangor for the Thanksgiving holiday, spoke at the event. Also speaking were St. Joseph Healthcare Board Chair Edwin Clift, president of Merrill Bank, and Bangor Mayor and City Council Chairwoman Susan Hawes who presented Sister Norberta with an official city proclamation honoring the hospital's service to the community. The time capsule would be unearthed during the hospital's 75th anniversary celebration festivities in 2022.[237]



SM Norberta Malinowski (center) looks on as Ron Skarka, vice president for business development, and Matt Flynn, CEO, bury a time capsule as part of the hospital's 60th Anniversary Celebration. At right is U.S. Senator Susan M. Collins, who spoke at the event.

Project Benefits Kenya Mission

As part of its 60th Anniversary celebration, St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, set out to change the world on a grand scale, just as Felician Foundress Mother Angela did. Taking her cue from Mother Angela, who sent a small fledgling contingency of Felician Sisters to the United States to spread her compassionate healing message to those of a different country, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, president and CEO, announced the project to support the Felician Sisters' mission in Kenya in conjunction with the hospital's 60th anniversary. According to Sister Norberta, St. Joseph's was "adopting" the small Ruiri Mission Health Center in Meru, Kenya as its "Sister Health Ministry." The health center was a Felician Sisters ministry, just as St. Joseph's. Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk and the members of the Mission Advisory Committee organized the project.[238]

The Kenyan Center turned no one away and provided all manner of support to people in need, from food and clothing to medical care and education. The sisters also went into the streets of Meru to feed and clothe the hungry street children, deliver food staples to those in need, and provide health education, including AIDS education for the estimated one out of four mothers they serve at the Center who suffered from the disease. St. Joe's had recently provided a sterilization unit to the Ruiri health center so that staff members would no longer be compelled to sterilize equipment over a charcoal fire. SJH employees were invited to focus on gathering and donating necessary items to the Ruiri Mission. Since the sisters often used bed sheets and curtains as clothing and diapers for the children, clothing items for babies, toddlers, children and young

boys and girls topped the list of items needed. Also included were powdered baby formula, baby bottles, cloth diapers, bedsheets, nursing uniforms, and medical dressings.[239]



SM Anna Maria Zabieglik (Warsaw), a member of the original pioneer group to Kenya, holds an infant at the Felician mission.

The *Celebrate – Honor – and Change the World* mission project began October 1, 2007, and continued through the holiday season. A colorful poster hanging throughout the hospital urged employees to "Make a difference in someone's world." Employees took tags from the mission tree outside the hospital cafeteria listing specific items needed. Once they fulfilled the stated need, their unwrapped gifts were placed under the tree. *Pulse,* the hospital's biweekly newsletter for the SJH community, ran updates in almost every issue, encouraging readers to "celebrate our anniversary, honor Mother Angela and all those sisters who have set the example for us and change the world by doing so." Further impetus for the project came from a program called "My Good Deed." Founded by the brother of a victim of the World Trade Center attacks on 9/11, the program was designed to encourage the changing of the world—one person at a time, one good deed at a time. The year 2007 marked the sixth anniversary of the September 11 attacks. An SJH housekeeping employee created a pattern using the hospital's blue surgical towels that would normally be discarded and transformed them into an adorable tank top for a very needy child. Employees who could sew were able to pick up a packet containing the pattern and the material needed to complete this project.[240]

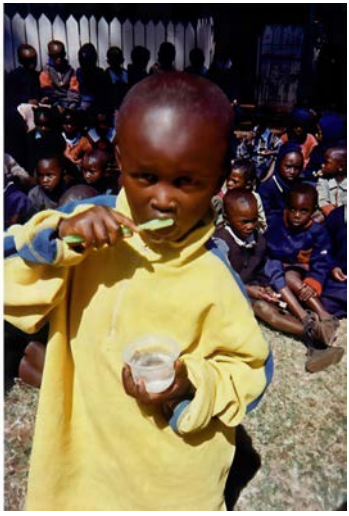
After Sister Norberta reminded employees that "the need to share our good fortune with others never diminishes," the mid-October issue of *Pulse* reported that the response to the project had been overwhelming. On January 18, 2008, despite the situation in Kenya caused by political unrest,[241] employees packed up five-hundred pounds of baby formula, baby clothes, and medical supplies for shipment to the Ruiri Mission Health Center in Kenya. Dave Voteur of the print shop, said, "It took two hours to go over the customs forms and ship everything." Thanks to his efforts, Federal Express provided the hospital with a

half-price rate to ship the donated packages. The shipping fee of $3,280 did not include duty fees and taxes once the packages arrived in Kenya. A donation from the Ciambro Charitable Foundation helped to cover the shipping and receiving costs. In addition to the donated baby items, medical supplies, and linens, more than $3,200 was raised in monetary donations for the health center.[242]



Felician Sister Agripina Karimi Gitonga opens cartons from St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, ME, filled with clothing, diapers, and baby bottles for the Ruiri Mission Health Center.





At left, a Kenyan mother swaddles her newborn in a lovely blanket provided by employees of St. Joseph Hospital. At right, a Kenyan youngster at the mission practices brushing his teeth with a new toothbrush, donated through the SJH Kenya Mission Project.

Early in March 2008, the disposable cameras sent along with the donations came back, assuring the hospital that the donations had indeed arrived safely at the Ruiri Mission Health Center in Meru, Kenya. SJH had the photos developed so that donors could share in the delight of the SJH Kenya Mission Project reaching its destination and the intended recipients. Sister Anna Maria Zabieglik, a Felician Sister from Warsaw and Polish pioneer to the mission, wrote, "In our wildest expectations we could not imagine to be shipped all those wonderful baby and child items."[243]

Transfer of Sponsorship

On June 20, 2007, the *Bangor Daily News* reported Sister Mary Norberta's announcement that St. Joseph Healthcare (SJH) would strengthen its administrative ties with Lexington, Massachusetts-based Covenant Health Systems (CHS). After noting that the organization counted several other Maine institutions among its affiliates, including St. Mary's Regional Medical Center in Lewiston and St. André's Health Care Facility in Biddeford, she explained that affiliation would provide administrative support and cost efficiencies, adding that virtually every hospital in Maine was linked to a larger organization.[244]

After discussing plans for expansion and upgrades to St. Joseph Healthcare, Sister Norberta also talked about her plan to name a new chief executive officer for the hospital in 2008. "My biggest challenge will be to stay out of the day-to-day issues at the hospital," she said, adding that she intended to retain her CEO status at SJH and at the organization's other affiliates, which included the hospice and home care division, a real estate management division and a currently inactive for-profit entity known as the Strauss Corporation.[245] In the July 1 edition of the *Pulse,* Sister Norberta told employees, "I have been leading this organization for a quarter of a century, and it is time for us to make sure that we have planned appropriately so that we are poised to continue our success for many years to come." She said she would put her energies into working with the subsidiary boards and devoting a significant amount of time to fund development.[246]

Several months later, on September 10, 2007, Sister Norberta told the provincial council that she felt that the management fee of $1.1 million that Covenant Health was considering assessing the hospital for could not be justified *quid pro quo.* She said she was also concerned about where the money would come from, maintaining that if it were taken from operations, it could handicap hospital operations. Sister Norberta had already spoken to David R. Lincoln, CHS president and CEO, who said he would consider phasing in the management fee.[247]

A month later, on October 13, during the fall provincial assembly held at the provincial house in Enfield, Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha announced the intention of the Enfield province to move toward transfer of sponsorship of St. Joseph Hospital to Covenant Health Systems. She told the sisters, "This is a very complex situation," that demanded considerations based on civil law, State of Maine health care regulations, canon law, preparation of required documentation, and communication with the general administration as well as the local bishop. Sister Bernardine outlined the factors leading to this decision:

- Membership in the Felician community has been declining, with fewer sisters able to engage in hospital ministry.
- Currently, St. Joseph Hospital is in a very strong position and has an outstanding reputation in the Greater Bangor area. The transfer of sponsorship will ensure the continued strength of the hospital.
- SJH has been an affiliate member of Covenant for several years and has enjoyed the benefits of the system. Relationship with Covenant would strengthen what is already in place at the hospital.
- The province is fully confident that Covenant will continue the ministry.[248]

Sister Bernardine assured the community that sisters would remain at the hospital if they were willing and able to maintain their positions as full- or part-time employees and/or even on a volunteer basis. She added that both Covenant and the Bangor community wished to retain the presence of the sisters. Before leaving the meeting, each local community received a handout that answered questions regarding the transfer of sponsorship. Finally, Sister Bernardine asked the sisters to pray that the Holy Spirit would guide all deliberations so that these efforts would continue the mission and ministry begun in 1947 by the Felician Sisters of Enfield.[249]

On December 21, 2007, Covenant Health Systems, Inc., together with St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and St. Joseph Hospital, filed a letter of intent regarding a proposed change of sponsorship.[250] Negotiations continued for the transfer of sponsorship, moving along as scheduled with Felician Services, Inc., and the hospital continuing its due diligence. Both Sister Bernardine and Sister Norberta met with Most Reverend Richard J. Malone, bishop of Portland, to apprise him of the progress made relative to the transfer of sponsorship of St. Joseph Hospital. By mid-March 2008, after careful study of the situation, Bishop Malone notified Sister Bernardine that since Covenant Healthcare Systems "has a proven record both within the state and in other dioceses," he was not opposed to the request to move forward. In his letter, he wrote, "I truly see this transfer of sponsorship as the best way to preserve the ministry of St. Joseph's Hospital in the Felician tradition. In our present American society and culture, it is becoming less and less possible for a Catholic hospital, or any hospital for that matter, to exist as a stand-alone entity. This affiliation will help to preserve the Catholicity of the hospital."[251]

In an interview on Thursday, June 5, 2008, published the following day in the *Bangor Daily News*, Sister Norberta discussed plans for the transfer of sponsorship. After noting that the primary reason for the change was "to ensure that the mission of the institution is carried out in the long term," she cited the declining number of sisters, but said the move would ensure "that St. Joseph's stays a very vibrant Catholic facility in this community for many years to come." Sister Norberta was also quick to point out that patients and employees would not notice any differences as the hospital changed sponsorship. "I think, hopefully, that when this occurs it will be very seamless," she said.[252]

Becoming a full member of Covenant would shift some administrative responsibilities away from the Felician Sisters. As Bethany McKnight, hospital spokesperson explained, "It means the sisters are no longer responsible for reporting from this ministry to the Vatican." As a public juridic person of

pontifical right,[253] Covenant would become responsible for ensuring that the hospital fulfilled its directive and ethical obligations as a Catholic organization and would present any proposal for capital or other projects to the Vatican for approval.[254]

At this time, the hospital still needed to provide the state with an updated strategic plan as part of its Certificate of Need (CON). State approval of a Certificate of Need was necessary to transfer sponsorship, and Sister Norberta said she hoped to file this in the fall of 2008. Acknowledging that it cost more to be a member of Covenant than an affiliate, she said the benefits would far outweigh the cost. "This gives us a lot more access [to assistance] and stabilizes the hospital for the future." [255]

Less than a week later, on June 11, the *Bangor Daily News* published a letter from Sister Norberta, written to address a "rampant rumor" in the community that she was retiring. In the letter, she clearly announced, "I am not retiring and any plans for a new hospital CEO will not be addressed for many, many months to come. Even with the addition of a dedicated CEO for the hospital, I would still remain the president/CEO for St. Joseph Healthcare." For the sake of the public in the Greater Bangor area, she outlined the steps taken to increase the relationship with Covenant Health Systems and even explained the status of a public juridic person. She reiterated the fact that this membership and sponsorship change would not have any negative impact on the community, that the change would be "virtually seamless," and that there would be no change in the sisters' presence at the organization.[256]

Sister Norberta concluded:

> I have been honored to lead St. Joseph Healthcare for more than 25 years. In all that time, I continue to be amazed by the employees' and physicians' dedication to the Felician ministry of compassion, competence and community. I am continually shown the beauty of the human spirit and all of us at St. Joseph Healthcare feel it is our honor and privilege to care for you and your loved ones. St. Joseph Healthcare is thriving and will continue to thrive under the sponsorship of Covenant Health Systems just as it has under the sponsorship of the Felician Sisters.[257]

By early summer of 2008, the data for the Certificate of Need was being finalized so that submission to the State Planning Office could occur in the fall. With the United States mired in its most severe recession in decades, hospitals were showing negative financial margins as well as a slowdown in cash collections, and St. Joseph was no exception.[258] After Covenant placed SJH on its watch list, Sister Norberta met with Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha and the provincial council to communicate the hospital's financial standing relative to the latest requests/expectations being made by Covenant Health Systems {CHS).[259]

Sister Norberta admitted that the hospital was experiencing a negative operating margin and struggling financially due to several factors, including the national economic slowdown. She also cited lack of efficiency of hospital billing and claims systems, the result of lack of oversight by the previous CFO. She added that the hospital was conducting a search to replace this person. Loss of revenue in lab work and radiology services also contributed to the

financial pressures. Finally, she spoke about the hospital's inability to maintain physicians on staff, resulting in costly payments to "traveling" doctors.[260]

Sister Norberta said she recognized the need to adjust hospital operations and sources of revenue and reported that the hospital administration was currently reviewing options to mitigate the situation. Reduction in staff was "unacceptable" because she said SJH was already "lean and mean." Additionally, she maintained, layoffs would have a negative ripple effect and SJH was working to avoid anything that would result in having employees or the public link the transfer of sponsorship to Covenant with negative outcomes. Two other strategies that the administrative team considered included initiating stronger management practices in several departments and hiring additional billers to collect on rejected claims.[261]

Sister Norberta's expectation was that while some changes would produce results in the last quarter of 2008, it would take about a year to turn the situation around. She expressed her frustration with Covenant, noting that while SJH had been an affiliate for years, Covenant had neither offered any assistance nor creative solutions. She said she wondered if CHS was rethinking its decision to move forward with the transfer of sponsorship.[262]

After a meeting via teleconference link with CHS' entire finance committee on August 21, Sister Norberta said she and Wayne Woodford, executive vice president and acting CFO, found the mood positive and reasonable, and the committee seemed satisfied with answers they provided to their questions. On their part, Sister Norberta and Woodford seemed satisfied to continue to move forward in negotiations with Covenant.[263] On December 19, 2008, both parties filed the CON application, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services announced that it had received and certified as complete an application for a Certificate of Need from St. Joseph and Covenant.[264]

Following the filing of the CON, a public information meeting took place in the St. Francis Center Conference Room at the hospital on Wednesday, January 28. Steven R. Keaten, healthcare financial analyst from the Department of Health and Human Services, represented the State of Maine. Also in attendance were Sister Norberta, president and CEO, St. Joseph Hospital; Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, vice-president, St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and St. Joseph Hospital; Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, St. Joseph Hospital Board; and Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation Board. Several SJH board members and members of the hospital's leadership team were also present. The purpose of the meeting was to present information about the proposal and to give any person attending the meeting the opportunity to question Covenant, represented by Susan McDonough, vice president, Strategy & System Development, or the State of Maine representative regarding the conditions that the applicant must satisfy to receive a Certificate of Need for the project.[265]

McDonough said, "We are very excited about the opportunity to work with our colleagues in Bangor to ensure successful hospital operations, respond to community needs, and preserve one of the few remaining faith-based hospitals in the State of Maine." Speaking of the benefits associated with the transfer of sponsorship, McDonough said, "Our goal is to strengthen St. Joseph Healthcare." She assured the SJH board members that the transfer of sponsorship would not result in people losing their positions. "The local culture is very important

to us." She continued, "We see it as vital to the success of any organization." McDonough also spoke of Covenant's high regard for St. Joseph Hospital and its commitment to quality service. She said she hoped to introduce its "Best Practices" in clinical and financial areas to other facilities in the system.[266]

In the February 1, 2009, issue of *Pulse,* Sister Norberta took advantage once again of the opportunity to assure SJH's employees that the sisters would remain at the hospital and no changes would be made with staff or services.[267] But by early March, during the President's Forum, she had to allay fears and stifle rumors spreading through the hospital, including those regarding layoffs and the sisters leaving SJH in the upcoming months. She told employees she was committed to seeing them through these tough financial times.[268]

The following month, at the combined Board of Trustees Meeting for the St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and St. Joseph Hospital, McDonough provided an update on the progress of the Certificate of Need.[269] She told the group that the CON was in review and had up to forty-five days before a preliminary draft report of findings would be published. Thus far, she said, all responses had been positive. She explained that once the CON was approved, the attorney general's office would review it to ensure that there were no components that violated any Maine laws. In the end, she said, a final CON could be realized as early as May 5. President and CEO David R. Lincoln added that once everything was in order, Covenant Health Systems would petition Rome for canon law approval. A dinner with both boards was planned for August 27, and the hope was that the transfer documents would be signed at that time.

On May 22, 2009, the State of Maine finally granted the request for the Certificate of Need with conditions:

- Receipt of a letter from the Office of the Maine Attorney General advising their intention to take no action regarding any antitrust issues regarding this transfer.
- Modify the terms of the agreement to allow for the deferral or reduction of the management fee should excess revenue over expenditures be less than 1.2% of revenues.
- Report improvements in quality outcomes as a result of this merger annually for a period of three years from transfer date.
- Identify and report savings that result from this project annually for the first three years from transfer date.[270]

The applicant (Covenant Health Systems and St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and St. Joseph Hospital) responded to the preliminary analysis on June 9, 2009. The letter produced by the applicants from the Office of the Maine Attorney General dated May 7, 2009, acknowledged no antitrust enforcement action with respect to the proposed restructuring, thus satisfying the first condition.[271]

Regarding the second condition, the applicant—Covenant Health Systems—offered two suggestions for alternative language regarding Covenant's membership assessment. However, the CON Unit recommended that this condition remain "with modified language that addresses the deferral of management fees." The modified recommendation read:

> Modify the terms of the agreement to allow for the deferral or reduction of the management fee should excess revenue over expenditures be less than 1.2% of *expenses in any given year. Payment of any cumulative deferral of the management fee from prior years will be allowed in a subsequent year only up to the excess of revenues over expenses in that year.*[272]

The applicants agreed to both the third and fourth conditions as set forth in the Preliminary Analysis. On July 2, 2009, Brenda M. Harvey, commissioner, Department of Health and Human Services, notified CHS Vice President Susan McDonough of the decision to grant with conditions a Certificate of Need authorizing the transfer of sponsorship of St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine to Covenant Health Systems.[273]

On July 31, St. Joseph Healthcare hand delivered a letter from Sister Norberta to DHHS discussing condition #1, Covenant's management fee, as "a barrier to the transfer of sponsorship." She added that she had been recently informed by Covenant that this condition was, in effect, "a deal breaker" and that Covenant would not go forward with the transfer of sponsorship with this condition in place. Further on, she wrote that while St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation and St. Joseph Hospital supported the CON application, neither "was an applicant for the CON." Seeking an opportunity for reconsideration of the CON decision, Sister Norberta requested a meeting to "discuss the impact of the CON decision on St. Joseph and to obtain your views and guidance regarding this matter."[274]

In fact, Brenda M. Harvey, commissioner, Department of Health and Human Services, reconsidered and changed the management fee condition, substituting the following:

> *Modify the terms of the agreement so that, for the three-year period following implementation, that portion of the management fee owed by St. Joseph Healthcare to Covenant shall be deferred to the extent that the excess of revenues over expenditures for the last year on which audited financial statements are available is less than the management fee designated for that year in which the fee is owed. The deferred fee will be owed in the following year in an amount equal to the lesser of the excess of revenues over expenditures for such year or the amount deferred, and if any deferred fee balance remains unpaid, such deferred fee will continue to the deferred in the same manner until paid in full.*[275]

Transfer of sponsorship was expected to take place on November 17, and as the time for the official transfer of St. Joseph Hospital to Covenant Health Systems moved closer, Provincial Minister Sister Bernardine asked the sisters for their continued prayers and explained that the "Change of Sponsorship Agreement" allowed the Felician Sisters to nominate one member to serve as a trustee of St. Joseph's. Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, RN, MSN, agreed to fill this board seat. [276]

Completing the sponsorship transfer took nearly a year, with both parties resolving issues regarding the transfer agreement to their satisfaction. The agreement included acceptance of the hospital debt, payment schedule, and the continued presence of the Felician Sisters at the hospital.[277]

Acquisition of St. Joseph by Covenant Health Systems

Finally, on July 29, 2010, Covenant Health Systems of Lexington, Massachusetts, completed its acquisition of St. Joseph Healthcare after countless meetings and hours of due diligence to address a daunting number of legal and regulatory guidelines established for health-care organizations.

The ceremonial signing event for the private official transfer of sponsorship of St. Joseph Hospital/Healthcare to Covenant Health Systems took place early in the afternoon of July 29, during the St. Joseph Healthcare Board of Trustees combined meeting at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine. In her remarks, provincial minister of the reconfigured Our Lady of Hope Province Sister Mary Christopher Moore, said, "The decision to move toward full membership with Covenant Health Systems and allow Covenant to provide official sponsorship of St. Joseph Healthcare was made to ensure the long-term viability of St. Joseph Healthcare as a Catholic identified ministry."[278]

Sister Norberta echoed what she had been telling staff and the public over the past three years, stressing that patients would see no change in the medical staff, the quality of care, or the range of services provided by the local organization and its affiliates. Administrative decisions would continue to be made at the local level, and hospital executives would still be accountable to a locally appointed board. The five sisters, including Sister Norberta, currently working in management and administrative positions, were continuing their employment at SJH. They were Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, and Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek.[279] Also present for the official transfer of sponsorship were Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, former provincial minister, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, former provincial council member and trustee.[280]

David R. Lincoln, president and CEO of Covenant Health Systems, said in a prepared statement that the merger with St. Joseph Healthcare would enhance both organizations. "We know firsthand of [St. Joseph's] dedication to the Catholic health ministry and the communities they serve and of their strong commitment to their employees," he said. "The transfer will allow St. Joseph to utilize more services of a regional delivery network and we look forward to having the talents of the St. Joseph staff to enhance our system."[281] A tour of the hospital for the guests from Covenant Health Systems followed a reception in the hospital cafeteria.

On Friday morning, the transition to Covenant membership was celebrated during a special Mass of Thanksgiving in the St. Joseph Hospital chapel. The theme for the liturgy, "Carrying the Light Forward," celebrated Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela's charism, the light which must be carried forward as St. Joseph Hospital moved into its future. Monsignor Andrew Dubois, vicar general for the Diocese of Portland, represented Bishop Richard J. Malone who was unable to attend. Father Roland J. Nadeau, hospital chaplain, concelebrated. Trustees of both St. Joseph Hospital and Covenant Health Systems, employees, and friends of St. Joseph Hospital came together for this bittersweet event. During the Mass, after a candle representing Covenant Health Systems was lit from the candle representing St. Joseph Hospital, the hospital candle was extinguished, thus symbolizing the transfer of sponsorship of St. Joseph Hospital to Covenant.[282]

Following the Mass, members of both organizations gathered in the cafeteria where they mingled and enjoyed a continental breakfast. In attendance were Sister Mary Norberta, president and CEO, St. Joseph Hospital; Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk; Sister Mary Edith St. Jean; Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, and Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek. Guests included Sister Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister, Our Lady of Hope Province; Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, provincial councilor and secretary, Our Lady of Hope Province; Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, former provincial minister, Our Lady of the Angels Province, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, former council member and vicar, Our Lady of the Angels Province and current board member, Covenant Health Systems. Edwin N. Clift, St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation chair, trustees, employees, and friends of St. Joseph Hospital came together for the momentous occasion. David R. Lincoln, president and CEO; Joyce L. Arel, board chair; Susan McDonough, vice president, Strategy and System Development, and numerous board trustees, leadership teams members, and staff members represented Covenant Health Systems.[283]

Collaboration to improve health care

Just days before the new provincial council for the Enfield province was installed in June 2007, Bangor's three leading health-care providers—Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems, St. Joseph Healthcare and Penobscot Community Health Care—announced that they had established a new collaborative relationship to better serve the healthcare needs of the Greater Bangor region. At a press conference at St. Joseph Hospital on Thursday, June 14, 2007, leaders of the three institutions said their intention was to make it easier for area residents to get the care they needed, improve the management of chronic conditions, and make the best use of available equipment and technology.[284]

The health-care leaders maintained that the goals of the cooperative relationship were primarily patient-centered and not administrative. Sister Norberta acknowledged that while all three institutions were well into the process of developing electronic medical records (EMR) to replace patients' traditional paper charts, the three different systems must be able to "talk" to each other. Consequently, the group needed to identify a connecting technology that could link their EMRs. She explained that this would be essential in emergency care, when doctors needed to obtain accurate, current information about patients who might usually be cared for at one of the other institutions. All three leaders agreed that their collaboration would help make the most efficient use of their existing facilities and equipment.[285]

SJH implements medical records system

St. Joseph Healthcare's commitment to providing the best possible care to every patient included implementing an electronic medical records system that would improve clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction. The official kickoff for the hospital's EMR initiative took place on August 7, 2007. SJH retained Quammen Group, a health-care-focused information-technology consulting firm, to coordinate implementation of the project. The Siemens MedSeries4 Clinical Suite formed the backbone of the new system and most directly affected both physician and nursing practices. The application enabled physicians to easily monitor the status and progress of care ordered. Once logged on to the system, nurses could review patient assessment data and document-pertinent

clinical observations. The three-phase program was projected for completion within twenty-four months.[286] This interconnectedness allowed SJH's medical professionals to share information readily and better coordinate patient care. The following month, Sister Norberta assured readers of the *Pulse* of the "major effort" beginning this fall "that will certainly lay the framework for the future in terms of healthcare technology at St. Joseph." She lauded the efforts of those who would work together to bring the system online.[287] In her update on the hospital shared with the sisters at the provincial assembly on April 26, 2008, Sister Norberta reported that the system would "go live" early in May.[288]

Other technology upgrades included installation of a digital mammography machine at the Regional Breast Care Center and the acquisition of two Philips BrightView single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) cameras. Using gamma cameras, SPECT imaging could detect radioisotopes commonly infused into the bloodstream prior to the test. A powerful computer then generated high quality images that doctors studied to diagnose conditions in various organs of the body, including the heart, lungs, bones, liver, kidneys and GI tract. Unlike older cameras, these units featured a flexible gantry system, which allowed useful studies of patients of any size.[289]

The new systems were not only user-friendly, but mission friendly as well. Since setup for each test was automated, technicians had more face-to-face time with the patient. Having two identical state-of-the-art SPECT systems also greatly enhanced flexibility in scheduling patients. In addition, an improved MRI machine to better serve patients was up and running by mid-December 2009.[290]

Gastroenterologist group joins SJH

In mid-January 2008, Gastroenterology Associates of Eastern Maine announced that it had affiliated with St. Joseph Healthcare. The practice was the second largest gastroenterology group in the state and served the entire northern half of Maine. Representatives of both the practice and the hospital heralded the transition as a good move for all concerned. Dr. Daniel Cassidy, a senior partner in the practice said, "Our whole crew is very happy with this change." A spokesperson for the Maine Medical Association said it was part of a sea change in American health care caused by the growing cost and complexity of running a private medical practice. Coupled with the organization's St. Joseph Internal Medicine practice, this acquisition was the beginning of SJH's growing emphasis on acquiring physician practices.[291]

"We look forward to this new and exciting relationship," noted Dr. Cassidy. "We fully intend to continue our mission of providing high quality digestive disease health care throughout northern and eastern Maine."[292] Cassidy added that the change allowed the six physicians in the practice to concentrate on treating patients without the distractions of managing the complicated business end of the practice. He said that recent changes in health care had made running the practice "a much more intense experience than it was when I started doing this back in the early '80s." Other pressures included the difficulty of recruiting new young specialists to the practice and to the area, a task made more difficult by the heavy percentage of low-paying Medicare and Medicaid patients in the region.[293]

Sister Norberta said that the acquisition of the gastroenterology group would help guarantee that inpatients at St. Joseph Hospital had adequate coverage, adding that the physician group would enjoy administrative support and "economies of scale" when it came to purchasing supplies, managing billing and payroll functions, complying with new reporting requirements, and recruiting new physicians. She believed that the future of medicine in Maine was likely to depend heavily on hospital-employed providers. "Young doctors are looking for a professional network and the solidarity of the hospital environment, not just working in a group practice." With the change of status came a change of name—Gastroenterology Associates of Eastern Maine—An Affiliate of St. Joseph Healthcare.[294]

SJH receives national awards

Once again, St. Joseph Healthcare was proud to be among the healthcare providers recognized for outstanding performance by Avatar International. For the fourth time in a five-year period, Avatar recognized St. Joseph Hospital as a leader in service quality. The Five Star Inpatient Care Award for 2006 was based on results from the hospital's 2006 inpatient care surveys which showed that SJH had the highest overall patient-satisfaction score for comparable hospitals within Avatar's extensive database.[295] St. Joseph's received the award again for 2007 as well as the first ever Five Star Loyalty and Endorsement Award for Inpatient Care, which represented a still higher achievement: recognition of attaining the highest score in the nation, regardless of hospital bed size. This was the greatest compliment the hospital could earn and reflected the effort that St. Joseph Hospital put into service quality.[296] In her October 15, 2008, memo to the hospital community entitled "The Prez Sez," Sister Norberta wrote, "In visiting with several of our patients and their family members, I have had numerous very positive comments about our care and our compassion. Our Avatar scores continue to be high, and I am proud of each of you. I can see the mission is active which is what really matters."[297]

In the spring of 2009, St. Joseph Hospital once again announced its outstanding accomplishments: two Avatar International Awards, the 2008 Five Star Service Loyalty and Endorsement Award for Inpatient Care and the Bronze Innovation Award for creative measures implemented by the St. Joseph Emergency Department. St. Joseph Hospital's exceptional scores on the latest Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems surveys supported the hospital in receiving the award for inpatient care for the second time. When patients were asked if they would recommend SJH to others, the number of respondents who said "definitely yes" placed SJH in the 98th percentile ranking on surveys completed during the fourth quarter of 2008.[298] Speaking about the second award, the hospital's Emergency Department Director, Kimberly Lugdon, said the department focused on the fundamental areas, allowing staff to create a better patient experience. She said they made sure every patient received "a warm blanket," and knew that with that blanket came our compassion and understanding of that patient's needs.[299]

In 2008, the Commission on Laboratory Accreditation of the College of American Pathologists (CAP) accredited St. Joseph Hospital's clinical laboratory. The CAP Laboratory Accreditation Program, begun in the early 1960s, was recognized by the federal government as being equal to or more

stringent than the government's own inspection program.[300] In spring 2009, St. Joseph's received full Joint Commission accreditation for an additional three years. Joint Commission accreditation was recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality reflecting an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards.[301]

Shortly after, St. Joseph Hospice received outstanding results from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization's Family Evaluation of Hospice Care survey. Hospice patient families and caregivers indicated 100% satisfaction in several categories, including pain and symptom management control, respectful treatment, education for caregivers and emotional support for the patient and family members. In addition, St. Joseph Hospice received a mark of 9.8 out of 10 regarding the following questions: how well the team respected patient's wishes, how well they communicated with patient and family, how well symptoms were controlled, and if the team allowed the patient to come to terms with his/her death. In total, the hospice received a 9.9 out of 10 overall rating.[302]

The hospital's Respiratory Care Department also received national accolades, earning Quality Respiratory Care Recognition under a program aimed at helping patients make informed decisions about respiratory care services. Only fifteen percent of hospitals in the United States received this award. St. Joseph Hospital was a third-time recipient.[303]

'Bright star' leaves St. Joseph Healthcare

Citing the need for more challenging research opportunities and higher-level facilities, Dr. Clifford Rosen, an internationally recognized researcher and endocrinologist, announced on August 14, 2007, that he would relocate to southern Maine to become a senior scientist at the Maine Medical Center Research Institute in Scarborough. Rosen was a highly regarded osteoporosis expert, a frequent presenter at international conferences, the editor of a respected medical journal, and a member of an influential advisory panel for the federal Food and Drug Administration. Employed by St. Joseph Healthcare since 1984, he had practiced in Bangor for 25 years where he was the principal researcher at a small lab at the hospital and oversaw lab services for scientists from around the world.[304]

Sister Mary Norberta said that she was "taken aback" by Rosen's announcement and concerned that all patients would be referred to appropriate providers. She noted that St. Joseph's helped Rosen obtain funding for his earliest projects and provided him with osteoporosis research space both at the hospital and a center on French Street in Bangor. Additionally, she pointed out, the hospital had enough faith in the bright young doctor to purchase one of the state's first bone density measuring machines at a time when densitometry was viewed with skepticism by many practitioners. She said, "Rosen is a bright star. We're sorry to see him go, and we wish him well."[305]

Rosen reflected on his move in an article published in the August 17 edition of the *Bangor Daily News.* He described the decision as "one of the most difficult we [my wife and I] have had to face." He continued, "Change is hard, particularly at our age. But this opportunity presented a new challenge and chance to teach as well as to translate findings from our laboratory into effective treatments for people suffering from osteoporosis." He continued,

> Still, I don't want to forget how much this community and its people gave back to me. I owe much of my professional success to Sister Norberta and St. Joseph Hospital for providing me with an opportunity to develop a clinical research program and deliver the highest standard of care from a small but intensely committed community hospital. For that, I will always be thankful.[306]

State makes Medicaid payments

In 2006, while campaigning for re-election in Maine, Governor John E. Baldacci committed to paying off hundreds of millions of dollars owed to hospitals for services they rendered to Medicaid patients. On Tuesday, March 17, 2009, he signed a $45 million financial order to pay a portion of the state's obligation to hospitals. The order came as welcome relief at a critical time.[307]

Sister Norberta praised the governor and the Legislature for directing federal stimulus funds to Maine hospitals. She said, "It has been tough sledding" without having been paid outstanding Medicaid claims. "They realized we were all getting further in the hole," she said, adding that St. Joseph Hospital would pay off debts, pay its vendors and "just stay solvent."[308]

Living the Mission at SJH

"All vital signs are normal." That's the way the lead article in *Pulse* described the Mission of St. Joseph Healthcare on July 15, 2007, which it termed obvious from "participation in programs to help feed the hungry, the warm comments from our patients, and the overwhelming feeling of comfort and concern exhibited to all people who enter our doors."[309]

Always working to find new ways for the mission to thrive and to follow in the footsteps of Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela, Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk, vice president of mission services, and members of the Mission Committee, embarked on a new educational program with the directors of the organization. After attending an educational session designed to enhance their understanding of the mission of St. Joseph Healthcare and the Felician Sisters, directors shared this information with their respective staffs. The newly developed tool—the mission integration manual—designed to be used in the hiring process, was unveiled at this session in the hope that it would ensure the hiring of mission-driven candidates. The manual also contained important educational information that broadened users' knowledge of the mission, values, and sponsorship of the organization. Mission Services also rolled out a new hiring-process tool, a large-format brochure that incorporated the hospital's mission statement as well as historical information relating to the establishment of St. Joseph Hospital and its sponsoring organization, the Felician Congregation. The brochure contained useful information relating to St. Joseph Hospital and the newly revised Standards of Practice. The brochure was shared with employees through their directors.[310]

Making a difference

Not only were the spirit and mission of the organization alive and well among the staff, but among their families as well. St. Joseph HomeCare and Hospice formed a "Care and Share Team" that planned and involved staff members in mission-supportive work. Individual employees completed food drives and provided gifts for foster children throughout the year, in addition

to supporting the hospital's mission work. They "adopted" families in need—victims of fire who had lost everything—and took it upon themselves to address their basic needs. In the spring of 2008, a group of staff volunteered a Saturday to spruce up two senior care facilities in Old Town, Marsh Island Apartments and the Meadows Residential Care Facility. They cut down dead plants, pulled weeds, and cleaned up dead foliage.[311]

Severe flooding occurred in Aroostook and Penobscot Counties in northern Maine between April 28 and May 1, 2008, and damage was extensive in the town of Fort Kent. Aroostook County was declared a federal disaster area on May 9, and the declaration was expanded to include Penobscot County on May 16, qualifying the entire region for federal assistance. Hundreds of families were evacuated from their homes, and many lost their homes and livelihoods completely. On Saturday, August 16, St. Joseph Healthcare Mission Committee members hosted a community-wide yard and craft sale, raising more than $3000 to assist the flood victims. Reflecting on this response to tragedy, Sister Norberta commended this "great response" from those who supported the yard sale, moved by "an innate spirit of volunteering and sharing which drives us to work so very hard to help those less fortunate."[312]

On September 16, 2008, St. Joseph Healthcare received the Volunteer of the Year Award for the third time since 1995. Since that time, the SJH Laundry Department had processed the bed linens for the Bangor Area Homeless Shelter which served more than 50,000 people each year. Shelter employees decided the recipients of awards and selected from among fifty organizations that assisted the shelter. Laundry supervisor Dean Hanson, who was the keynote speaker at the award event, said the announcement of the award came as a complete surprise.[313]

St. Joseph had always held a special place in the history of St. Joseph Hospital as its namesake, protector and provider. Each year, the hospital celebrated St. Joseph Day on March 19 with employees donating food items to St. Joseph's Table, in honor of St. Joseph's devotion to his family and selflessness in caring for his friends and neighbors in need. Employees left donated items at the table set up outside the hospital cafeteria. In 2009, the collection netted more than forty boxes of food for the Emmaus Homeless Shelter in Ellsworth, which then distributed the food to more than forty nearby communities.[314]

Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski

When Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski celebrated the 50th anniversary of her life in the Felician Congregation in the spring of 2007, she said, "I have been blessed in countless ways and pray that I have been a good steward of the many gifts God has given me."[315] She had indeed used her unique mix of talents, opportunities, challenges, and strengths in service to God's people at St. Joseph Hospital in Bangor, Maine, as president and CEO for 26 years.

Lauded for her grace, stamina, charisma, and humility, on Wednesday evening, January 16, 2008, she received a standing ovation before a record-size crowd of about 730 attendees as she accepted the 2008 Norbert X. Dowd Community Service Award from the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce for her "outstanding commitment to serving the many and varied interests of the Bangor region."[316] She accepted the award, but thanked the sisters with whom she lived and worked and who supported her, as well as her administrative

team and all the employees of St. Joseph's. "Working together enables us to take care of our patients and reach out to the community beyond," she said. In a videotaped tribute to her years of work and community service in Maine, co-workers and friends said she had touched the lives of countless patients, employees, and peers. The Dowd Award, intended to honor a creative, socially conscious individual who had made significant contributions to the local business community, was the most prestigious award given annually by the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce.[317]

Under her leadership, Sister Norberta brought many firsts to the region and to the state of Maine, including allowing fathers in the delivery room. She led the charge to ensure adequate primary-care services for rural areas to the extent of financially subsidizing primary-care practices to encourage a thriving network within the community. She had also been a leader in organizing small community hospitals under the Maine Health Alliance to ensure the continuity of these institutions. In his letter of congratulations to Sister Norberta, Governor John E. Baldacci wrote, "I have had the pleasure of working with Sister Norberta for these past two and a half decades. She has provided me with a wealth of advice over the years. I have relied on her honesty and her friendship, both professionally and personally. During times of great sorrow, she has been there for my family, providing great comfort. I am proud to call Sister a friend of mine."[318] The St. Joseph Healthcare community had the opportunity to personally congratulate Sister Norberta on January 21 during a reception honoring her in the hospital cafeteria.[319]

The papal visit

On April 15, 2008, sisters throughout the province viewed the historic landing of Shepherd One, carrying Pope Benedict XVI for his pastoral visit to the United States. They carefully followed his six-day-journey to the White House, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Catholic University of America, and the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, all in Washington, D.C. Before moving on to New York City, Pope Benedict celebrated Mass for more than 45,000 Catholics at the new Nationals Park. Before departing from JFK International Airport for his return to Rome, the Pope addressed the United Nations and visited several New York sites, including St. Joseph Parish in Yorkville, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Ground Zero, and Yankee Stadium where he celebrated Mass before a crowd of 60,000 people.[320]

Invited to dine with Pope Benedict

Pope Benedict's 2008 trip to the United States had been timed to celebrate the bicentennial of four archdioceses in the U.S.: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Louisville, Kentucky. But it was the abuse crisis that was a central focus of the trip, his first papal visit since the scandal began making headlines in this country. At the Mass in Nationals Park in Washington, Pope Benedict said, "No words of mine could describe the pain and harm inflicted by such abuse. It is important that those who have suffered be given loving pastoral attention." The pope lauded efforts to deal "honestly and fairly with this tragic situation and to ensure that children—whom Our Lord loves so deeply and who are our greatest treasure—can grow up in a safe environment."[321]

On April 16, Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski, president and CEO of St. Joseph Hospital, flew to Washington, D.C., in response to an invitation from Senator Susan Collins to attend dinner with the Pope at the Italian Embassy in Washington. Collins was invited to that dinner and allowed to have one guest accompany her, so she asked Sister Mary Norberta. "I'm delighted I can share this with her," said Senator Collins whose Bangor home was within walking distance of the convent. Sister Norberta said, "Her phone call was a big surprise and was gratefully appreciated."[322]

Sister Norberta said at first, the guests were told that the pope was running late. After waiting three and a half hours to celebrate his 81st birthday, they found out he was not coming. Sister Norberta confessed that she was disappointed but left a monetary gift and wishes for the Holy Father with a priest who assured her that he would present her gift to a dignitary from the Vatican.[323]

An honorary degree recipient

St. Joseph College in Standish, Maine, honored Sister Norberta by conferring an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters during its 2009 Spring Commencement Exercises on May 9, 2009. The college recognized Sister Norberta for exemplifying "the mission of the hospital to embody wellness promotion." Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, provincial councilor, along with sisters from St. Joseph Convent in Bangor—Sister Mary Edith St. Jean, Sister Barbara Theresa Marie Martis, and Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak—were present to celebrate this moment with Sister Norberta.[324] On May 27, the sisters joined many friends, trustees, doctors, and employees in a congratulatory reception in the conference room at 900 Broadway to honor Sister Norberta on the conferral of the honorary degree earlier in May. Provincial councilors Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz and Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, who had arrived for the St. Joseph Hospital Board meeting, were also present.[325]



St. Joseph College in Standish, ME, conferred an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters on SM Norberta Malinowski during its 2009 Commencement Exercises held Saturday, May 9.

Maine Woman of the Year

The Maine chapter of the nonprofit organization Business and Professional Women (BPW) named Sister Mary Norberta their 2009 Woman of the Year. Sister Norberta received the award at a surprise ceremony at the hospital on July 17, 2009. A national nonsectarian, nonpartisan organization founded in 1919, BPW had as its mission to promote equity, economic self-sufficiency, and full participation in the work force for all women. Once again, Sister Norberta was recognized for her consistent leadership and never-ending devotion to St. Joseph Healthcare and the community.[326]

FORMATION

Vocation ministry

With the establishment of the North American Felician Vocation Team, the Felician Sisters consolidated and enhanced the efforts of the vocation ministers of the eight North American provinces. The new team met several times a year to set direction which the Team coordinators followed up on.

Based on the "Pastoral Plan of the Third Continental Congress on Vocations" (2003), the team established its primary goal: creating a vocation culture in the Church through pastoral activity, especially the pastoral care of youth and young adults, which focused on five actions: prayer, evangelization, experience, mentorship and invitation. To achieve this goal, the group established four objectives:

- To inspire each sister to rekindle the fervor of her own vocation to become a more effective vocation animator.
- To provide opportunities for prayer and evangelization for the purpose of vocation awareness.
- To provide mentoring and experiences for service and charity.
- To invite potential candidates to discern a religious vocation.[327]

The Team coordinators actualized these objectives by keeping abreast of current trends in vocation ministry, organizing team effort, creating and printing brochures and ads, scheduling and planning "Come and See" experiences, and coordinating team participation at regional and national events. This arrangement provided the part-time vocation ministers with greater availability to visit schools and parishes, communicate with inquirers, and simply to be present when young people gathered for conferences and retreats.[328]

After the North American Felician Vocation Team met on January 31, 2008, they presented "Models for Vocation Ministry in North America" to the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee. The "Models" provided the practical details for fulfilling the team's objectives, but these guiding principles were operative before that. In the Enfield area, Sister Mary John Fryc, vocation director, and members of the North American Vocation Team, participated in "Steubenville East" from July 13-15 and 20-22, 2007. An outreach of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, the series of summer conferences across North America helped teens encounter the love of Christ every summer. The weekend conferences offered deep and moving experiences of prayer and fellowship for teens and youth groups. Held at the LaSalette Shrine in Attleboro, Massachusetts, the event

attracted almost 3,000 high-school and college-age students. The conference's theme, "All Access," derived from Ephesians 2: 17-18, "He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." It challenged the young people to give God complete access to every part of their lives. The novices and their directors joined Sister Mary Ann Papiez, assistant director of vocations, Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak, and Sister Mary Angela Boyarchok in witnessing to the young people in attendance. Sister John said that she and the sisters found the teens "edifying and impressive."[329]

The 2008 summer youth conference, held once again at the LaSalette Shrine from July 11-13 and 18-20, featured a special vocation tent where priests, religious women and men, and seminarians were available to speak with the young people, answer questions and disseminate vocation material. At the concluding Mass on Sunday morning, not only did the celebrant invite the priests, seminarians and religious on stage where they received a standing ovation from all present, but he also invited young people who seriously felt called to serve God as a priest, brother, or sister to come forward. Seventy young men and one hundred young women came forth. Sister John said, "Though tiring, it was a weekend we enjoyed working for the Master of the Harvest!"[330]

In 2009, Sister Mary John and Sister Mary Ann participated in Steubenville East that was held on the University of Rhode Island campus in Kingston from July 24-26. The theme for the Eucharistic feast, "Above All," derived from I Chronicles, 29:11, "Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to You." The sisters joined the many volunteers who served the needs of approximately 2,000 high school and college students. Felician Sisters vocation materials were available to all participants and eight women responded with a request for additional information relating to the life of a Felician Sister.[331]

Other events and gatherings offered for vocation discernment included an "Inquirer's Weekend," held at Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, Michigan, from September 28-30, 2007. Sister John, who was part of the team that conducted the weekend, said she felt that "the inquirers have been strengthened in their call by coming together." Four of the young women became Felician candidates.[332]

Sister Mary John and Sister Mary Ann participated in the Family Vocation Day held at the National Shrine of Divine Mercy in Stockbridge, Massachusetts on Saturday, November 1, 2008. During the day, the young adults reflected on topics such as "The Joy and Peace of Doing God's Will," and "In the Hands of the Master," or listened to vocation reflections by a diocesan priest or seminarian. Attendees also visited booths sponsored by religious communities, the Diocese of Springfield, and Family Vocation Ministries, the sponsor and organizer of the day's program. Religious women and men were available to talk with parents and young adults. A Family Holy Hour for Life that included exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a homily by Father Brian T. Mullady, OP, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the rosary, silent time, and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament closed the day. Sister Mary Ann said, "I believe that the event was a success, and we need more of these."[333]

Since a desire to be of service was a factor attracting many young people to religious life, Sister John and Sister Mary Ann arranged a week of service with seven young women of high school and college age at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield from July 14-17, 2008. The young women assisted at two Felician-sponsored ministries, the Enfield Montessori School and the Felician Adult Day Care. They also lent a hand to Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, coordinator of the annual Lawn Festival. They shared prayer and reflected on the Stations of the Cross, toured the Heritage Center and visited the sisters in Holy Family Infirmary. Finally, they joined the novices at the North American Common Novitiate for Evening Prayer and supper.[334]

'Speaking in Parishes' Project

In the fall of 2008, the Archdiocese of Hartford initiated a unique and powerful way to define and stimulate interest in personal vocations. Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek represented the Felician Sisters in Enfield for the "Called by Name" Program. Joined by Sister Gabrielle, a Little Sister of the Poor from St. Joseph's Residence in Enfield, Sister Marcia spoke at the five parish churches in Enfield on five consecutive weekends and then continued to visit one parish per month within the deanery.[335] In her five-minute talk, Sister Marcia encouraged parishioners to participate fully in promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life and invited them to share names and contact information of young people they knew who might have gifts that characterize a religious vocation. Sister Marcia described the experience as "positive, affirming, hope-filled and gracious," and she found that making one-on-one contacts before and after the Masses was an effective way to tap into the community. Sister Marcia noted that she was encouraged by the responses, explaining that the sisters received three to four cards from the parishioners in each parish, most identifying candidates to the priesthood. "I am hopeful there are vocations out there we need to be inviting by word and personal action."[336]

Evangelizing teenagers in Maine

From November 14-16, 2008, Sister Mary Thomas Lesniak participated in the *JOURNEY 2008* Retreat held at St. Dominic's High School in Auburn, Maine. The Eucharist-centered retreat drew more than four hundred young people from Maine and New Hampshire. Because one of *JOURNEY's* goals was to make teens and young adults aware of the gift of vocation to the priesthood and religious life, the retreat gave Sister Thomas the opportunity to meet with the young women interested in religious life, speak with them, answer questions, and distribute Felician Sisters vocation material.[337]

During the weekend of April 17-19, 2009, Sister Thomas was present for the Catholic Youth Ministry Convention in Portland with more than five hundred young people in attendance. Sister Thomas was available to the young people to answer questions regarding religious life and to distribute vocation material related to the Felician Sisters.[338]

Signs of hope

Since the novices from the North American Felician Novitiate joined the sisters for breakfast and the celebration of the Eucharist each Sunday morning at the Enfield provincial house, the sisters came to know them, and they

became tangible signs of hope as well as sources of strength and inspiration as they declared their readiness for the First Profession of Vows.

Sister Esmeria Marie Bastos, one of the "pioneers" of the North American Felician Novitiate, was the first member of the common novitiate to profess first vows. She served in ministry and participated in the community life of the sisters at several sites in the Enfield province. The early afternoon ceremony took place on Saturday, November 17, the feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, in the chapel of Holy Name of Mary Provincial House in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, provincial council member, and Sister Marcia Mary Polchlopek, representing the Enfield province, joined family members, friends, and sisters from several provinces as well as her fellow novices for the celebration. After expressing heartfelt thanks to her parents, family, friends, and formators, Sister Esmeria thanked the sisters of the Livonia and Enfield provinces where she spent her formation for opening "not only your doors, but also your hearts."[339]

Surrounded by her parents, family, friends and community, Sister Mary Monica Ann Blazuk was the second member of the common novitiate to profess first vows. The simple Eucharistic celebration took place in the chapel of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Provincial House in Livonia, Michigan, on Sunday, January 4, 2009, the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, provincial council member, represented the Enfield province. After the proclamation of the Gospel, Director of Novices Sister Mary Sharon Iacobucci called Sister Monica by name and asked, "My dear sister, what do you ask of God and his holy Church?" Sister Monica's response, "I ask for God's merciful love and a share in the life of this religious community of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice," echoed each Felician Sister's personal response.[340]

World Day for Consecrated Life

In 1997, St. John Paul II set aside the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord, February 2, to celebrate those women and men who had devoted their lives to the Lord by living out the counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In response to the call of Pope John Paul II to promote consecrated life throughout the universal Church, the sisters of the North American Felician Novitiate sponsored a Celebration of Consecrated Life Day on Saturday, February 2, 2008. During the afternoon gathering, the sisters welcomed Felician Associates as well as acquaintances and new friends. The novices filled the afternoon sharing their vocation stories as well as unforgettable moments from the DVD that recorded their Mexico immersion experience at the formation house in San Juan de Sabinas.[341]

At the invitation of Little Sister of the Poor Mother Mary Bernard, sisters from the provincial house joined the Little Sisters for the celebration of the World Day of Consecrated Life on Saturday, February 2, 2008, at St. Joseph's Residence. Sister Joan Marie Swierzb proclaimed the readings and the novices, along with Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, carried the gifts in the offertory procession.[342]

The following day, Sunday, February 3, women and men religious and their families and friends celebrated the gift of consecrated life at St. Michael Cathedral in Springfield, Massachusetts. The novitiate community represented the Felician Sisters with Sister Maryann Spiller (Chicago) serving as lector

for the event. Passionist Father Lucian Clark, the presider and homilist for the Eucharistic liturgy, spoke about the dedication and sacrifice of those in consecrated life. He acknowledged that the Diocese of Springfield and the Church worldwide rely heavily on the works and ministries of consecrated religious. "They are truly a gift to the Church," he said.[343]

Planning for the reconfiguration

During the meeting of the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee held from November 16-20, 2008, in Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, Illinois, the group established a task force to develop a program for the common postulancy and determine its site and directorship. Sister Mary Ann Papiez served on the Common Postulancy Task Force. The Steering Committee trusted that all aspects of the common postulancy would be in place by November 21, 2009.[344] At the final meeting of the Journey in Hope Steering Committee in June 2009, the group learned that Sister Paula Mary Palasz (Chicago) had agreed to be the director of the Common Postulancy Program and Sister Mary Faith Balawejder (Coraopolis) would serve as assistant director.[345] Later that summer, Sister Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister-elect and her council, appointed Sister Mary Michaeleen Pardowsky (Chicago) to fill the role of local minister for the postulant community. The former St. Adalbert Convent on Pittsburgh's South Side housed the postulant community.[346]

At its January 2009 meeting at the Retreat Center at St. John's in Plymouth, Michigan, the Steering Committee considered a request of the directors of the common novitiate to include vowed members interested in formative living to form community in the novitiate house in Enfield. These sisters, who would be community-minded and persons of deep spirituality, could continue their ministry close to the common novitiate while conducting classes with the novices. Both the Steering Committee and the novitiate directors hoped the sisters could move in and get settled before the novices began their formation program on August 19, 2009, in Enfield.[347] At the June 2009 meeting, the group agreed that Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko (Enfield) and Sister Mary Juanita Szymanski (Livonia) would reside with the novitiate community while pursuing their own ministries. Sister Marie JoAnn was a member of the provincial council and principal of St. Bernard School in Enfield. Sister Juanita was a co-teacher for grade 3 and part-time librarian at St. Bernard School.[348]

During the first meeting of the provincial council-elect of Our Lady of Hope Province, held via teleconference on June 5, 2009, Sister Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister-elect, told her team that if they believed in a future for the province, vocation ministry must become a top priority. As a result of the discernment that had taken place in mid-May, two sisters accepted the challenge to serve as full-time vocation co-directors for Our Lady of Hope Province, Sister Mary Beth Bromer (Chicago) and Sister Mary Veronica Golbinec (Livonia). Plans were underway to build a Vocation Team that would consist of mentors and vocation representatives.[349]

'It is God who gives the increase'

The sisters in Enfield and throughout the Congregation valued prayer as integral to the success of their vocation-recruitment ministry. On the monthly Vocation Day, the sisters offered their prayers, suffering, and fasting for vocations. Each month, the sisters in the provincial house participated

in a Eucharistic liturgy offered for an increase of vocations to the Felician Congregation. Additionally, they joined in a triduum of prayer for vocations as well as Morning and Evening Praise prepared on this specific theme.[350]

In the daily intercessory prayer to Blessed Mary Angela, the sisters petitioned for "numerous, holy vocations to the community." The monthly prayer intentions also served as a reminder to each sister of her responsibility to be a vocation animator. A specially crafted wooden vocation cross, inscribed with the words "Master of the harvest, hear our prayer," circulated among the sisters, students, retirees, families, parishioners and nursing home residents as a reminder to dedicate that day to praying for vocations. The report prepared for the general visitation in 2008 noted:

> Having the North American Central Novitiate here in Enfield has increased the Felician presence and visibility in the Enfield area. The novitiate community actively participates in the liturgical life of two nearby local parishes, Holy Family and St. Patrick, where the Felician Sisters have never ministered on a full-time basis. As a result of their participation, the Felician Sisters now have a presence in the five Catholic parishes in the Enfield community. [351]

ASSOCIATES

The Second Vatican Council invited everyone to a new vision of partnership by recognizing that "[t]he classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God."[352] In 1995, the American bishops affirmed the universal call to holiness when they wrote, "The laity's call to holiness is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Their answer is a gift to the Church and to the world."[353] The Felician Constitution, *Response to Love,* reminded the sisters of their responsibility "to promote the charism of Mother Mary Angela through associate programs and other collaborative efforts."[354]

In 1989, at the request of Sister Mary Lawrence Lojko, provincial minister, Sister Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz researched associate programs and began to organize a program in Enfield. By the fall of 2008, the program had thirty-eight members, including twenty prayer associates. On Saturday, September 20, during their Annual Luncheon, the associates honored Sister Seraphine for her nineteen years of service as associate director and bid her farewell as she left this position. She said, "I have experienced a great deal of joy working with the associates. Their enthusiasm put a spark into my activity. I found myself doing more . . . in order to bring a greater depth to their spirituality, . . . delving into the lives of the Franciscan saints. . . . My involvement with them gave me a great deal of satisfaction."[355]

Reflecting on their personal experience, Louise and George Archambault, who had been associates since 1994, said, "It was the best thing we could have done. It helped us through the difficult times in our lives. We were so welcomed by all the sisters. It really made us feel like we belonged." They said they were grateful to Sister Seraphine because of all they learned about Mother Angela and the history of the Felician Congregation, as well as about St. Francis, but even more because they came to know how powerful Eucharistic celebration is in their lives. They said they also learned how to use the gifts God had given

them to make this a better world. "We will never forget Sister Seraphine and will always be grateful for her helping us to be better."[356]

Sister Frances Marion Bonczar, who succeeded Sister Seraphine, brought to the position many years of working in formation in the Felician Congregation. She said she was excited about this new ministry: "It is always a humbling experience to be called to walk a spiritual journey with another." Her goals for the program included deepening the associates' knowledge and love of Blessed Angela, her charism, which is rooted in the Franciscan charism, St. Francis, St. Clare, other saints within the Franciscan family and a fuller appreciation of life within the Felician community. Sister Frances said she brought her gifts of listening and compassion while acknowledging the gifts that the associates bring: their hunger for a deeper spirituality and a sense of belonging to a community and the relationships that are formed.[357]

The Enfield associates continued their bi-monthly meetings and an annual retreat day as well as their service ministry at the provincial house and with sisters in the infirmary, even volunteering to transport them to doctor appointments. Each year, on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the associates celebrated their recommitment in a simple but impressive ceremony following Evening Praise and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. During this ceremony, they expressed their desire to "deepen [their] spiritual life with Christ in the footsteps of Blessed Angela." The sisters, in turn, promised to support them and walk with them in the footsteps of Blessed Mary Angela. The evening closed with a shared meal.[358]

Moving toward one province

Meanwhile, the Associate Program Subcommittee was hard at work to help Felician Associates across North America feel that they were an integral part of the reconfiguration and to move them to a one-province model. After the 2007 spring provincial assemblies, the Governance Task Force reviewed questions and concerns voiced by the sisters. In a memo disseminated in the fall of 2007, the Task Force provided the sisters with additional background information on the *Journey in Hope* that responded to their questions and clarified their concerns on several topics. The Memo affirmed the associates as "vital to our Felician Franciscan Congregation." The memo stated that an ad hoc committee comprised of associate directors had been formed to address the development of the associate program.[359] The members were Sister Mary Auguste Biache (Lodi), Sister Carol Marie Wiatrek (Rio Rancho), Sister Carole Mary Capoun (Chicago), Sister Mary DeSales Herman (Livonia), and Sister Mary Jolene Jasinski (Buffalo). Sister Danat Marie Brysch served as the liaison to the steering committee.[360] This group felt strongly about the associates sharing and living the charism of Blessed Mary Angela, noting that "They take her spirit to places that we cannot." They asked, "If Mission is our concern, who better to help us continue to live Angela's charism in compassionate service toward the poor and needy in the 'spiritual renewal of the world' than our own associates?"[361]

The ad hoc committee was convinced that an associate director's office would be needed when the reconfiguration took place. The members agreed that commonality of formation in the life of the associate was an important aspect of the program, so they reviewed current formation and commitment

processes, documents, guidelines and policies.[362] Mandated by the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee, the directors prepared a draft of a Felician Associate Handbook, the result of two years of work. The handbook included the Felician Associate Mission Statement, essential information about the nature and aim of the Felician Associate Program, as well as procedures for admission to the associate program, and formation. It introduced associates to the culture, mission and values of the Felician Sisters and communicated clear expectations to the new associate.[363]

The ad hoc committee sent the handbook to Sister Deborah Cerullo, SSND, who reviewed it and offered her canonical observations. The group also met with her to discuss guidelines, forms, and documents in terms of both their civil and canonical implications.[364] By early 2009, the committee presented the sixth draft of the associate handbook to the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee who also affirmed the Common Felician Associate Application and Felician Associate Commitment Form. The Steering Committee agreed that a common associate newsletter funded by the province would benefit the diverse group of associates and suggested that initially it could be printed but, in the future, might become an online communication. They advised including information about the associates on the congregational website rather than developing a separate website. Conversation continued regarding the position of a director of associates.[365]

At its final meeting in June 2009, the Journey in Hope Steering Committee decided that the provincial leadership team-elect should determine the process to be used in the selection of a permanent director of associates, the establishment of a central office, and continued membership in the North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR).[366] During the teleconference held on November 5, 2009, with her council-elect, Sister Mary Christopher identified Sister Carole Mary Capoun (Chicago) as the sister best qualified to serve as associate director because of her outstanding leadership of the associate directors particularly around technology and especially her work with the Chicago associates. Since her recent hospitalization created uncertainty about her ability to take on this position, Sister Christopher directed provincial councilor Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz, liaison for extended relationships including associates, to contact the current directors to solicit suggestions from among the group.[367] In early February 2010, Sister Nancy announced that Sister Mary Juanita Arnister (New Jersey) had agreed to serve as the Director of Associates for Our Lady of Hope Province. Two Felician members of the team named were Sister Mary Angelica Smialowicz (New Jersey) for the East Region and Sister Carole Mary Capoun (Illinois) for the West Region.[368]

CENTENARIAN

Pope Francis has reminded us, "In the Bible, longevity is a blessing. . . . Life is a gift, and when it is long it is a privilege."[369] This stage of maturity is the opportunity to deepen and integrate what is most valuable in the depth of "being" a human person and to discover the beauty of who God has made us to be as persons. With activism, haste and great worries ending, it is the time for intimacy—relationships with sisters, friends, God, and oneself—deterring isolation, sadness, depression and/or exclusion. Old age is like the autumn of

life because it is a time to reap the fruits of the harvest sown in life. As she turned 100, Sister Mary Desponsata Biadasz embraced this time of her life, opening herself to the gift of her long life and welcoming it in its fullness.

The year was 1908. The Model T, the car that "put America on wheels," had just come into popular usage, the ball signifying New Year's Day had dropped in New York City's Times Square for the first time, and U.S. postal stamps cost two cents. Into this world, in the small town of Webster, Massachusetts, Josephine Biadasz was born in this same year, on October 6, the fifth of seven children.[370]

After attending St. Joseph School in Webster for six years, Josephine "made up her mind," and left for Lodi, New Jersey, with the intention of joining her sister Rose (Sister Mary Leocretia) and becoming a Felician Sister.[371] Her sister Mary, later known as Sister Mary Apollinaris, entered the Felician community in 1928. After graduating from Immaculate Conception High School, Josephine entered the Felician Sisters in Lodi on August 26, 1925. Sister Mary Desponsata professed final vows on August 20, 1933, and in 1934, transferred to the newly established Our Lady of the Angels Province in Enfield, Connecticut.[372]

Sister Desponsata earned a Bachelor of Science in education from St. Mary's College in Hooksett, New Hampshire, and gave more than 55 years of teaching service in elementary schools staffed by the Felician Sisters in Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania; Wilmington, Delaware; and Bayonne, New Jersey. Her impact was also felt in the New England area, as she taught in Boston, Easthampton and Lowell, Massachusetts as well as in Manchester, New Hampshire. Her teaching ministry extended to eastern New York, in schools in Amsterdam, Kingston, and Staten Island. For fifteen years she worked as a catechist in parishes in Greenfield and Pittsfield, Massachusetts and Enfield, Connecticut. She served as local minister in Greenfield and Pittsfield as well as in Florida and Kingston, New York.[373]

On May 13, 2000, Sister Desponsata celebrated the 75th anniversary of her life as a Felician Sister with her classmate Sister Mary DePaul Dubiel at Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield. After her retirement to the motherhouse, she continued to offer her services at the convent. In November of 2003, she was admitted to Holy Family Infirmary. She wrote, "I drive around in my wheelchair and try to maintain a regular schedule with the sisters. My arthritic joints refuse to hold me up—I fell a few times and so do not want to take any more chances. I am grateful to God that I didn't break any bones."[374]

A massive heart attack in 2005 sharply curtailed her physical activity, but through it all, she maintained her sense of humor. The rosary became her constant companion, and she faithfully prayed the Divine Mercy devotion. Sister Desponsata loved music and was a member of the Holy Family Infirmary Angel Band. Always well-read, she stayed abreast of community issues as well as current events and was proud of the *Biadasz Family Newsletter* that she shared with everyone.[375]

Sister Desponsata's nephew Walter Biadasz had an ardent interest for learning the Biadasz family history and genealogy, and he traveled to Poland numerous times, searching for family members. A great joy in his later years was reaching out to family members as the editor of the *Biadasz Family Newsletter,* which was dedicated to researching the family heritage and ancestral history. The newsletter also featured family members who achieved recognition in their field of endeavor as well as articles on the history, culture, and traditions

of Poland. One issue even included a piece on the Felician Sisters, entitled "Who Are the Felician Sisters?" and another focused on the call to religious life in the Biadasz family in which he wrote about Sister Desponsata, Sister Leocretia, and Sister Apollinaris.[376]

On Sunday, February 3, 2008, more than twenty nieces, nephews and cousins arrived at Holy Family Infirmary to celebrate Sister Desponsata's century of life. Relatives came from as far away as Florida and Alabama, and birthday cards with joy-filled messages arrived from Poland and France. Former students remembered her, too, most notably Father Gary M. Dailey, her fourth-grade pupil from St. Stanislaus School in Adams, Massachusetts, who showed up with another cake and flowers and who celebrated Mass in the infirmary chapel on Sister Desponsata's birthday.[377]

After celebrating her 100th birthday, Sister Desponsata longed to leave this earth to enjoy the fullness of life with God in heaven. God heard her prayer and took her to himself on October 6, 2008, in the 83rd year of her religious life in the Felician Sisters Congregation. The wake and service, followed by Evening Praise, took place on October 7, 2008, in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House. Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, celebrated the Mass of Christian Burial assisted by Father Dailey. Several of Sister Desponsata's nieces and nephews attended the wake and funeral. Interment took place in the Felician Sisters' plot in St. Adalbert Cemetery in Enfield.[378]

Sister Desponsata was an eyewitness to a century dominated by world wars and conflicts, space travel, and cultural and digital revolutions. Her inspirational story is a reminder that love, loss, hope, and grief are essential ingredients in a full life and that humor can help us through the worst of times.

STRENGTHENING OUR FRANCISCAN IDENTITY

The Enfield Felicians joined Felicians and Franciscans throughout the world in the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Third Order Regular (TOR) Rule. In her letter of January 3, 2007, Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch wrote, "It seems that it is not by chance . . . that this 25th anniversary year of the Rule follows upon our resolve as a Congregation to 'strengthen our Franciscan identity'".[379] The same letter encouraged the sisters "to plan concrete ways to rediscover the gift of our Rule." The anniversary year prompted a renewal of appreciation for the Rule by the Enfield sisters.[380]

To "strengthen our Franciscan identity," beginning in September 2007, the Enfield sisters engaged in a year-long effort of shared prayer and discussion on Franciscan values during their house assemblies. Readings used for reflection included "Separation and Loss" from *Praying with Clare of Assisi* by Sister Ramona Miller, OSF; "The Tears of God" from *The Humility of God: A Franciscan Perspective* by Ilia Delio, OSF; "Learning to Gaze: Poverty and Prayer" from *Franciscan Prayer,* also by Delio; and her "Transformation," from *Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love.* Each month, sisters received the readings, prayer services and discussion questions. The 25th anniversary celebration of the Third Order Rule reminded the sisters that they were to be "A city set on a hill," a center of Franciscan spirituality in north-central Connecticut. Consequently, they invited the public to join them on October 3, 2007, for their special celebration of the traditional *Transitus* service, commemorating the passing of St. Francis.[381]

Franciscan Federation, Region 1

As part of its 25th anniversary celebration of the Third Order Rule, Region 1 of the Franciscan Federation presented a day-long program, "Living and Celebrating the Third Order Rule." Along with about twenty-five other Felician Sisters from the Lodi, New Jersey province and 100 members of other Franciscan communities, Sister Clare Marie Berryhill, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz attended the program held at the Franciscan Spiritual Center of Mt. Saint Francis Retreat Center in Ringwood, New Jersey, on Saturday, November 3, 2007.[382]

During the morning session, Brother Tom Grady, OSF, the Federation's past president, explained the development of the Third Order Rule beginning in the year 1209 when St. Francis' *Letter to the Faithful* provided the first norm of life for Franciscans. He noted that the Rule as we know it today was the result of a lengthy process that involved many people. He told his audience, "The Holy Spirit dwells in that human place, and it is very human indeed." The afternoon session explored the Franciscan values of *conversion, minority, poverty,* and *contemplation.*[383]

Sister Lorraine Campanelli, OSF, chair of Region 1, shared the resolution from the Annual Federation Conference held from July 9-12 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The theme of the conference was *A Franciscan Dynamic: Right Relationship, Care for Earth, Care for Each Other.* The resolution reminded the members of their "call to care for and preserve Sister Water." In conjunction with this, Sister Lorraine elicited suggestions from the audience regarding actions that Region 1 could take. Two suggestions supported by those present included participating in the United Nations Day of Water on March 22, 2008, and finding ways to help religious communities with foreign missions to build wells.[384]

In conjunction with the anniversary, the Enfield sisters participated in the *Rolling Fast for Peace* on December 4. From December 1 through 7, 2007, approximately forty Franciscan groups of men and women throughout the country fasted for peace to prepare for the celebration.[385] At the conclusion of the Advent Day of Prayer on Saturday, December 15, 2007, Father Michael Zielke, OFM, Conv, who facilitated the day, presented each sister with a pocket copy of the 25th Anniversary Edition of the Franciscan Rule.[386]

Mindful of the seraphic spirit that imbued the Felician Congregation from its beginning, the province designed and printed a special Christmas card that prominently displayed a photograph of a stained-glass window in the provincial house chapel. The window depicts St. Felix holding the Child Jesus in his arms. The inside of the card reflected on the spirituality of St. Francis and his subsequent recreation of the Bethlehem experience with the people of Greccio.[387]

'Ours is a seraphic spirit'

In 1871, Mother Angela wrote to Mother Mary Anna Bielska, "Ours is a seraphic spirit, different from that of other communities, which can be nurtured only with self-denial and prayer."[388] On March 1, 2008, Sister Suzanne Marie Kush (Buffalo), whose thesis explored the "Capuchin Influence on the Founding Spirituality of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice," presented "The Charism of the Congregation in Light of Our Franciscan Identity." Unfortunately,

six inches of snow on the ground made it difficult for sisters who lived outside the provincial house complex to attend the presentation.[389]

Sister Suzanne began her presentation noting the directive from the General Chapter of 2006 that encouraged the sisters to "embrace our Franciscan charism." She traced the development of the word *charism* and discussed compassion and mercy as integral to the Franciscan charism. Throughout her presentation, Sister Suzanne impressed the sisters with the fact that the charism is alive through each of them and is, therefore, ever evolving. She posed challenging questions to her audience: "How are we to live this charism, to express its essence in a new way?" Reflecting on St. Francis and his embrace of the leper, she asked, "Who is *our* leper? Who are *we* called to embrace? Who is my neighbor? Do we have a listening heart, so we know what God is calling us to do?" In closing, she told the sisters that Francis's message is to have a heart full of mercy, and added, "to have a heart full of mercy is to have the heart and mind of God."[390]

St. Bonaventure University hosts 25th anniversary celebration

More than 230 Franciscans representing forty-five different religious congregations gathered at St. Bonaventure University April 18 and 19, 2008, to commemorate the moment in 1982 that helped Third Order Franciscans reconnect with their faith and tradition. With forty sisters in attendance, the Felician Sisters were well represented at the Festival of the 25th Anniversary on the Third Order Regular Rule sponsored by the Franciscan Institute and the university. Sister Constance Marie Tomyl represented the Enfield province. She collaborated with Sister Mary Ann Therese Kelly (Buffalo) and Sister Judith Marie Blizzard (Lodi), musicians, to coordinate and direct the musicians for the opening ritual on Saturday morning as well as the evening celebration of the Eucharist.[391]

Before the Mass began, Sister Margaret Carney, OSF, STD, a pivotal figure in rewriting the Third Order Rule, memorialized Atonement Friar Father Thaddeus Horgan, whose zeal for presenting the Rule's values touched thousands of Franciscans worldwide. His premature death on April 19, 1990, left both an ache and a legacy in the telling of the Rule's story, she said. Very Rev. James Puglisi, SA, was the principal celebrant and homilist of the festival liturgy. He told the group, "The Rule must become action in our lives. It must become life for a new generation."[392]

Earlier in the day, attendees listened to Father Roland J. Faley, TOR, keynote speaker at the Festival, discuss his role in revising the Rule in his talk entitled, "The Rule of 1982: The Work of All the Faithful." His biblical scholarship on *metanoia* and his study of the 800-year tradition of Francis's Third Order led to the Order's self-understanding as modern-day penitents. During the afternoon, participants had their choice of four breakout session presenters: Margaret Carney, OSF, "Lost and Found on the Path of Penance"; Jean Francois Godet-Calogeras, "The TOR Rule: Rooted in an Authentic Franciscan Experience"; Thomas Barton, OSF, "Minority: Subverting the Dominant Paradigm," and Ann Bremmer, OSF, "What Makes a Health System Franciscan?"[393]

In conjunction with the festival, the Franciscan Federation Council members and leadership met on Sunday, April 20 to decide the organizational

model that would best serve the mission of the Federation. Two resolutions proposed to the members passed unanimously:

- The Franciscan Federation will experiment with the governance structure for a period of five years, 2008-2013.
- The Franciscan Federation accepts the agreed upon model as the governance structure to initiate the period of experimentation.

According to Federation leaders, the members had expressed their desire to focus on the Third Order Regular charism and what the Federation could do for the members. The Federation Board hoped that the new governance structure was a step in moving toward this transformation. The essential purpose of the Franciscan Federation is to "tend the Franciscan Third Order Regular Charism."[394]

Franciscan Morning & Evening Praise

Since the time of our Holy Father St. Francis, Franciscans have esteemed the daily prayer of the Church. The preface to *The Geste of the Great King: The Office of the Passion of Francis of Assisi*, begins with Francis' own words: "How loudly I cried out to you, O God, as I read the psalms of David." Like other religious communities, Franciscans had a history of praying a form of the Liturgy of the Hours, sometimes referred to in the past as the "Divine Office" or "Breviary."[395]

As the 20th century ended, communities of women religious yearned to retrieve a sense of praying "in common" in a manner and in words that matched their current reality and sensibilities. Congregations of women religious determined the existing Liturgy of the Hours to be inadequate in reflecting these concerns. As Mercy Sister Sheila Carney explained, "People were tired of the old office and tired of sexist language." The Mercy Sisters, Dominicans, and others tackled the challenge, along with a Carmelite Sisters community (formerly of Indianapolis) that published a widely used *People's Companion to the Breviary* in 1997.[396]

Around the year 2000, the annual Franciscan Federation conference included an informal survey to determine whether to create an office specifically for the Franciscans.[397] The results of this survey persuaded the Federation board to lend its support to such a project. *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise* was created in response to the members' expressed desire to have a daily prayer book that is clearly Franciscan in character. Sister Ellen Lamberjack, a Franciscan Sister of Tiffin, Ohio, chaired the project. She explained that as parts of the book were assembled, a coordinator sent them to some forty Franciscan communities, which used them for prayer in two-month segments and submitted feedback. "Those evaluations were invaluable to us," she said.[398]

The Task Group decided that the book would comprise only morning and evening praise and follow the model of the liturgical office. Franciscan flavor permeates the book, with each week of the four-week cycle themes focused on the Franciscan values of conversion of heart, poverty, contemplation, and minority. The book uses only two psalms and includes two readings, one scriptural and one from Franciscan sources. It also includes special liturgical feast days, feasts of Franciscan saints and other selected saints, as well as some commons.[399]

In her paper entitled "Praying the Franciscan Liturgy of the Hours," Felician Sister Judith Marie Kubicki reflected on features of this new prayer book. She wrote:

> The Franciscan Office includes readings from Franciscan sources that enable us each day to reflect upon our heritage as Franciscan women. The inclusive language, while not always perfect, enables us to speak with our own voice as women of the Church committed to lifting up our hearts and the world in prayer. The contemporary intercessions challenge us to keep in mind the pain and suffering of our world and our commitment to work for justice and peace. For it is through this Franciscan Liturgy of the Hours, "we unite with the whole Church in the universal act of praise and intercession for the salvation of the world."[400]

Several Felician Sisters contributed their time, talent, and treasure in the preparation of the prayerbook, including Sister Lisa Marie Drover, Sister Ann Marie Klasky, and Sister Mary Josetta Prondzinski, all members of Mother of Good Counsel Province in Chicago, Illinois. Sister Josetta also contributed artwork. Nearly fifty women's congregations contributed support, both personal and financial, to the preparation of the book, including two U.S. Felician provinces, Chicago and Rio Rancho, New Mexico.[401]

Franciscan Sister of St. Joseph Ann Lyons served as the Franciscan Federation's executive director in 2009, when 10,000 copies of *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise* were printed. "Everybody was waiting for it to come to fruition," she said. The yearly updates at the conferences had the members excited.[402] All the Felician provinces ordered copies of the book for each sister. In Enfield, the October 17 Provincial Assembly concluded with a prayer service and ritual *Blessing of Franciscan Morning & Evening Praise* when each sister received a copy of the new prayer book as well as a bookmark made by the novices in the Krakow province with a leaf from the tree planted by Blessed Mother Angela. During the meeting, each sister also received a brochure with reflections and quotes on Franciscan prayer prepared by the Franciscan Federation and reformatted by Sister Mary Francis Lewandowski, director of the North American Felician Communications Office.[403]

At the meeting of the new provincial council-elect held on August 21, 2009, Provincial Minister-elect Sister Mary Christopher Moore suggested engaging a presenter for a study day on the *Franciscan Morning & Evening Praise* who could discuss the history, Franciscan influence, and new features of the book. The Franciscan Federation suggested Franciscan Father Charles Faso, who held a master's degree in liturgy from Notre Dame University. Father Chuck led sessions for the Enfield sisters on praying with the new *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise* in late March 2010, though the sisters had been using the books since receiving them.[404]

Sister Judith summed up the feelings of many sisters when she wrote, "The newly published *Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise* provides us with a new opportunity to tap into our rich Franciscan tradition so that it might enhance and inspire our communal daily prayer. It is a gift, however, rather than a burden or a straitjacket to be endured. We need to be creative in the

ways in which we pray it in conjunction with the calendar of the universal Church."[405]

FOUNDING THE "NEW"

The *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee continued to work diligently to ensure that a smooth transition for the eight North American provinces to the one Our Lady of Hope Province could occur in the day-to-day living experience of the sisters. As the search continued for the new provincial center, the group also planned to hire an archivist who could bring the archives of the eight provinces together, moved forward in hiring a Chief Financial Officer, met with representative lawyers from the firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP to finalize the Proposed Plan of Consolidation and Reorganization, and solidified plans for the celebration of the Founding of the "New" on November 21, 2009.[406]

The election process

The Steering Committee also reviewed the schedule for the Chapter of Elections, set to take place from April 20 to 24, 2009, at The Retreat Center at St. John's in Plymouth, Michigan. To prepare for that election, the sisters from Our Lady of the Angels Province gathered in Enfield for Phase One of the Election Process on Saturday, December 13, 2008. In Phase One, the sisters in each of the eight provinces with active voice elected four electors and one alternate to represent them at the April 2009 Chapter of Elections. Unfortunately, a destructive winter storm coated much of New England and upstate New York with ice on December 12, cutting off power to more than a million people and making travel hazardous for sisters in Adams, Massachusetts; Amsterdam, New York; and Bangor, Maine. Consequently, they were unable to attend, and their votes were taken by telephone.[407]

During the opening prayer service on December 13, the sisters called upon the Spirit to reveal "the women who will lead us in this new way. . . Women on fire with the love of God, women who internalize and live the charism of Blessed Mary Angela, women who are willing to embark on a new journey, women of wisdom and vision, of conviction and courage, gifted women who speak the language of the Spirit." In her role as coordinator of the Elections Committee, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl reviewed the program for the day and directed the sisters' attention to the ambiance with the photo of the pioneer sisters and the quote from Mother Angela, "I will always keep in my heart deep love and gratitude for the American province." Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha, provincial minister, asked for and received confirmation from the assembly of the appointment of the tellers: Sister Clare Marie Berryhill and Sister Mary Angela Boyarchok. Sister Francine Mary Sousa tallied the votes and served as recorder.[408]

Before Phase Two began, the voting for three electors, Father Richard L. Conboy, facilitator, briefly reviewed elements of the process with the sisters. Voting resulted in the election of the following sisters as Electors: Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz, and Sister Joan Marie Swierzb, with Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko elected as alternate.[409] Before the afternoon session's voting for nominees, Father Conboy led the sisters through a guided reflection on leadership qualities. The sisters chose the following nominees who would be considered

for election as provincial minister, vicar, and six councilors in April 2009: Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, and Sister Mary Rosalma Fish. The day closed with the sisters blessing the province's three nominees for leadership. [410]



Electors chosen from Our Lady of the Angels Province (from l): S Joan Marie Swierzb, SM Laureann Alexandrowicz, S Constance Marie Tomyl, S Nancy Marie Piecewicz.



Nominees chosen for election to the first leadership team for Our Lady of Hope Province (from l): S Constance Marie Tomyl, S Marie JoAnn Lewko, SM Rosalma Fish.

Reflecting on the day, Sister Clare Marie Berryhill said, "When the day first opened, I couldn't help but think of the five pioneer sisters in America beginning something new. They were looking towards the future, shaping it and embracing it but not always fully knowing what it would hold. This was our chance to look to the future, shape it and embrace it. It seemed exciting and yes, even a little bit scary." She continued, "Father Conboy did an excellent job of facilitating the day's proceedings. It was encouraging to see the sisters consistently recognize those among us with strong leadership qualities as was evidenced in the minimal need for re-voting on any particular nominee." Sister

Mary Seraphine Liskiewicz commented on how serious and thoughtful the sisters were as they considered the individuals who had left themselves open to be voted upon. "The whole process was carried out solemnly and peacefully. . . . It was truly a reverential and ceremonial experience."[411]

Chapter of Elections a 'Pentecost Experience'

Once Phase Two of the Election Process was completed across the provinces, the sisters in the North American provinces readied themselves for Phase Three. As spring unfolded in Plymouth, Michigan, electors and nominees gathered for the Chapter of Elections for the new North American province—Our Lady of Hope—on April 20, 2009.[412] Early that morning, the sisters in Enfield blessed those chosen to participate in the Chapter of Elections and implored the God of surprises to open their hearts and grant them the grace of discernment.[413]

As sisters arrived in the rain by car and by plane to The Retreat Center at St. John's, someone said rain is often a sign of blessings. The reception area and halls buzzed with excitement as sisters greeted one another. At the beginning of the evening program, Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz carried the Paschal candle into the Assembly Room during the singing of "Holy Spirit, Come," composed by Sister Marilyn Marie Minter (Lodi). Over the next few days, the sisters sang the hymn imploring the Spirit to guide the minds and hearts of the electors "that they may listen to your murmurings and choose well." In his opening remarks, Father Richard L. Conboy, facilitator, acknowledged the palpable love and unity demonstrated by the sisters toward each other and urged them to "treasure the unity that already exists among you." He encouraged the sisters to get in touch with their inner selves so that they could be about their serious and sacred task.[414]

A sacred silence settled over the group on Tuesday, April 21, designated as a day of prayer, a day of quiet to prepare for the formidable task ahead. In his remarks that morning, Father Conboy said, "We are the set designers who are looking at the pieces created over the last twelve years—a beautiful collage. . . . This is a happy event, this is an exciting event, and we are ready." As part of their reflection, Father asked the sisters to consider their understanding of the concept of leadership as initiative, disturbing the status quo, and reaching for the future. In the context of our culture, he said, things are done more effectively by teams rather than individuals, underscoring the need for collaborative individuals.[415]

At the beginning of Wednesday's session, Father Conboy shared the letter from Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, who assured the sisters of the support of their sisters throughout the Congregation so that they might truly be "daughters of Blessed Mary Angela willing to become kindling for the blazing power and presence of the Holy Spirit for a new Pentecost in North America." She encouraged them to look to Blessed Angela as their model for readiness "to take risks that will stretch all of us for the sake of Jesus Christ and his Gospel in our world today." Before the voting for provincial-elect began, Father Conboy briefly reviewed elements of the process with the sisters. The members confirmed the appointment of the secretaries, Sister Mary Andrew Budinski (Coraopolis), and Sister Mary Inez Moch (Chicago) and approved the

Handbook of Rules and Procedures. Sister Mary Andrea Chudzik (Chicago) and Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz volunteered to serve as tellers.[416]

Voting resulted in the election of Sister Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Province, Coraopolis, as provincial-elect. Once Sister Mary Barbara Ann confirmed results of the voting, the sisters continued the process with the election of Sister Danat Marie Brysch, provincial minister of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, Rio Rancho, New Mexico, as vicar. Sister Barbara Ann confirmed her election as well. Councilors elected—one from each of the remaining six provinces—included Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz (Livonia), Sister Constance Marie Tomyl (Enfield), Sister Mary Geralyn Mroczkowski (Chicago), Sister MaryAnne Olekszyk (Canada), Sister Mary Jolene Jasinski (Buffalo), and Sister Judith Marie Blizzard (Lodi).[417]



The newly elected leadership team for Our Lady of Hope Province (from l): S Constance Marie Tomyl, S Nancy Marie Jamroz (Livonia), S MaryAnne Olekszyk (Canada), SM Christopher Moore (Coraopolis), provincial minister; SM Geralyn Mroczkowski (Chicago), S Danat Marie Brysch (Rio Rancho), S Judith Marie Blizzard (Lodi), SM Jolene Jasinski (Buffalo).

"I think we're in good hands," said Sister Mary Goretti Kuiack (Canada), referring to the new leadership team. She said she couldn't help but notice how all the elected members were so peaceful about the great task ahead of them. . . . I felt that they are all confident that the same Holy Spirit that got them there is going to help them one day at a time in the future. If that peace-filled, trusting attitude continues, we are bound to bear much fruit."[418]

Sister Christopher extended her appreciation to the sisters for their support and encouragement. "It is both a privilege and a great responsibility to be called to serve. These are exciting and challenging times in the Church and in our Congregation. I am looking forward to the challenges our reconfiguration process will bring because I believe that God is directing our steps toward a revitalization of the Felician mission in North America." Reflecting on the Chapter of Elections, she said, "Surely the Spirit of God was present in our deliberations, and I am confident that the same Spirit will direct me and the new council members in the days ahead." Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz said, "The future lies now at our feet. We have chosen women of faith and vision,

of strength and courage. I have the utmost confidence in them, and I am very proud to be Felician!"[419]

Two days had been designated for the election process, but once underway, the process moved swiftly and was completed by the end of Wednesday afternoon. Sister Christopher seized the moment and invited the sisters to a session on Thursday morning to share their visions, concerns, and hopes with the newly elected leadership team. Sister Mary Giovanni Monge (Livonia) said, "This openness to our thoughts and the willingness to hear them was a great first move and it meant a lot to us. I felt privileged to be a part of all this. . . ." Sister Mary Jean Sliwinski (Buffalo) said, "I appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues. It gave us a voice and I think will help the new administration to focus and maybe find somewhere to start." Following the sharing, the new leadership team invited the sisters to "Walk on the water with us!" As the sisters came forward at the conclusion of the prayer, each received a blessing from a member of the team.[420]

Father Conboy celebrated the Mass of Thanksgiving on Thursday afternoon that echoed Mary's *Magnificat* in its expression of praise, "because of the great things the Almighty has done." Father said, "We talked all morning about how to transform home. We do that with confidence because the Lord is with us just as he was with Mary." Drawing from Paul's letter to the Colossians, the first reading of the evening, Father exhorted the sisters to "put on love." As part of the concluding rite, the sisters offered a special prayer for the members of the newly elected leadership team.[421]

Before the celebration dinner that followed the Eucharistic liturgy, Sister Mary Andrew Budinski (Coraopolis) presented each member of the new leadership team with a spiritual bouquet—the collected prayers of the sisters—to accompany them as they began this new venture in leadership. In addition, Father Wojciech Giertych, OP, brother of Sister Mary Celestine Giertych (Canada) and a theologian of the Papal Household, promised to offer Mass at the Vatican during the last week of April. Gifts of jumbo-sized capsules of Tylenol and tiny leisure suits designed for toddlers drew laughs from the audience. Each sister wore a lovely handmade rose corsage crafted of ribbon for the occasion by Sister Mary Barbara Kopecki (Rio Rancho).[422]

Following dinner, everyone enjoyed the Madonna University Lyric Theater's presentation of selections from their recent production of "Into the Woods" by Stephen Sondheim. Sister Christopher had the last word, expressing thanks to the members of the Elections Committee and the Steering Committee as well as Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, Sister Mary Cabrini Procopio, vicar general, and Ruby Cribbin, facilitator for the *Journey in Hope* process. For her final remarks, Sister Christopher drew on her three favorite sources of inspiration—the comics, poetry, and sacred scripture. She left the sisters reflecting on the words of the prophet Jeremiah 29:11: "'I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"[423]

During the Eucharistic liturgy on Friday morning, Father Conboy reflected on the theme of servant leadership. He told the sisters it would be a "dreadful mistake" if we thought all we had done here this week was elect a council for the new province because "the mantle of servant leadership belongs to all of

us." Reminding the sisters of the mundane tasks that would await them when they arrived home, he said, "Let us wash feet."[424]

Bringing the New to Birth

While the installation of the new provincial minster and her council would not take place until November 21, 2009, a letter from Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch to Provincial-Elect Sister Mary Christopher Moore of May 1, 2009, outlined "areas of decision-making that appropriately belong to you and your council-elect at this time." With the unanimous approval of her general council, Sister Barbara Ann authorized Sister Christopher and the council-elect to function as needed in the following areas:

- To enter into negotiations for the purchase of the building in North Sewickley Township that will serve as the provincialate for Our Lady of Hope Province.
- To make decisions relative to the renovations, furnishings, etc that will be required at the above-mentioned site.
- To request funds from the Journey in Hope account for required expenses with approval from the general level.
- To appoint a canonical treasurer.
- To hire the chief financial officer and adjunct staff.
- To approve plans for the installation and celebration of the Our Lady of Hope Province.
- To make any needed decisions such as those an outgoing council would normally make.
- To keep a record of provincial council-elect meetings.
- To work with the Steering Committee in other related matters.[425]

Accordingly, the new leadership team joined the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee for its final meeting June 22 to 27, 2009, held at the Central Archives in Our Lady of the Angels Provincial House in Enfield, Connecticut. The Steering Committee shared several significant decisions they had made with Sister Mary Christopher and the provincial council-elect.

- The physical signing of all civil documents related to the reconfiguration of the provinces would take place on Friday, November 20, 2009, in Pennsylvania. The civil closing of the current provinces would become effective on January 1, 2010.
- Present provincial ministers would relinquish their duties on November 21, 2009, and vacate their physical living and office space by January 1, 2010.
- The province had entered into a sale agreement for a building in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. An architect was contracted to renovate the building.
- St. Cecilia Church in Rochester, Pennsylvania, would be the setting for the Installation Mass with Most Rev. David A. Zubik, bishop of Pittsburgh, as the main celebrant and homilist. The Pittsburgh Airport Holiday Inn would house the sisters during the Installation weekend, November 20-22, 2009.

- Diversified Search Odgers Berndtson was retained to conduct the search for a Chief Finance Officer (CFO). At their suggestion, because of the scope of the job description, the title of the position changed to Chief Financial and Administrative Officer (CFAO). Three to five potential candidates would be made known by August with a second round of interviews possibly occurring in September.
- Sister Mary Jolene Jasinski (Buffalo), provincial councilor-elect, agreed to assume the role of canonical treasurer, and Sister Constance Marie Tomyl (Enfield), provincial councilor-elect, agreed to serve as the provincial secretary.
- Sister Paula Mary (Chicago) agreed to be the director of the Common Postulancy Program. Sister Mary Faith Balawejder (Coraopolis) would serve as assistant director.[426]

To accomplish the myriad tasks facing them, the new leadership team met via teleconference or in person in one of the provincial houses each month. These gatherings provided an opportunity for the new provincial council members to bond with each other as well as to meet the sisters in each area. During the July meeting at Immaculate Conception Provincial House in Lodi, New Jersey, the new council members became better acquainted with one another, set parameters for working together, and established dates for upcoming events, including the first provincial assembly for Our Lady of Hope Province that was set to take place at the Renaissance Hotel—Newark Airport, in Elizabeth, New Jersey, from April 23 to 25, 2010.[427]

The August meeting at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Provincial House in Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, provided an opportunity for the team to visit the site of the new provincial center in Beaver Falls as well as to view the architectural plans. The closing on the property had taken place just prior to the group's arrival, on August 17, 2009. The group also reviewed the completed booklet of Provincial Policies, established the agenda for the meeting of local ministers in Buffalo, New York, in October, and brainstormed names for the two regions of the province. This resulted in "Region I—East" with Sister Judith Marie Blizzard serving as the regional coordinator and "Region II—West" with Sister MaryAnne Olekszyk serving as the regional coordinator. Since the province had been unable to get the reproduction rights from the iconographer working on a depiction of Our Lady of Hope, the new council decided to invite the sisters to submit sketches of an image of Our Lady of Hope.[428]

The September meeting at Mother of Good Counsel Provincial House in Chicago, Illinois, followed three days of immersion with the staff of Felician Services, Inc. during which the Mission Integration Policy was formulated and later approved by the Our Lady of Hope Provincial Council. The group refined the agenda for the October meeting with the local ministers and selected representatives from each current province to attend the 2010 Biennial Assembly in Rome in March. They also defined the role of the secretary of the former provinces and determined the secretarial tasks that would continue to be completed at the local level by the "local communicator." Finally, the sisters discussed issues relevant to life in the province after November 21, 2009.[429]

The DVD of the keynote address at the 2009 Franciscan Federation Conference, delivered by Sister Patricia Smith, Philadelphia Franciscan, was

the centerpiece of the meeting with the local ministers held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Provincial House in Buffalo, New York, on October 14. Entitled "Franciscan Leadership: Mutual Love Generating a Future," the DVD was intended to motivate and inspire the local ministers as the local leaders of life in the provincial houses after November 21, 2009.[430] In her invitation letter of September 8 to the local ministers, Sister Christopher acknowledged that "times of transition can be fraught with uncertainty and anxiety," and noted that the reconfiguration of the eight provinces would be no exception. "However," she continued, "we would like to mitigate these feelings by meeting with you."[431] Council member presentations addressed "Sharing Responsibility with the Local Minister," "Care of the Sick," and "Hospitality." The local ministers also had the opportunity to engage in discussion about how best to serve the sisters who were residents of the provincial houses "as we go forward on our *Journey in Hope."*[432]

In her final communication with the new council via conference call on November 5, Sister Christopher discussed details of their arrival at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Provincial House in Coraopolis where they would make their home until the building in Beaver Falls was ready for occupancy. She also shared news and schedules about the week before the installation as well as details of the installation weekend and orientation with the general administration.[433]

Well before daybreak on the rainy morning of Saturday, November 14, Sister Constance Marie Tomyl drove out of the Enfield campus to begin the long drive through Connecticut into New Jersey where Sister Judith Marie Blizzard joined her. Both sisters made the trip across Pennsylvania, driving west along Interstate 80 and arriving at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Provincial House shortly after 7 p.m. Earlier that week, Sister Constance had reminded the leadership team that the first five Felician pioneers who came to America had made their journey at the same time.[434] In fact, on November 13, 1874, they debarked from the *SS Ethiopia,* which had carried them across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe to America, and the next day, November 14, they found themselves trudging through New York City, a stop on the way to their final destination, Polonia, Wisconsin![435] Sister Connie said, "It helped us to appreciate the fact that we, too, are pioneers, traveling in the footsteps of our pioneer mothers."

THE APOSTOLIC VISITATION

In early May 2007, just before the installation of the new provincial minister and council for Our Lady of the Angels Province, the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) held its Plenary Assembly in Rome. In his address to the women religious leaders, Pope Benedict XVI pointed out the theme chosen, which he said he found "particularly interesting": *Called to weave a new spirituality that generates hope and life for all of humanity.* He said he understood it as "the fruit of ample reflection" on the question: "In contemplating our world, listening to its cries and needs, its thirst and its aspirations, what thread are we Religious, responsible for our Congregations, called to weave in this moment in order to become prophetic and mystic 'weavers of God'?" Further on in his address, Pope Benedict urged his audience to "cultivate the 'mystical' dimension of Consecrated Life, that is, "always keeping your soul united to God through contemplation." He spoke of the prophet as one who allows himself

to be "totally permeated by that love for God which fears nothing and is even stronger than death." Pope Benedict downplayed accomplishing works and accorded primacy to being "a witness of God's love, seeking to live it among the realities of the world, even if his [the prophet's] presence can sometimes be 'uncomfortable' because he offers and incarnates alternative values."[436]

At that same assembly, UISG President Sister Therezinha Joana Rasera, SDS, spoke about the evolution brought about by Vatican Council II in her address, entitled, "To Serve in Community Among One's Brothers and Sisters." "The Church itself," she said, "invited and encouraged us to open up, to evolve." She told her audience, "A new style of religious life is in gestation," one that "includes and values the gifts and the rich experiences of the different generations within institutes; . . . that administers changes through listening, sharing, discernment; co-responsibility and openness to the will of God who journeys with the human story; . . . expressing a vision of the future that is creative and a bearer of hope."[437]

Recognizing that religious life must move to new places, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) chose as its 2007 assembly theme, "The Next Frontier: Religious Life at the Edge of Tomorrow." The assembly raised questions such as, "Where is religious life moving next?" and "Towards what frontiers of global need should it now migrate?" In the summer issue of its publication, *The Occasional Papers,* the editor invited readers to ponder how they were called to "fan into flame the sparks of hope needed as religious life moves toward the next frontier."[438]

Differing views of the future

It was in this context that more than 650 consecrated religious in the United States heard Cardinal Franc Rodé, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), deliver the keynote address at the *Symposium on Apostolic Life: Religious Life since Vatican II . . . Reclaiming the Treasure.* Held to honor the Boston archdiocese's bicentennial, the symposium took place at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, on September 27, 2008.[439] In his speech, Cardinal Rodé acknowledged the contributions of both men and women religious who "left an indelible mark on the culture." Despite past greatness and current vitality in the American church, he noted that "all is not well with religious life in America." He said that in the period of innovation that followed the council, some religious orders mistook the spirit of renewal to license rupture, rather than reform, and this rupture from tradition and from the charism of their founders had fundamentally changed the way many religious had made public witness to their consecrated life and how they maintained their vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity.[440]

"The sheer decline in the numbers of consecrated men and women, the abandoning of many corporate apostolates and ministries, the closing of communities, the invisibility of corporate witness to consecrated life, amalgamations of provinces, mergers of different institutes, the graying of religious, the death of entire congregations—these realities are all familiar to us," he said. Further on, Cardinal Rodé contended that "the secularized culture has penetrated the mind and heart of not a few consecrated persons, who understand it as a way to enter modernity and a modality of approach to

the contemporary world." Finally, he said, "consecrated life today knows the temptation to mediocrity, bourgeois ways and a consumerist mentality."[441]

At about this same time, Marist Brother Sean D. Sammon's article, "The Domestication of U.S. Religious Life" appeared in the Summer 2007 issue of *Human Development,* a publication of The Jesuit Educational Center for Human Development. A licensed psychologist, Brother Sammon was serving as superior general of the Marist Brothers at the time of this writing. In his article, he analyzed the factors that contributed to the situation in which religious in the United States found themselves—Vatican II itself, the nature and impact of change, and cultural shifts underway in American society. He posited that while midcourse corrections in religious life's present-day journey of renewal in the United States were to be expected, "the solution is not a return to the past." In this regard, he referred to the ten-year comprehensive study of religious life in the United States by David Nygren, CM, and Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ, who noted: "Without significant change, religious life in the United States will continue to decline, and more important, those who need the help of these orders will not be cared for." Further on, Sammon wrote: "The practices of the past were suitable for the past. However, if we are to re-establish the witness value of our way of life, we will need to find new signs to help us do so, and we will need to carry out that task together."[442]

In his discussion on the "Identity" of religious that he defined as that clear sense of who religious are as a group and what they stand for, Sammon said, "Ideally religious life should be distinguished by its radical commitment to the mission of Jesus as well as the specific works carried out by its members." He invited his readers to ponder a "troubling" question, "How closely do we resemble that description?" Finally, in response to his question, "Is religious life in the United States living out that prophetic role or failing in some fundamental way to be its own best self?" Only after looking at institutes that have suffered "shocking losses" in the last half century, "chastened also by disappointment, failure, and scandal could he reply, "Religious life in the United States today appears to be right where it should be in the process of renewal."[443] He concluded his discussion urging the reader to "take the steps necessary to once again be the Church's living memory of what it can, should, and must be. In so doing our hearts will be transformed and we will find the simple courage, sustaining hope, and spirit of faith needed to complete the journey of renewal that still lies ahead."[444]

'Reclaiming the treasure' of religious life

Cardinal Rodé told the *National Catholic Reporter* that his office was already considering an apostolic visitation when he traveled to Stonehill and once there, he felt that the problems and challenges that religious face were made clear. The investigation, he said, was in response to "concerns expressed by American Catholics—religious, laity, clergy and hierarchy—about the welfare of religious women and consecrated life in general."[445] He later said that the apostolic visitation "hopes to encourage vocations and assure a better future for women religious. . . . My hope is that the Apostolic Visitation will not only provide the Holy See with a thorough analysis of the condition of religious life in the United States, but also be a realistic and graced opportunity for personal

and community introspection, as major superiors and sisters cooperate with this study."[446]

Later, CICLSAL said it initiated the Visitation because of its awareness that apostolic religious life in the United States was experiencing challenging times. "Although we knew that any initiative of this magnitude would have its imperfections, we wished to gain deeper knowledge of the contributions of the women religious to the Church and society as well as those difficulties which threaten the quality of their religious life and, in some cases, the very existence of the institutes." CICLSAL said it hoped that this experience of prayerful reflection, self-evaluation, and dialogue, in the light of Church guidelines for religious life, "would continue to bear fruit in the revitalization of religious life as well as in greater collaborative efforts among religious institutes, with the Church's Pastors and lay faithful and with the Dicastery, in an ever-deeper spirit of ecclesial communion."[447]

With the approval of Pope Benedict XVI in an audience held on November 17, 2008, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) chose to conduct an Apostolic Visitation to the institutes of women religious in the United States that were engaged in apostolic ministry and had a generalate, provincialate and/or initial formation program in the United States. According to the official website for the Apostolic Visitation, a visitation "is a formal but personal process, initiated at the highest levels of the Catholic Church, to look into the welfare of a particular aspect of the Church." Visitations, as noted in the final report, are a normal instrument of governance in religious life. CICLSAL officially launched its inquiry in December 2008, and the heads of religious congregations were notified by letter dated February 2, 2009. Cloistered contemplative communities were not included in the Visitation.[448]

In some ways, this Apostolic Visitation was unprecedented. It involved 341 religious institutes of both diocesan and pontifical right, to which approximately 50,000 women religious throughout the United States belonged. Where institutes had more than one province in the United States, each province was considered a separate unit, for a total of 405 entities involved in the Visitation. The Dicastery appointed a woman religious from the United States, Mother Mary Clare Millea, ASCJ, as Apostolic Visitator, granting her the faculties to design and conduct the Visitation. She, in turn, chose a core team of American religious who assisted her throughout the process.[449] In the memo that Minister General Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch wrote to the sisters in the United States to inform them of the Visitation, she noted that Mother Clare was familiar with the Felician Sisters since her mother resided in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and her late father volunteered at the Felician-sponsored ministry there, St. Felix Pantry.[450]

Phase One

According to CICLSAL, the Visitation process "sought to convey the caring support of the Church in respectful, 'sister-to-sister' dialogue, as modeled in the Gospel account of the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, using quantitative and qualitative data-gathering instruments."[451] The Visitation process took place between 2009 and 2012 and was divided into four phases. In the first phase, all the superiors general of institutes of women religious

involved in the Visitation were invited to speak with or write to the Visitator to share their hopes and concerns for their institute. Sister Barbara Ann wrote that she met personally with Mother Mary Clare on March 30, 2009, in Rome. She described the meeting as "comfortable and positive, focused on our lived reality with respect to our Felician charism in prayer, common life, and ministry; on our beloved mother, Blessed Mary Angela; and in particular, on the Journey in Hope process from its inception in 1996 to the present."[452] Seventy-eight percent of the 341 superiors general responded to the invitation to communicate with the Visitator through personal visit, phone conversation, or letter. The exchanges were open and cordial.[453]

Sister Danat Marie Brysch, provincial minister in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and provincial council member-elect for the new Our Lady of Hope Province, gathered with the women religious leaders at the 2009 Leadership Conference of Women Religious Annual Assembly held in New Orleans, Louisiana, from August 11-14, 2009. They explored the Apostolic Visitation as well as a separate inquiry initiated on April 8, 2008, by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the position of LCWR in matters pertaining to Catholic Church doctrine.[454] Following analysis of the experience of these studies, the leaders noted that their orders had always been fully accountable to the Church and planned to collaborate with the Vatican in these studies. Among the expressed concerns of the women religious leaders were a lack of full disclosure about the motivation and funding sources for the studies. The leaders also objected to the fact that their orders would not be permitted to see the investigative reports about them that were being submitted directly to the Vatican. Throughout the assembly, the leaders emphasized that their orders had remained faithful to the reform and renewal of their communities called for by the Second Vatican Council that urged women and men religious to adapt their lives, prayer, and work so they could most effectively fulfill their mission. They reclaimed their commitment to what they believed was the unique and needed role of religious life, which included serving at and speaking from the margins of the Catholic Church.[455]

As LCWR's outgoing president Sister J Lora Dambroski, OSF called the assembly to move forward together, she also pointed out the potential inherent in the Vatican studies. In her address to the assembly, she called the inquiries a "unique invitation to ongoing creativity in the living of Gospel commitment" and said they provided "another defining moment in our conference and our collective histories and future."[456]

Phase Two

The second phase of the visitation, which began after August 1, 2009, involved completion of a *Questionnaire of Religious Institutes*, prepared for this Apostolic Visitation. The questionnaire was used to gather empirical data and qualitative information regarding the spiritual, community, and ministerial life of the individual congregations as well as formation, governance, and finance.[457] The questionnaires asked for a list of each sister, her year of birth, address, and type of ministry, a list of properties owned by the congregation, and a copy of the most recent independent audit or internal financial statement. Some congregations refused to fill out the questionnaire or simply sent back copies of their constitutions.[458] Minister General Sister Mary Barbara

Ann Bosch reported that since she and the seven provincial superiors had offered copies of the most recent Annual Statistical Reports (ASR), materials related to the *Journey in Hope* process, and other pertinent documents, Mother Clare, apostolic visitator, felt she had most of the information required on the questionnaire.[459]

Also in Phase 2, every member of each religious institute was asked to reflect on the questions contained in Part B of the *Instrumentum Laboris,* "Reflection Topics for the Apostolic Visitation." The questions covered the same basic material included in the Questionnaire completed by the major superiors. The major superiors were asked to provide a copy of the entire *Instrumentum Laboris* for each of their sisters in the United States and to invite all the sisters to reflect, personally and/or communally, on the topics in the light of *Vita Consecrata, Starting Afresh from Christ,* and other documents as well as their own Constitutions and Chapter decisions. The topics were:

- Identity of your religious institute
- The governance of your religious institute
- Vocation promotion, admission and formation policies
- Spiritual life and common life
- Mission and ministry
- Financial administration[460]

Enfield's Provincial Minister Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha forwarded a copy of the working document to each sister in the Enfield province on September 10, 2009, and asked them to reflect prayerfully and engage in conversation together on the questions. She suggested the local house meeting as an appropriate avenue for sharing.[461] At the Provincial Assembly that took place at the provincial house on October 17, 2009, the sisters used a major part of the assembly to discuss the topics in small groups. Each council member reviewed the sisters' responses to one of the questions to formulate a response to a part of the questionnaire.[462]

When both Sister Mary Christopher Moore, provincial minister-elect and Sister Mary Jolene Jasinski, canon lawyer and canonical treasurer-elect, attended the National Conference of the Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) held in Atlanta, Georgia, from October 20-23, 2009, they learned that RCRI was providing legal assistance to religious institutes because the apostolic visitation is a Canonical Inquiry. The canon lawyers attending identified questions that they felt were open to interpretation regarding assets, finances, and members, and expressed concern about releasing this information. They also recommended that rather than sending the completed questionnaire online, hard copies be submitted. Sister Christopher shared her concerns with Sister Mary Barbara Ann, who suggested that the provinces collaborate and provide the same response to a question where appropriate. The provincial ministers participated in a conference call on November 4 to review the document considering these suggestions.[463] Because of RCRI's assistance and legal advice during Phase 2 of the visitation, CICLSAL eventually eliminated questions regarding assets, finances, and members from Part C of the questionnaire.[464]

Phases Three and Four

In the third phase of the Visitation, during October through December 2009, the Visitator carefully studied the data received to determine which of the 90 religious institutes, representing about half of the apostolic women religious in the United States, would be visited.[465] Teams of visitators, consisting of vowed religious women officially appointed by the Visitator, then conducted on-site visits through 2010. Sister Barbara Ann noted that, because of the timing of the founding of the new province, none of the current U.S. provinces would be visited before November 21, 2009. She added, "With respect to our Lady of Hope Province, there is no information yet regarding a possible visit."[466]

In the fourth and final phase of the Visitation, the Visitator presented to the Dicastery a final report and an executive summary of general issues and trends in women's religious life in the United States as well as the reports containing data specific to the reality of each of the institutes involved in the study.[467]

CICLSAL explained that,

> In all of its phases, the Apostolic Visitation focused on the vocation to religious life as lived by the members of religious institutes who publicly profess the evangelical counsels and exercise some external apostolic work in the United States. The entire process sought to elicit from the leaders and members of the institutes a sincere and transparent depiction of their lived reality. It attempted to assist the Apostolic See and the sisters themselves in being more cognizant of their current situation and challenges to formulate realistic, effective plans for the future. Particular attention was given to the vowed commitment of the women religious in fidelity to their charism, considering the Church's teachings on religious life and the guidelines for its renewal indicated by Vatican Council II and post-Conciliar documents.[468]

ENFIELD CELEBRATES LAST PATRONAL FEAST DAY

The sisters of Our Lady of the Angels Province gathered on August 1, 2009, to celebrate the last patronal feast day of the province.

The actual preparation began earlier that year, with each sister creating her personal, unique scrapbook page for the "Scrapbook Project." The intent of the project was to help the sisters to value what had been and what was to be, while honoring the sadness of the transition and acknowledging the loss. The project engaged the sisters in a collective review of the life of the province and moved them toward successful closure. Sister Constance Marie Tomyl reflected, "There is great power in planned, conscious rituals, especially those that honor life transitions."[469]

Sister Mary Angelia Rzasa, provincial archivist, coordinated the project and collaborated with the sisters to provide creative ideas or practical assistance. She worked diligently to design the exhibit for the *Scrapbook Project* displayed in the provincial house auditorium. While tables were filled with individual scrapbook pages, the walls were lined with pictures from the past, constituting the *Memory Walk.* Pictures from the past were grouped according to decades, beginning with the 1930's and continuing into the present.[470]

Sister Mary Norberta Malinowski said, "Seeing the photographs of the sisters from the early days to the present reminded me of the great and humble women who preceded us and built the province, the women who prayed and

sacrificed for the future of our province. We owe them a debt of gratitude." Sister Mary Anastasia Holak said, "The display . . . brought whispered prayers for those who have gone home to God . . . . [It] was a visible manifestation of the loving care of Divine Providence. . . . There is no doubt in my mind that Divine Providence will continue to guide us as we step forward into our new *Journey of Hope."* [471]



SM Edmund Dzienkowski (at l) and SM Fabian Cymes view pictures of the Enfield province's past displayed on 'Memory Walk.'



S Janice Marie Gaudette (at l) and SM Alexa Oleszczuk enjoy the uniqueness of the sisters' scrapbook pages.

The sisters began more intense preparation on July 28 with a *Triduum of Readings and Prayer Services* that focused on the history of the Felician Congregation in North America, beginning with the decision of the General Chapter of 1874 to accept apostolic service in America, through the founding of the Enfield Province in 1932, to the present.[472]

The day itself began in the provincial house chapel with festive Morning Praise to honor Our Lady of the Angels. At 10:15 a.m., sisters gathered in front of the historic Orrin Thompson Mansion, the first provincial house of the Enfield province, to plant a cherry tree. After Sister Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski shared a reflection on the symbolism of trees, Sister Nancy Marie Piecewicz reminded the sisters that "trees give us a message of hope. . . . God, who can bring blossoms to a barren tree, can help bring an era of new life." Sister Constance Marie Tomyl explained that a cherry tree was chosen because it symbolizes rebirth, death, and new awakenings. Furthermore, the Japanese name for cherry tree, *sakura,* means "a tree on which God sits."[473]

Sister Mary Romuald Bednarczyk likened the planting of the tree to the process of growth in the newly formed province, Our Lady of Hope: preparing the soil for new growth, sustaining the roots by praying and connecting, tending the garden by reflective decision making, and finally, celebrating the harvest as we celebrate each other.[474]

The Eucharistic celebration followed with Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, provincial house chaplain, as the celebrant and homilist. During his homily, he asked Mary, Queen of the Angels, to "watch over our province and intercede for us in the future." The celebratory dinner at noon provided delicious food and fellowship and displayed a cake with the image of the Enfield provincial house held in the heart of Blessed Mary Angela.[475]

The *Sharing of Memories* early in the afternoon began with the song *Journeys Ended, Journeys Begun,* from Weston Priory. The lyrics helped the sisters recognize that to move firmly along the path to a new calling, they needed to share memories and to see God's journey for them.[476] Sister Constance Marie reminded the sisters that, "Our purpose in gathering here today is to share our memories and to see in them God's journey for us so that we can move firmly along the path to our new calling." She invited the sisters to "be mindful of our sisters who have walked with us and who have gone before us."[477]

Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, celebrating her 70th anniversary in the Felician community, shared her unique memories from the vantage point of having served the community as provincial treasurer during five administrations. As other sisters shared their stories, laughter and tears seemed to be the order of the day. The sharing closed with the *Litany of Remembrance and Gratitude.*[478]

The sisters made their way to the chapel where they listened to the *Letter from Mother Angela.* They heard the words of Blessed Mary Angela through the person of Sister Marie JoAnn Lewko, who assured them that the Felician foundress was with them. "I do not know what the future holds for you," she said, "but I know He is already there before you." Like Mary, the sisters spent time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, "pondering all these things in their hearts." The very full day closed with festive Evening Praise and supper.[479]

Sister Mary Edith St. Jean said, "I have been pondering events of the past with deep feelings of appreciation for all the blessings our province has

received. . . . I will continue to pray for all our sisters who were called by the Spirit to serve as humble, compassionate, and competent leaders in the spirit of our Foundress. May courage, integrity, and trust in Divine Providence, a legacy left by our first five pioneer sisters, be their guiding light."[480]

The climax of the weekend was a special celebration held on Sunday, August 2, when the Enfield sisters celebrated their sisters marking 75, 70, and 60 years. The celebrants were Sister Mary Cecilia Janiec, 75 years; Sister Rosemary Zawada, Sister Mary Vincent Rutkowski, Sister Mary Florentine Myjak, and Sister Mary Esther Sibiga, 70 years; and Sister Mary Apollonia Niksa, 60 years. Father A. Waine Kargul, celebrated the Eucharistic liturgy, substituting for Father Adolphe T. Renkiewicz, chaplain, who was ill. Following the Mass, the sisters assembled on the front steps of the chapel for a group photograph.[481]

GOING FORWARD AS ONE

Reflecting on the historic installation of the first provincial minister and leadership team for Our Lady of Hope Province, Sister Mary Christopher wrote, "Saturday, November 21, 2009, was truly a glorious day in the history of our Felician Congregation. It was a day that celebrated our history and one that made history. It was a day of sacred ceremony, of joy and laughter, and ultimately, of unification."[482]

November 21 is itself a historic day for the Felician Congregation, which was founded on that day, the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. November 21 also marked the foundation of the first American province in 1874, when five pioneer sisters made their way from Poland to America aboard the *SS Ethiopia,* docking in New York harbor before continuing their westward journey to Polonia, Wisconsin.

More than 420 Felician Sisters from the United States and Canada, and representatives of the Congregation from Poland, Brazil, and Kenya witnessed the Founding of Our Lady of Hope Province and Installation of the new provincial leadership team during the Eucharistic liturgy celebrated in St. Cecilia Church in Rochester, Pennsylvania. Most Reverend David A. Zubik, bishop of Pittsburgh, was the main celebrant and homilist. Father Michael Greb, OFM, Cap., pastor of St. Cecilia Parish, and Father Richard L. Conboy, chaplain at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Provincial House in Coraopolis, concelebrated. A delegation from Rome, consisting of the Congregation's seven-member general administration, was also present for the day's events.[483]

Dissolution of the eight provinces

The deeply moving ceremony—the culmination of a thirteen-year planning and reconfiguration process—began with sisters from each of the eight former provinces carrying a candle representing their province in the entrance procession. Following the opening hymn, Sister Mary Barbara Ann Bosch, minister general, stood before the altar and proclaimed the dissolution of the eight former Felician Provinces in North America. As Sister Barbara Ann called the name of each province, the former provincial minister extinguished the candle, symbolizing the end of the existence of that province. The provinces named in order of their founding and the provincial ministers were:[484]

Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, Livonia, Michigan
Sister Mary Renetta Rumpz

Immaculate Heart of Mary Province, Buffalo, New York
Sister Mary Lorianne Tylczynski

Mother of Good Counsel Province, Chicago, Illinois
Sister Mary Andréa Chudzik

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, Lodi, New Jersey
Sister Mary Aquinas Szott

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Province, Coraopolis, Pennsylvania
Sister Mary Christopher Moore

Our Lady of the Angels Province, Enfield, Connecticut
Sister Mary Bernardine Mucha

Holy Name of Mary Province, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
Sister Mary Celestine Giertych

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province, Rio Rancho, New Mexico
Sister Danat Marie Brysch

As the candles were extinguished, the sorrow could be heard in the church as some sisters wept softly. After reflecting on the history that brought the Felician Sisters to this momentous event, Sister Barbara Ann proclaimed the establishment of Our Lady of Hope Province, "the official province of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice in North America."[485] She encouraged the sisters to "remain open and receptive to this 'annunciation moment.'" She continued,

> We believe that *now* is still in process of becoming and that here is fertile soil into which we will plant new seeds and watch them burst forth into something we know not now, but which will be more than we can imagine, and will be taken, blessed and broken into more than can be imagined.[486]

Installation of Our Lady of Hope leadership team

The installation of the new provincial leadership team followed. Sister Barbara Ann first called forth Sister Mary Christopher Moore to serve as provincial minister of the new province, reminding her that "a power beyond your own is always at work within you!" She then called forth the seven new council members: Sister Danat Marie Brysch, of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, vicar and first councilor; Sister Nancy Marie Jamroz, of Livonia, Michigan, second councilor; Sister Constance Marie Tomyl, of Enfield, Connecticut, third councilor; Sister Mary Geralyn Mroczkowski, of Chicago, Illinois, fourth councilor; Sister MaryAnne Olekszyk, of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, fifth councilor; Sister Mary Jolene Jasinski, sixth councilor; and Sister Judith Marie Blizzard, of Lodi, New Jersey, seventh councilor.[487]

The sisters present affirmed their support of the new administration and raised their hands over their sisters, asking the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they lead the Felician Sisters of North America on their continuing *Journey in Hope.*[488] Then eight sisters chosen from among the electors joined Sister Christopher and the councilors before the altar for the ritual of signing and blessing with oil. While Sister Barbara Ann led prayers for the gifts of

wisdom, humility, gentleness, joy and hope, compassion, strength and peace, the electors anointed the eyes, ears, mouth, shoulders, heart, hands and feet of each member of the new leadership team. The Rite of Anointing and Blessing concluded with the singing of the traditional *Magnificat,* the formal hymn of thanksgiving of the Felician Congregation.[489]

During his homily. Bishop Zubik, who attended a Felician-staffed school and had a personal relationship with the Felician Sisters, expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to be present at this historic milestone in Felician congregational history. He noted that the mission to meet the needs of the poor and marginalized inspired the Felician Sisters throughout their history from Blessed Mary Angela's ministry to the poor in Poland, to the pioneer sisters in Wisconsin who ministered to the Polish immigrants, to the establishment of one province in the 21st century to continue and strengthen the Felician presence in North America.[490]

Following the Mass, the sisters gathered at the Holiday Inn Pittsburgh Airport for a celebratory banquet. A multimedia presentation on large screens in the banquet hall chronicled the history of the *Journey in Hope.* Sister Mary Andrew Budinski, former council member of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Province and local minister of Our Lady of Hope Provincial House Convent, served as MC for the banquet program. The sisters acknowledged Sister Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski and Sister Mary Raymond Kasprzak, former ministers general, who approved and encouraged the *Journey in Hope* process. Sister Mary Laureann Alexandrowicz, former provincial minister in Enfield, Connecticut, received recognition for bringing the idea of provincial consolidation forth. The provincial ministers who served on the *Journey in Hope* Steering Committee received grateful praise for their years of planning and coordination of the *Journey in Hope* process.[491]

Three people outside the Felician Community received the gratitude of the sisters for their work during the *Journey in Hope* process. Ruby Cribbin facilitated the *Journey in Hope* process from its inception; Sister Deborah Cerullo, SSND, served as canon lawyer during the process; Father Richard Conboy facilitated meetings and provincial chapters during the *Journey in Hope* process as well as the Chapter of Elections. The members of the general administration expressed their good wishes for the leadership and sisters of Our Lady of Hope Province.[492]

In her remarks, Sister Mary Christopher expressed the gratitude of the leadership team for the support of the sisters, encouraging them to continue praying for the new province and asking for their patience during this time of transition. She noted that much needed to be done and cautioned that the sisters could expect differences from the way things were done in the former eight provinces structure.[493] She told the sisters, "In this pioneering journey, we must think broadly and openly. We must work with daring and courage. It is not a time for complacency. It is not a time for settling into 'comfort zones.' If we journey in hope and with pioneering zeal, we can together chart a new course—one that is open to new opportunities and new possibilities."[494]

She then shared a prayer attributed to English sea captain and pioneer of the seas, Sir Francis Drake.

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too well-pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life.
Having fallen in love with life
We have ceased to dream of eternity.
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask You to push back
The horizon of our hopes,
And to push us into the future
In strength, courage, hope and love.[495]

The sisters who attended the installation of the provincial leadership team had the opportunity to tour the building being renovated as the site of the new provincial house and offices. The structure in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, was formerly an elementary school and then an apartment complex. The building underwent a complete renovation and was scheduled to be ready for occupancy in late January or February 2010.[496]

In addition, the visiting sisters were warmly welcomed and treated to lunch at McGuire Memorial in New Brighton, Pennsylvania, a facility that serves children and adults with physical or mental challenges. Located several miles from the new provincial house, on November 21, 2009, after a year of planning, it became a co-sponsored ministry of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Felician Sisters of North America. Many sisters took advantage of the opportunity to tour the facility.[497]

A visit from former member Eleanor Ash from Buffalo, New York, dressed as Blessed Mary Angela, closed the banquet reception that celebrated the new beginning for the Felician Sisters of North America. Using Mother Angela's words, Ash reflected on the growth of the Felician Congregation since its founding in 1855 and expressed appreciation to her daughters for their prayer and work, reminding them that the Congregation was grounded in action and contemplation, and that it is only after gazing, considering and contemplating Jesus, that we "imitate Jesus in our actions."[498]

Ash brought simple gifts to complement her words and blessings. The first was a rose for each new council member, along with the reminder to be "humble and hopeful" in leadership. As one of their first acts of service, the

council members next distributed envelopes to each sister, containing a holy card, a piece of hard candy, and a clay heart. The card depicted Jesus smiling and was intended to keep the sisters mindful that, despite external and internal challenges, "God is always with us, so, we rejoice."[499] While a piece of hard candy may bring delight to both the giver and receiver, Mother Angela reminded the sisters that it is the touch, or gesture, which is important. Finally, the clay heart was a reminder that while our hearts are small and cold at times, prayer enlarges the heart. Mother Angela urged the sisters to warm their hearts by extending gratitude to all who had been or are a part of their lives. "May they feel the warmth of our good will and love," she said.[500]

As Mother Angela did so frequently during her lifetime, Ash enclosed the sisters in the hearts of Jesus and Mary, and prayed that "they bless your every step, your every action, your every thought, just as I, your unworthy mother—but loving you in God—bless you."[501]

As part of living out the charism of Blessed Mary Angela, the sisters participated in "Socks for Love," and brought packages of socks to distribute to ministries within the province that served the poor. St. Anne Home in Greensburg, McGuire Memorial in New Brighton, and The Mooncrest Children's Program in Moon Township, all in Pennsylvania, and St. Ann Catholic Outreach Center in Kingstree, South Carolina, were the grateful recipients of these gifts.[502]

The twenty-seven sisters who represented the Enfield province at this event returned home encouraged by the words of Mother Angela and filled with hope for the future.[503] Now part of the one province—Our Lady of Hope—they pondered the words of Sister Christopher in her letter of November 24, 2009, as they began to live out being

One in mission. One in vision. One in courage. And one in hope.



**For identifications, please see pp 508 and 509*

Our Lady of the Angels Sisters 2009
Identification List

1. S Nancy Marie Piecewicz
2. S Joan Marie Swierzb
3. S Constance Marie Tomyl
4. SM Angela Boyarchok
5. SM Bernardine Mucha
6. S Theresa Marie Grochowski
7. SM Veronica Zacharczyk
8. SM Rosalma Fish
9. S Francine Mary Sousa
10. SM Edmund Dzienkowski
11. S Janice Marie Gaudette
12. S Marianne Los
13. S Susan Adele Marie Tippett
14. SM Laureann Alexandrowicz
15. SM Fabian Cymes
16. SM Jeanette Piorkowski
17. SM Anastasia Holak
18. SM Angelora Floryan
19. SM Romuald Bednarczyk
20. SM Julia Janas
21. S Jeanne Marie Akalski
22. SM Thomas Lesniak
23. S Clare Marie Berryhill
24. SM Esther Sibiga
25. SM Magdalen Pytelewski
26. S Theresa Mary Gondek
27. S Mary Ann Papiez
28. SM Angelia Rzasa
29. S Theresa Mary Pietrzak
30. SM John Fryc
31. SM Lawrence Lojko
32. S Patricia Marie Iagrosso
33. SM Bernice Pikul
34. SM Alfreda Charzewski
35. SM Agatha Rutkowski
36. SM Andriette Tomaszewski
37. S Jacqueline Mary Kazanowski
38. SM Florence Pelczynski
39. SM Alexa Oleszczuk
40. S Frances Marion Bonczar
41. S Eleanor Marie Statkiewicz
42. S Marie JoAnn Lewko
43. SM Amandine Zdrok
44. SM Irene Faszcza
45. S Sophia Wanda Mary Stapor
46. SM Adelia Markiewicz
47. SM Rose Kruszewski
48. SM Margaret Perkowski
49. SM Presentia Kaznocha
50. SM Bernadette Swist
51. S Rosemary Zawada
52. SM Florentine Myjak
53. SM Bernard Skrocka
54. SM Apollonia Niksa
55. SM Antonia Popielarczyk
56. SM Edith St. Jean
57. S Joanne Marian Kaminski
58. SM Edna Korona
59. SM Norberta Malinowski
60. S Dolores Anne M Ungerer
61. S Carol Marie Saladin
62. SM Angelica Mycek
63. SM Joseph Byczek
64. SM Cecilia Janiec
65. SM Vincent Rutkowski
66. SM Phyllis Nowak
67. SM Rosalette Janeczek
68. SM Helene Hadam
69. S Christine Marie Stankiewicz

Not pictured:

S Barbara Theresa Marie Martis
SM Cornelia Furtado
S Marcia Mary Polchlopek
SM Seraphine Liskiewicz
SM Stella Motyl

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Endnotes

Since many of the sources used in this history come from the collection of unpublished materials preserved in the Felician Heritage Center and Archives in Livonia, Michigan, AFSNA—Archives of the Felician Sisters of North America—is being used to identify their source. Published sources are fully cited whenever possible at their first appearance in the Endnotes.

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