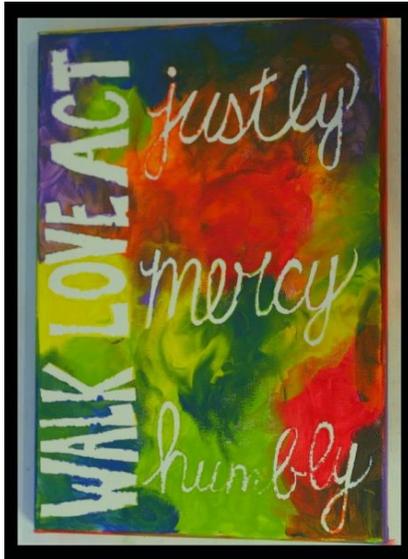




*Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God*  
Confidently, Joyfully, We Go Forward!



“Do not be daunted by the enormity  
of the world’s grief.  
Do justly, now. Love mercy, now.  
Walk humbly, now.  
You are not obliged to complete the work,  
but neither are you free to abandon it.”

The Talmud

*Sound familiar? Check out Micah 6: 8!*

### CALENDAR

- March 02-05 General Leadership Meetings – Brazil
- March 05-06 General Leadership & Chapter Planning Committee Meetings
- March 07 Auxiliary Spaghetti Dinner/Nativity 4-7PM
- March 08 International Women’s Day
- March 10 Gala Meeting – 6PM Nativity
- March 11 Migrant Christ Prayer at Noon
- March 12 **Community Day – 98<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Founding**
- March 13 Sister Janet returns to US
- March 14 St. Patrick’s Day Parade
- March 15 Community Day Celebration – Oakmont, 12 Noon - 3:30PM
- March 16 Day Care Board Meeting 6PM
- March 16-26 Sr. Joanne in USA
- March 17 St. Patrick’s Day
- March 20 MSMW Meeting – Martina Center 9AM-1PM
- March 21 Associate Meeting – Nativity 10AM
- March 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

*May God give you, for every  
storm, a rainbow  
For every tear, a smile  
For every care, a promise and a  
blessing in each trial.  
For every problem life sends,  
a faithful friend to share.  
For every sigh,  
a sweet song and an answer  
for each prayer.*



Irish Blessing



### BIRTHDAYS & FEAST DAYS

March 01 Ir. Maria Adelma B



March 26 Ir. Neide B



March 28 Ir. M. Amélia B

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## LOOP 2 MEETING - USA MOVES US FORWARD

Sisters in the US gathered on January 25<sup>th</sup> to continue the discernment process leading to the General Chapter in October. The synthesis of suggestions from the Loop 1 meetings in the US and Brazil were studied and, through the discernment groupings, Groups A and B came up with very similar priority issues addressing the climate crisis and restructuring needs of the congregation.



These issues will be added to those of our Sisters in Brazil and will form the basis of the upcoming Loop 3 sessions during the ACRs in both geographic regions.

The General Leadership will be meeting with the Chapter Planning Committee in March to begin the nomination process for the election of General Leadership at the Chapter.

Let us continue to work and pray for the success of the General Chapter as we continue to be faithful to our Charism and Mission.

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## SISTER DEISE RECEIVED INTO THE NOVITIATE



Let us thank God for the gift of our postulant, Deise Santana Santos, who was received into the Novitiate on February 2. Sister Deise will reside at St. Clare Novitiate in Vila Alpina for this first Canonical year.

Prayers are also requested for Sister Antonia Maria Silva (seen at right with Sister Joanne and Sister Deise) who assumed the role of Novice Director this year, and for the local community: Sisters Adriana and Vandette.

Sister Antonia Maria will be counting on the assistance of other sisters to provide additional classes for Sister Deise. An inter-congregational program for novices is also available in the São Paulo area.



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## TWO YOUNG WOMEN BEGIN EXPERIENCE IN OUR CONGREGATION



We were happy to welcome two young women to our formation community in Alagoinhas, Bahia on February 12. Veronica Gonçalves dos Santos, 24, (left) and Rafaela Bispo dos Santos, 25, (right) are both from Bahia and have been accompanied by our Sisters over the last few years.



Following an initial experience and orientation to our life, these women will formally become Aspirants. Sister Maria do Carmo Nogueira is responsible for the Aspirants, with the assistance of her local community, Sisters Elenice and Maria José Torres.

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## TASTY CELEBRATION ON LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY



Yummy! Thanks to the generosity and skills of Sister Francine and her assistant, Sister Mary Ann, our

Sisters enjoyed kugelis and ausuki cookies at Nativity Convent to celebrate Lithuanian Independence Day, February 16. You can see that everyone was VERY satisfied. Just two pieces left!

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## FRANCISCAN ASSOCIATES OFFER POTLUCK LUNCHEON FOR THE SISTERS



What a great time our Sisters and Associates had for the potluck lunch provided by the Associates on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Delicious food. Delightful conversations. We are truly blessed! Many thanks to these wonderful women!



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## SCHOOL AND MISSION COMMUNITIES BEGIN THE NEW YEAR IN BRAZIL

The end of January ushers in the beginning of a new year of school and activities in the parishes in Brazil. This past year the coordinators of pastoral Services in our four schools and social center worked diligently to create a comprehensive plan of action. At right is the committee that included Sister Maria José da Conceição as director, Sisters Yolanda and Juliana, along with representatives from each institution. They are hoping for a wonderful year of growth and service with the students.



All the faculty members of each school participated in an opening educational day, which always features an expert presenting on some critical aspect in the educational field. Sister Joanne welcomed everyone to



the new year and invited them to share our rich Charism and Mission with their students as they implement ever changing norms expected from the government. Sister Maria José da Conceição met with faculty in Barbacena to begin their year.



The children are also excited about a new year of learning and activities. Each child received a special calendar album with important dates and messages related to this

year's Fraternity Campaign: *Fraternity and Life – Gift and Commitment.*



Our mission communities are also beginning a new year. Some Sisters have moved to new communities. All are anxious to enter into the life of the local church.



Sister Amélia welcomed Sisters Adelma and Margarida to Itinga (left).

Sister Maria José was joined by Sisters Eunice and Luzia in Barbacena (right).



We wish all of our Sisters a blessed and fruitful year!

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*In commemoration of the 98<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Founding – an excerpt from the November 20, 2011 Congregational Bulletin:  
a bit of our history recognizing our first General Superior following Mother Chrysostom  
as we became an autonomous congregation.*

## *Transformed by Providence – Our First Congregational Leaders*

*Part V of our history: In celebration of our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary on March 12, 2012*

### **Mother M. Baptist Laurinaitis**



A common birth and baptismal certificate written in German certifies that Mary Anna Laurinaitis was born on September 26, 1882 and baptized the next day in the church of St. John the Baptist in Rupkojai, Lithuania. When she was eight years old her family began a new life in Chicago, Illinois. Mary Anna was 23 years old when she joined the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth (See photo). In 1906 she was given the name Sister Mary Baptista of the Meek Heart of Jesus and made her first vows in 1908. She then taught in the congregation's Lithuanian schools, gave religion classes to the public-school children, and visited families in the parishes. She was a firm disciplinarian, as was necessary, for in one school she had a class of 84 students. She sought to instill in her students a love for learning and for the heritage of the country the young immigrants had left behind.

Sister Baptista was among the Lithuanian sisters who sought to create a separate Lithuanian province and, as circumstances warranted, she ultimately had to make the decision to leave the community which had been her home for 17 years. So, at 40 years of age she was dispensed from her vows and travelled to Pittsburgh to begin anew. She taught at St. Casimir School so that others could make their novitiate. Unlike the others, she chose to retain her religious name (which later was shortened to Baptist) and pronounced her vows in the new Franciscan community on August 12, 1924. During these first three years, 1922-1925, she was among the thirty-seven candidates who were received for formation in Millvale under their new novice director, Mother M. Chrysostom. It was a time of excited and anxious beginnings, much uncertainty, yet the conviction that God was guiding these women on a grace-filled path. As Bishop Boyle recalled ten years later: "Surely the finger of God is here."

In 1925, when our sisters moved to Mt. Providence, Mother Chrysostom, while still a councilor in her own community, was appointed Superior General of our new foundation. However, on August 2, 1928 she was again elected Superior General in her own community. Bishop Boyle made a surprise visit to our convent during a council meeting and informed the sisters that it was time to take on the leadership of their own congregation. He asked all at the meeting to write the name of the Sisters they believed to be most qualified to become superior and left the room indicating he would return soon with a decision. He returned some days later to announce that he would appoint Mother M. Baptist as an interim Superior General until elections could be organized the next year. *(In the photo is Mother M. Aloysia, Mother M. Baptist, with Msgr. Michael Kruszcas, 1930, on the porch of St. Joseph House, the original farmhouse on the property.)*



Since Mother Baptist had served under Mother Chrysostom for three years as councilor, she took on this new responsibility with humble zeal, distinguishing herself in that year as a public relations woman with a deep concern to maintain well the property and buildings we had acquired, to expand our ministries, and to show appreciation and gratitude to the priests and people who had come to our assistance. Within the year as Superior General she was able to pay back a loan from the diocese for our newly constructed Motherhouse.



Mother Baptist's artist skills were recognized and encouraged in the Holy Family community. She was willing to forgo this talent, under the present circumstances, as she concentrated on work in the interior of the Motherhouse building, farming and gardening with the sisters, and maintaining relationships with the benefactors Providence had sent to us. She extended our services to more Lithuanian parishes beyond Pittsburgh.

Mother Baptist concluded her

year, turning over the leadership of the young community to Mother M. David Pocius who became our first elected Superior General.

However, Mother Baptist continued to share her expertise as a councilor from 1929 until 1935.

Again from 1938 to 1944 she served as the bursar (treasurer) of the congregation. When missioned

in a parish she often served as the local superior. The Sisters who lived with her describe her as fun-loving, approachable, considerate and understanding. She served in several parish schools including Our Lady Help of Christians in Los Angeles, California.



Later she was able to return to her art and theater, amidst her teaching responsibilities (see paintings). She painted a delicate flower-patterned set of china dishes as a gift from the community to Monsignor Michael Kruszcas for his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest, which now is exhibited at the Motherhouse. She directed the early St. Francis Academy prep girls in preparing Lithuanian plays for parishes where our Sisters taught in order to enhance the cultural life of the Lithuanian immigrants, while fundraising for the convent needs.

At the age of 82, Mother Baptist had to admit she could no longer cope with the demands in a parish and returned once more where she began, to the Motherhouse. She could often be found doing what she loved, with a rosary in her hand before the Blessed Sacrament or reading English and Lithuanian literature.



The last three months of her life found her weak, her strength permitting her movement only in her room, the infirmary or, at times, in the chapel choir loft. Finally, on February 13, 1971, the Sisters noticed she was failing and called Fr. Bryce, our chaplain, to anoint her. Sisters then gathered in her room for prayer as they watched her slip away. She was buried on February 16, the day on which her beloved country celebrates its Independence.

At her wake service, Mother M. Loyola, in homage to our first General Superior stated: "We remember with nostalgia, with tears, with gratitude, the meaning of her life for us. We remember her as the valiant woman who did not 'eat her bread in idleness.' We remember her as the artist who beautified our house with the fruits of her handiwork. We remember her devotion to her people and her heritage, a devotion that turned her life into such a pilgrimage that she could echo the words of Ruth:

***"Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people".***