



Winter 2024-25

Caritas

A publication
for the Sisters
of Providence
and Friends



Listening to God

“O my God, I thank You for the grace
of my religious vocation. You alone
inspired me to follow You.”

– Emilie Gamelin, foundress of
the Sisters of Providence

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A Message from the Mother Joseph Province Leadership Team



Dear Friends of Providence,

The mission of the Sisters of Providence advances even in the midst of change.

This Leadership Team began five years ago at the start of 2020, filled with prayers of hope and enthusiasm. Of course, during those exciting days, we didn't know that a global pandemic would alter the world's course so dramatically.

Despite uncertainties and learning new ways of communicating online, our Provident God accompanied us throughout. We implemented strong prevention measures to keep Sisters and staff safe. Our health care and educational ministries weathered the troubled times – not without some anxiety – and emerged strong. In partnership with our benefactors, we continue to support front-line ministries serving the hungry, the marginalized and the suffering throughout the Western United States. We improved our human resources and financial infrastructure as we also renewed Sister residences and office facilities in preparation for the future.

You, our friends, stayed with us through the challenges, as friends do. Even today, as we arrive on the cusp of our *Journey to Oneness*, uniting Sisters around the globe into one Congregation, you continue to support us in advancing the mission.

Today, the Sisters work and collaborate with local ministries. Our sponsors ensure the mission of healing continues to serve all. Our schools excel in preparing students for life with strong educational experiences that include an emphasis on service. And we are seeing an exciting outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our community in the young women asking to join the Congregation.

In this issue of Caritas, you can read more about the power of Providence at work:

- Women discerning their vocations reveal what is in their hearts and thoughts as they search for God's desire for their lives.
- Sisters from Chile, Canada, Haiti, El Salvador, Egypt, the Philippines and the United States come together in Montreal to celebrate one united Congregation.
- Ministries throughout the Western United States that provide spiritual, physical and emotional support to children and adults in need.

Our local communities are diligently preparing for the new governance model. The Sisters have worked hard and, as always, show a dedication to the mission that reveals the power of God in their lives.

Thank you for continuing to involve yourselves with the Sisters of Providence – whether you are a benefactor who continues to support the Sisters of Providence mission, a caregiver or educator in one of our ministries, a volunteer, a Providence Associate living out the charism in everyday life or a member of the lay staff who serve the Sisters so well.

You have already or will soon be receiving a letter inviting you to help us through your donation and prayers to support the next generation of women discerning life as vowed religious. Please answer that call with all the generosity that your hearts and resources will allow.

In a world of change, we know that our Provident God stands with us, just as Our Creator stood with Blessed Emilie, Mother Joseph and Mother Bernarda!

Lovingly in Providence,

Sr. Barbara Schamber, SP, Provincial Leader
Sr. Jacqueline Fernandes, SP, Provincial Councilor
Sr. Margarita Hernandez, SP, Provincial Councilor

David Neisius, Provincial Treasurer
Elinor Alexander, Provincial Secretary



P.S. You don't have to wait for the letter to support vocations. Use this QR code or visit sistersofprovidence.net.



Sr. Barbara Schamber opened the Liturgy with stories of Sr. Anita and Sr. Mary.

Providence HS Celebrates Sisters Anita and Mary

The opening Mass for the academic year at Providence High School honored **Srs. Anita Butler** and **Mary Hawkins**. Several Sisters, Providence Associates and other guests who attended included Sr. Anita's cousin who lives nearby. The school has an extensive video and film classes and students from that program managed nearly all the technical details – from sound system to live stream. The chorus that last year sang at Carnegie Hall provided the liturgical music. The administration also provided a light reception after the liturgy.



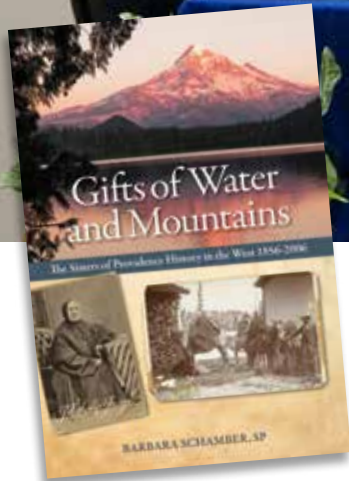
Attending the Mass with the student body were (left to right) Sr. Beverly Dunn, Sr. Jacqueline Fernandes, Sr. Hong Nga Nguyen, Sr. Teresa White and Sr. Barbara Schamber.



The Mass was the opening liturgy for the school year and included a blessing of the Associated Student Body and other school organizations.



Panelists discuss the history of the Sisters of Providence with **Sr. Barbara**.



University Panel Explores *Gift of Water and Mountains*

University of Providence panelists spent time at their annual Harvest Festival with Provincial Leader **Sr. Barbara Schamber** to break open her new book on the history of the Sisters in the West.

Gifts of Water and Mountains was published earlier this year. It details the first century and a half of the Sisters of Providence presence in the Western United States starting with Mother Joseph and other Sisters as they began their ministry in 1856 at Fort Vancouver, Oregon Territory.

The panel consisted of **A.J. Hoy**, vice president of mission integration, **Dr. Sarah Spangler** (theology) and **Dr. Michelle Miller** (psychology).

In the wide-ranging discussion, Sr. Barbara emphasized the long history of partnership between the Sisters and lay people. She pointed to the faculty at the university as a prime example of that collaboration.

The discussion also stressed how the book brings to life so many Sisters. Narrators often focus on the leadership role of Mother Joseph, explained Sr. Barbara, but the Sisters in remote ministries had to operate much on their own initiative given that communication took so long.

The University of Providence, formerly the University of Great Falls, offers both undergraduate and graduate level liberal arts programs and health programs. Many Sisters of Providence received their degrees from the school during its 90-year history. For more information visit uprovidence.edu.



Buy at Amazon.com: Use this QR code or visit tinyurl.com/GiftsWaterMountains



Our Lady of Sorrows Stations Revitalized

As you may know, the Sisters of Providence hold a special devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows which grew from the tremendous suffering of our foundress Blessed Emilie Gamelin, who lost her husband and children. For many years, Sisters used the stations of Our Lady of Sorrows on the patio of St. Joseph Residence for prayerful reflection. Over the years, the Seattle weather took its toll on the wooded stations until they were badly in need of refurbishment. In the fall, Sisters were able to celebrate the installation of the new refurbished stations which once again grace the grounds of SJR.

Join Us in a Spiritual and Financial Commitment to the Next Generation of Sisters of Providence

Dear Friends,

We have women right now who are ready to join the Sisters of Providence. The spirit of God is alive in them and their commitment is burning in their hearts.

We simply need to find the means to financially support them through their final discernment phase and, Provident God willing, their formation and noviate experiences.

As the final step before entering the community, women are asked to spend three to six months actively working in an existing ministry of the Sisters of Providence. However, because of strict immigration restrictions, it is nearly impossible to do that service in the United States.



Fortunately, such ministries as the BECA scholarship program and parish ministry in El Salvador will welcome the additional workers with open arms as will several SP programs in Chile.

To bring about this immediate boost to our ministries and to allow the discerners to be fully informed of the call they are accepting, we need to pay for the travel of several women and provide for a small stipend as they do their work. Room and board expenses will be shouldered by the community in El Salvador or Chile.

Blessed Emilie Gamelin emphasized the importance of dedication and selflessness in religious vocations. She believed that those who are called to serve should do so with love, compassion, and a strong commitment to helping those in need. Her words and actions underscore the idea that vocations are not just about personal fulfillment but about serving others and fulfilling God's will. We all have a stake in the success of vocations.

Please join us through financial support. The women profiled in these pages are just a few of many who are either ready to make the commitment to religious life or are already in formation.

The need is urgent. It is an investment in the future of the Sisters of Providence and our mission of caring for the most vulnerable among us.

Providence of God, we thank You for all!

Sr. Margarita Hernandez, Provincial Counselor
Sr. Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo, Vocations Coordinator

Please Donate Today!

Use this QR code or visit
sistersofprovidence.net to support
the urgent need for vocations.



The Discernment Journey

What goes through the hearts and mind of women considering life as vowed religious? How is the calling nurtured over a lifetime? What role does the family play in vocations? How can lay people support these women in their journeys?

Vocations are ignited quite often by watching a vowed woman serve others. The spark grows in their lives until they seriously begin investigating their future and listening to God.

For those wanting to learn more about that call, the Sisters of Providence, like most other orders, host Come and See retreats.

Women from Chad, Congo, Nigeria and Cameroon gathered at one such retreat earlier in the year for a few precious days of reflection and discernment. In spite of the noisy, smoke-covered African marketplace just down the hill, these women had the opportunity to spend quiet time listening to God and to meet one-on-one with vowed Sisters.

They are students, teachers and nurses, with a range of ages and living conditions.

"Life is busy," said Rita, "and the retreat gives us a chance to take a breath and focus on prayer and discernment.

"It's a time for recollection and, at the same time, to stop and listen to God, to what the Lord wants and, of course, in connection with the Sisters of Providence, to discover God's will. It's a time of grace."

In addition to the Come and See retreats, often Sisters will work individually with women contemplating a vocation. This is happening now in El Salvador where women see the exceptional ministries led by Sisters of Providence.

For a video series on the discernment journey, many of the women now considering entering the Congregation talked about their experiences.

(Right) Srs. Margarita Hernandez and Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo, who led the retreat in Cameroon, visited a nearby Poor Clares monastery after the retreat. Sr. Margarita worked with the English-speaking discerners and Sr. Marie-Thérèse, the women who spoke French.

The insights in the videos reveal the prayers and challenges of entering religious life:



Regina, Nigeria

Ministry and Vocation -

"I want to say that the zeal to continue as a religious strikes me when I see poor people on the streets, when I see people who need help so much; I really want to share my life with the people outside who are poor, who really need help from others."

– Regina, Nigeria



Rita, Chad

Signs of a Call to Religious Life -

"I've been searching for this way of the Lord for many years. I feel Love is drawing me to religious life and I must take the time to discern what God wants for me."

– Rita, Chad





Marili, El Salvador

Why the Sisters of Providence - "I like how they accompany the people who need it most, especially the support they have given to my family."

– Marili, El Salvador

Family Support - "[My family is] very, very supportive. My mom can pray for you over the phone. She will always call and tell me she is praying for me even when I was coming to this retreat. She had to pray so that I arrived safely."

– Michelle, Nigeria

Challenges - "Financially, it would be quite difficult for my family to support me in my discernment because

we are of low resources in many things, but they would completely support me in my decision, even if I have to go to another country for formation." – Marili, El Salvador

Above all, the women trust in a Provident God to see them through.

"Mother Emilie whenever there was nothing to feed the children would go to the Blessed Sacrament," recalls Michele about a story she heard during the retreat. "'Good God', she prayed, 'these are the children you gave me. I do not have means to take care of them.' Before she could finish, somebody was already at the door with food.

"That made me see how she had trust in God and that I should also have that kind of trust in God. Because God is always faithful with us and always provides for us."



Michelle, Nigeria



The videos are posted on the Sisters of Providence YouTube page and social media platforms. You can view the short, one-minute clips here:

youtube.com/user/SOPMotherJosephProv





(Left) Mary, Queen of the World Cathedral was filled with Sisters, friends and staff from around the world. The Church is patterned directly after St. Peter's in Rome. (Right) Congregational Leader **Sr. Alba Letelier** and Vice-Postulator **Sr. Karin Dufault** open the liturgy to celebrate the opening of the formal investigation of the presumed miracle. At the conclusion of the Mass, all those involved took a solemn vow to faithfully perform their duties and signed documents that will be retained with the official sainthood archives.

Sisters Celebrate Unity with Eye to the Future

Sisters, Associates, friends and staff gathered from around the world to celebrate and kick-off the new governance structure for the Sisters of Providence.

The three-day celebration began with Mass at Mary, Queen of the World Cathedral in Montreal, Canada, not far from the Sisters' motherhouse. Archbishop Christian Lépine celebrated the liturgy which included the start of a formal inquiry into a presumed miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Emilie Gamelin.

Over the course of the gathering, participants enjoyed the world premiere of a play commissioned just for the celebration. In five acts focusing on episodes of the life of Blessed Emilie, Mother Bernarda and Mother Joseph, the actors traced the history of the Sisters of Providence from their founding in 1843 until present day. After each act, the audience reflected on which lessons meant the most to them today and how they would live those lessons as they continue the mission today.

The event closed with a ritual of both remembrance and sending forth.

On January 1, 2025, the governance of Mother Joseph in the Western United States, Mother Bernarda Morin in Chile and Holy Angels and Emilie Gamelin in Canada will be unified into a single Congregational governance.

The process, nicknamed *Journey to Oneness*, has been ongoing since approved by the General Conference in 2022.



Actors portraying Mother Gamelin and the early Sisters of Providence.



Some of the Sisters, Providence Associates, Sponsors and staff who attended.

On January 1, 2025, the governance of Mother Joseph in the Western United States, Mother Bernarda Morin in Chile and Holy Angels and Emilie Gamelin in Canada will be unified into a single Congregational governance.



Sr. Maggie Pastro takes part in the closing ritual.



Brenda (Velasco) Mizenko, PA, and her husband moved to the Black Hills in 2013 and have been teaching at St. Elizabeth Seton Elementary since. She was in the noviate 2000-2003.

From the Hive to the Classroom Children Learn the lessons of Laudato si' from beekeeping

By Brenda (Velasco) Mizenko, PA

Never in my life did I imagine I'd ever become a beekeeper. Yet here I was in a full bee suit with honey bees buzzing all around me about to remove frames from their hives.

Thanks to a grant with the South Dakota Honey Bee Educators Cohort, I was able to bring a honeybee program to St. Elizabeth Seton Elementary School in Rapid City, South Dakota, where I teach. With the Black Hills behind our school, we found the perfect location for our apiary. My fifth graders learned about the importance of honey bees to our environment and how bees make their honey.

A colleague, who is an experienced beekeeper, helped me to remove the frames from the hives. Later my students uncapped the honey with a special scraper, spun the frames with a hand cranked extractor, and poured out the raw honey into a filtered honey bucket.

The honey sat in the bucket overnight and the following day, the children poured delicious golden honey into various jars and bottles. All in all, the students poured 112 jars and bottles of "Seton Honey" which they distributed throughout our school district.



Fifth graders getting ready to pour the honey.

It was the perfect lesson in science and sustainability and most importantly, teaching about caring for God's creation.



Serving the Table of the King this year at the health system headquarters were (left to right) **Sr. Jacqueline Fernandes**, provincial councilor, and **Dougal Hewlitt**, chief mission office for the system. **Sr. Bea LaFramboise** (masked) is being served her lunch.

“Let us never forget the poor. In them, we find Jesus, the same Jesus who will judge us at the end of our lives.”

– Emilie Gamelin

Advancing the Mission Together

More than 100 ministries are supported this year by the **Emilie Gamelin Mission Fund** and the Sisters of Providence Leadership Team. These organizations serve people who are without homes, hungry, impoverished or abused. The grants help the organizations continue advancing the mission of the Sisters of Providence throughout the Western United States.

Afrique Future
 Afrique Future - Mother Joseph Health
 All Saints Catholic School
 Annunciation House
 Captain Grey STEM Elementary School - Pasco
 Caritas Court Free Little Pantry
 Castello Dominican Missionaries
 Catherine Place
 Catholic Charities of Central Washington
 Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington
 Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley
 Catholic Community Services Housing Services
 Western Washington
 Catholic Relief Services
 Catholic School Endowment Foundation of Oregon
 Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate

Central Washington Catholic Foundation
 Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST)
 Cornelia Connelly Center
 Cristo Rey Jesuit High School
 Daughter of Mary
 Faith Action Network
 Family Promise of Spokane
 Feeding America
 Fig Tree, The
 Food Bank at St. Mary's, The
 Fulcrum Foundation
 Future Church
 Gathering Place
 Genesis Project
 Giving Voice
 Great Falls Catholic High School

Habitat for Humanity Renton
 Holy Family Bilingual Catholic School - Seattle
 Housing Hope
 Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center
 Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest
 Jesuits Refugee Services USA
 Jubilee Women's Center
 Kids Community Dental Clinic
 La Casa Hogar
 Los Angeles House of Ruth
 Mary's Pence
 Meals on Wheels - Spokane
 Meals on Wheels - Portland
 MEND
 Mercy Housing
 Mexican American Catholic College (MACC)
 Monastery of St. Gertrude
 Mt. St. Vincent Foundation
 National Catholic Reporter
 National Religious Vocation Conference
 NeighborWorks - Great Falls
 NETWORK
 New Beginnings Ministry
 Noah's Ark
 North by Northeast Community Health Center
 Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
 Olive Crest
 Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish School
 Our Place
 Outside In
 Pax Christi
 Pax Christi International
 Poor Clares of Montana
 Portland Rescue Mission
 Poverello Center Inc.
 Providence High School
 Providence Hospice of Seattle Foundation
 Providence Inland Northwest Foundation
 Providence Milwaukie Foundation
 Providence Mount St. Vincent
 Providence Newberg Health Foundation
 Providence Senior and Community Services Heritage
 House at Market and ElderPlace
 Providence Southwest Foundation- Centralia
 Washington
 Providence Willamette Falls Medical Center
 Recovery Café
 Roncalli International
 Second Harvest- Spokane
 Shalom Ministries
 Sisters of St. Joseph in Urcos, Peru
 SnowCap
 SOA (School of Americas) Watch
 Sophia Way, The
 Sr. Nakatudde Catherine Correth
 St. James Cathedral Charity Golf Tournament
 St. Joseph Marquette Catholic School

St. Thomas Child Family Center
 St. Vincent de Paul - Great Falls, Montana
 St. Bonaventure Indian Mission and School
 Transitions
 University of Providence
 Valley Community Center
 Vanessa Behan
 Washington Office of Latin America (WOLA)
 West Seattle Veterans Center
 WestSide Baby
 Westside Neighbors Shelter
 White Center Food Bank
 Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual
 Xavier Society for the Blind
 Yakima WYCA
 Youth Care James W. Ray Orion Center



**“What gratitude do
 I not owe Thee for
 so many benefits.”**

– Emilie Gamelin

*Blessed Emilie
 Gamelin,
 Foundress of
 the Sisters of
 Providence.
 Illustration by
 Clara Cheung*

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Community, Spirituality & Ministries

The Sisters of Providence are women of all ages who come from many countries and cultures. We are dedicated – in the spirit of humility, simplicity and charity – to serve those most in need. Are you discerning your vocation? Does our charism speak to your heart?



If you would like to learn more about life as a Sister of Providence, contact **Sr. Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo, SP**, at 206-937-4600 ext. 1226 or 206-225-6828, or email her at sprovidence1856@gmail.com.



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**Sisters of
Providence**
MOTHER JOSEPH PROVINCE



A Christmas Prayer

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace; enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust and our quarreling into forgiveness.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way may peace triumph at last, and may the words “division”, “hatred” and “war” be banished from the heart of every man and woman. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be “brother”, and our way of life will always be that of: Shalom, Peace, Salaam! Amen.

–Pope Francis



Please use the enclosed envelope to make
your gift today in support of the many
ministries of the Sisters of Providence.