



Many Souls... One Journey:

Franciscan Sisters of the Poor living the Charism of
Bl. Frances Schervier yesterday, today & tomorrow...

If you would like to get to know us better...



The first step getting to know us better is to meet the SFP Community while you discern if religious life is the best way for you to live out your life in a healthy, happy and holy way. To find out if you are 'at home' with us, you can meet some of us "virtually" in these pages. Or, if you want some 'real-time' with us, come to some of our events, volunteer for some of our ministries. Volunteer experiences can be arranged with **Franciscans for the Poor (Contact Chris Lemmon at 513-761-9040 ext 110)** and **Park Slope Christian Help, Inc (Contact Sr. Mary Maloney at 718-237-2962)**. We would be delighted to get to know you...and to invite you to become part of our community of caring -- for one another, for the earth and all its creatures, and for our good God. Visit our website (www.franciscansisters.org)! Call us (513 761-9040 ext 132). We're waiting to hear from you!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Franciscan Sisters of the Poor
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513-761-9040 ext: 132

GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE POOR

In 2008, in celebration of the 150th Anniversary of our foundation in America, we published a booklet chronicling the lives of some of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. So many people were interested, and so many people wanted to know more, that we decided to continue to share our stories with you so that you could get to know us better -- and also to give you a better idea of what it means, what our lives are like as women religious in today's Church.



From left to right: Sr. Gianna Giovannangeli (Italy), Sr. Joanne Schuster (USA), Sr. Laura Cantello (Senegal), Sr. Tiziana Merletti (Congregational Minister), Sr. Marilyn Trowbridge (First Councilor), Sr. Anna Ingoglio (Second Councilor) and Sr. Maria Helena Carvalho (Brazil).

• **Sr. Tiziana Merletti** is the Congregational Minister of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. Sr. Tiziana was born in Abruzzo, Italy. She joined the congregation in 1981, and graduated from the University of Abruzzo in Jurisprudence in 1984. She also earned a doctorate in canon law from the Lateran University in Rome in 1992. Prior to her election in 2004, she worked as coordinator of activities for young people, and volunteered to work with people who had AIDS. She also served as Membership development director, and taught Canon Law. She also has served as Regional Minister for Italy and Senegal.

• **Sr. Marilyn Trowbridge**, First Councilor., is a graduate of the University of South Carolina with a Masters in Nursing and a certificate as a Family Nurse Practitioner. Sr. Marilyn studied Spirituality at the St. Louis University, the Mercy Center in California and currently is a student with the Shalom Institute. She also served as Regional Minister for the U.S. after which she engaged in spiritual direction, youth ministry and has served on many boards of directors

• **Sr. Anna Ingoglio** was elected Second Councilor. She received her baccalaureate in theology and a licentiate in spirituality from the Pontifical Antonianum University. She served as a missionary in Senegal, and most recently she served as the coordinator of a house for the homeless in Messina, Italy.

• **Sr. Joanne Schuster** is Congregational Councilor for the U.S. Area. Poor. Sister Joanne is a registered nurse who also holds a Doctorate in the Administration of Health Systems from the Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. Prior to serving in this capacity, she was President and C.E.O. of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Health System for 20 years, and President of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Foundation.

• **Sr. Gianna Giovannangeli**, Congregational Councilor for Italy, received her degree in theology at the Pontifical Istituto Teologico in northern Italy, based in Padova, and her Master of Science of Formation from the Istituto di Psicologia del Pontificio Ateneo della Gregoriano. She taught at the National Institute for the Handicapped, and for a number of years worked in formation with the young sisters in Italy. She has always dealt with youth and with spiritual formation of youth.

• **Sr. Laura Cantello**, Congregational Councilor for Senegal, was born in San Andrea, Italy, and entered the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor in 1978. She holds a Degree in Medicine from the University of Messina, Italy, as well as a Degree in Theology from the University of Assisi. In 1991, Sr. Laura traveled to Senegal, Africa where she became the Director of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Health Care and Maternity Clinics. Sr. Laura also teaches Midwifery at the University of Dakar.

• **Sr. Maria Helena Carvalho**, Congregational Councilor for Brazil, was born, reared and educated in Mineiros, Goiana, Brazil. She holds a degree in Social Work from the Catholic University In Goiana, Goias Brazil. Prior to her work in leadership, Sr. Maria Helena was a social worker in Pires do Rio, Brazil where she worked with the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor Job training program for young girls, the women's empowerment programs and the youth programs.

"To live in community, you have to give, to give-in and to forgive."

Bl. Frances Schervier

I am Sr. Margie Ferri, and many years ago, in the beautiful historic city of Charleston, South Carolina, I was born. My family, at that time, consisted of my parents, my grandmother, her two unmarried children and three of us. With the passage of years two more were born into our family. Every summer my great-grandmother would come to live with us. We looked forward to her coming because she would gather us together and sitting in the swing on the porch would tell great stories. These wonderful childhood days had a great influence in shaping my life.

I believe that I felt the first stirrings of a call to religious life in 4th grade. I was sure then that I would be a religious sister, but it took a while. I finished high school, worked for a few years and went on to nursing school. I worked in various fields of nursing and enjoyed life in general. Then, out of the blue, a friend asked me to accompany her to Greenville, SC, where she had an interview at St. Francis Hospital. I went with her, and it was there that I met the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. Their simplicity and joyfulness attracted me...so, my friend got the position and I applied for entrance into the Community. The day of my final vows was September 8, 1960. What a glorious day! And my family and friends were there to celebrate with me. I was very joyful because, in spite of difficulties, I had finally given my life into God's hands. I was missioned to St. Michael Hospital in Newark, NJ but when we received word that the Congregation had accepted a mission in Brazil, I felt inspired to volunteer.

I was chosen to be in the first group to start the mission. We were five, and on December 11, 1960 we left for Brazil. We arrived on December 12th, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A few days after arrival we found ourselves studying Portuguese at the language school in Anapolis, Goias where we lived. After language school, we were on our way to open our first mission in Brazil. Upon arrival in Pires do Rio, we stopped at Sacred Heart Church, where the whole town came out to greet us. I think every one of them gave us a big Brazilian hug of welcome! We worked among the very poor; visiting the sick in their homes, helping in the parish soup kitchen and orphanage.

Being the only nurse in the group, I learned that I was to open both a clinic and a ten bed maternity hospital for the poor. We had no equipment, but in time, with the help of God, and some of the lay women, as well as our sisters in the US, we were able to open a maternity hospital.

In 1977, I was elected to leadership in the Congregation and, after 17 years in Brazil, I returned to the U.S. I also worked in various ministries in NY and NJ and enjoyed each one very much. While in Jersey, I celebrated 50 years of religious life. When I renewed my vows during Mass, I was aware of how much more meaning they held for me. I realized that I had grown over time and gave thanks to God for His working in my life. My life has been a happy one, and I pray that I continue to deepen my relationship with God, and give to all those with whom I come in contact, the love within my heart.



Sr. Margie Ferri, SFP



Sr. Mary Atonita Mettert. SFP

I was born in 1927, New Castle, Indiana, the youngest of five children: one sister and three brothers, all of whom are now deceased. When I was five years old my mother was found in a coma and was hospitalized for three months. My father asked the nurses if I could come to visit my mother, so I could see that she was ill and was all right. After visiting hours, my father would take me so I could look at my mother and talk to her, even though she would not respond. During these visits I would watch the nurses and I began to think how neat it would be to be a nurse. My father was always doing nice things for all of us, anything to make the hurt go away...For example, I have always loved cats and when I was 10, someone ran over my cat during the night. The next morning, my father had a hard time telling me about it. But when he went to work that day (he worked in a casket factory) he made a tiny coffin and brought it home with him...and we buried my cat in it.

We had no Catholic school in New Castle, so I went to public grade school. A neighbor told my mother about the Aspirins at St. Clare Convent in Cincinnati, we traveled there and I enrolled. However, in December of 1941, my father died suddenly, and it changed our whole life style. I could not return to the Aspirancy; my brother enlisted in the Marines, and I had to stay home to be with my mother. I attended a public high school for the rest of the semester, but in September of 1942, my mother insisted that I return to the Aspirancy.

It was during this time that I kept hearing a little voice saying that I should become a religious...and, while it took a while, I discovered that I could be both a nurse and a religious if I entered the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. So, on July 16, 1944, my mother reluctantly brought me to St. Clare's Convent where I became a Postulant. The highlight of my life was when I made my final profession in May of 1952.

My dream of becoming a nurse has not been fulfilled, but I have worked among the poor and the elderly, and others who needed help. I became an accountant, then hospital administrator and lastly a nursing home administrator. In my work, I found that the poor elderly were 'slipping through the cracks' and I was determined to find a way to help them. In 1992, I launched a home for the independent elderly, **Our Lady of the Woods, Inc.** This gives the elderly a place to live in security, with companionship and access to nutritious meals. After 16 years caring for the elderly at Our Lady of the Woods, in 2008 I retired and passed the ministry on to my successor.

Sanctity consists in the union of our wills with the Divine; when that is complete and perfect, then there is also great sanctity.

- Blessed Frances Schervier



Sr. Karen Hartman, SFP

I am the daughter of Frank and Catherine Rorick Hartman: the second of six siblings. I have two loving sisters and three adorable brothers. I attended St. Peter Catholic School Fort Wayne, Indiana, then on to Central Catholic High School for my freshman year. I first met the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor in the summer of 1951 through a friend, Pat Holly, who had two aunts who are Franciscans. The Sisters were visiting Fort Wayne on a recruitment tour for the Aspirancy... In grade school, I was hounded by the Sisters to join their order of teaching Sisters...but teaching was not my “bag”, so I refused – persistently! And I refused to talk about it. Now, I found myself, on July 16th of 1951 being asked to join the Aspirancy at St. Clare Convent in Cincinnati, OH. By the close of the evening, I was signed up, measured for the aspirant’s uniform, and a date was set to come to St. Clare’s and attend Our Lady of the Angels High School!

The charism of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor is healing – and from early childhood I’d wanted to be a nurse and thought this was God’s plan for me. After graduation from high school, I entered the community. The years of postulancy and novitiate passed very quickly and soon I was assigned to enter St. Elizabeth Hospital School of Nursing in Dayton, OH. I was delighted!

Through the years, I graduated with a diploma in nursing, then continued studies at the University of Dayton earning a BSN, then attended Ohio State University earning an MS in Nursing Administration -- and later graduated from Xavier University with an MA in Theology. My life has taken many turns -- from staff nurse to head nurse to supervisor to director of nursing to associate administrator, and then to the chaplaincy, and then Program Director and Director of Development for the volunteer program as well as Director of Associate Relationship. Each experience has shown me the goodness of God and how graced I have been to minister in so many capacities.

Recently, one of my most exciting experiences was a trip to Bay St. Louis, MS to assist with the gulf coast to assist at Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church. We were privileged to meet many faith-filled people -- who had suffered so much loss and yet were eager to share their life and stories of survival with us. We shared prayers, greetings of peace, meals, expectations, hugs, and tears with the few returning residents. When the day of departure arrived everyone expressed the desire to return in 2007. And the folks extended a very warm welcome for our return. So-o-o, we came back again in 2007. I am so grateful for having had the grace to return to Mississippi and minister to the people and be present to those who sometimes feel discouraged because so much of the rubble still remains! I am now actively and officially working for peace and justice...

I hope and I know. . . that in your hearts you want only that the holy will of God be fulfilled in you. "

Bl. Frances Schervier



Sr. Mary David Mulroy, SFP

I, Patricia Ann Mulroy, saw the light of day way back in 1925, in the little town of Reading Ohio. I was the third oldest of seven children. Due to the Depression and a job opportunity our family moved to Lancaster Ohio, which became home". Growing up during the ensuing years, there is nothing spectacular to relate. Of the children, four married and had families; my brother and I entered Religious Life, he the Franciscans (O FM) of Cincinnati, OH and I entered the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. One brother winged his way to heaven as an infant. My mother and dad were wonderful parents, but as usual, we children didn't realize how wonderful they were until we were much older. Thoughts of becoming a religious began in my high school years. High school is and was a great time of life. Consequently my Religious leanings were like an "on and on desire. That is, until I met this Dominican Sister. She took me under her wing in my senior year and with her gentle prodding and encouragement, I decided that I would pursue it. But, where and what? I knew that I did not want to teach, maybe nursing? You might say, also, that I was influenced by an uncle and brother who were both Franciscan Priests and an aunt who was a sister of Notre Dame de Namur. So, it came to pass that I decided on a Franciscan nursing congregation. I sent my letter off to the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor in Cincinnati, OH, asking for admission.

Oh, happy day! The answer came in the affirmative so a date was set. August 15, 1943 was the date chosen and so I came to be. On entering, I found that I was in a group of five young girls with the same aspirations that I had. We spent our time in household duties, instructions on how to become a Religious, how to pray and meditate so that we would be fortified with God's graces to continue on this chosen road. So, time passed until the day of days came when we professed our perpetual commitment, and I became Sr. Mary David Mulroy for good.

I did become a nurse and worked in this profession in various Hospitals of the Congregation. In 1961 our congregation opened a Mission in Brazil, South America. I volunteered and was accepted. I and another sister left in June of 1964 to sail away to Brazil. In Brazil we had a maternity hospital, day center for children, and clinics. I worked in all but most of my time was in the day centers. It was a gratifying time and I enjoyed every minute of my stay there. After some years I decided to return to the United States and in

September of 1989 I did just that. Since my return I have lived at St. Clare Convent in Cincinnati, OH, where I have worked as a Volunteer in our residence for the elderly. Also, I did volunteer work in our archive department and assisted in the finance office. In 1999 with the possibility of heart surgery, I retired from active Ministries. Due to the odds given I decided against having heart surgery. I continue to be a retiree, for which I am most grateful for it affords ample time to pray and thank God for all I have and am receiving. I really am enjoying my retirement! Bless all who read this.

What is mine through Your gift, O Lord, let it be Yours through my gift!

Bl. Frances Schervier



Sr. Bonnie Steinlage, SFP

I, Sr. Bonnie Steinlage, became a Sister because I wanted to do good works and serve God. When I was a youngster, I recall the Sisters coming to our area (Mercer County) to collect food to feed the patients at Old St Mary's Hospital. I recall the anticipation my parents had when the priest would tell the people at St Henry Catholic Church that the Sisters would be coming to collect: this was a big deal! I remember being shy (afraid!) and would hide behind my mother when they came! I'll never forget the day they came and all my parents had to give was 50 cents. Mother was embarrassed because we didn't have any more money, but we gave all we had. My parents often talked about the good works the Sisters did among the poor, and that's why I chose to become a sister.

I chose to become a Franciscan Sister of the Poor because a friend of mine entered here. I didn't think I was smart enough to be a Sister, but when the SFPs accepted my friend - who got lower grades in school than me - I thought 'if they accepted her, they'll accept me! And they did!

I have had so many highlights in my life as a religious nurse and hospital chaplain. I have been with many persons at defining moments in their lives. More recently, some of my highlights as a 'religious cosmetologist' for the poor, sick and homeless, is to have been instrumental in inspiring people in the beauty industry -- John Paul DeJoria, CEO of *John Paul Mitchell Systems*, Winn Claybaugh, founder of the John Paul Mitchell Schools, and Fredric Holzberger, former distributor of *Aveda Salon Products*. Also, I have cherished the support of my community - ranging from putting me through cosmetology school at the beginning, to voting to formally sponsor 'Franciscan Haircuts from the Heart.' In addition, this ministry has received funding through our Foundation, to supporting me financially while I do this work

I manage the *Franciscan Daymaker Salon*, which is a walk in salon in a very poor section of the inner city. I 'work behind the chair' four days a week here, plus help manage the *Franciscan Haircuts from the Heart* voucher program. I also do 'house calls' for homebound family members and hair care at Mercy Mt Airy. I stand on holy ground in the salon, as I shampoo or cut and style hair. And to hear someone say, "I feel human again!"... There are no words to describe how I feel! THIS is to really live!!!

*Everything that you do in the service of charity is truly prayer
and the very best prayer.*

- Blessed Frances Schervier



Sr. Jo-Ann Jackowski, SFP

I really thought it would be fun to be a sister! Truly! I was in 8th grade, choosing which high school to go to. I knew my 1st and 2nd choice, but was at a loss for a 3rd choice. The sister suggested the high school where the girls went who would become sisters. I had been interested in being a sister off and on since I was 3 years old. So when one of the Sisters mentioned a special school for people interested in entering the convent, I ran home at lunchtime and asked my mother; she said yes so I put it on my form – and, as they say, the rest is history! The school was too far away to travel to daily, so I would have to board – and I thought living at a boarding school would be great. Once I left home at 14, I couldn't return – my baby sister needed my bed and there was no room for me – I slept on the couch during vacations. I met

Franciscan Sisters of the Poor when I was Director of Formation for my previous congregation. When I took our novices to the Inter-Franciscan Novitiate Program in Warwick, NY, I was struck by the creativity, the joy and the authenticity of the sisters. As my own need for change grew, I thought about which of the other congregations I knew, and felt attracted to, would welcome me. I knew I wanted to remain Franciscan – and I wanted a group that was open and progressive.

I remembered the SFPs and my experiences with them and called. This is what I was looking for – It was my “pearl of great price”, and deep in my heart I felt a certainty that this is a group of women with whom I would continue to grow and be challenged. There are many high points in my life as a religious. Teaching elementary school for my early years is one – I think working with children, especially on the junior high level, called me to reflect and struggle to be authentic. You could hide with little ones and adults, but young teens can see through masks we wear and they push all the right buttons for honesty and growth. Also, the day I renewed my perpetual vows as a Franciscan Sister of the Poor will always be a shining moment for me. I planned the liturgy and shaped the ritual within the framework of the ceremony and Mass – the songs, the prayers, the movement from Baptismal font to the center of the altar, the words I spoke as part of my renewal of commitment. I live and work in Hoboken, NJ, offering spiritual programs, prayer rituals and mini-retreats in the parishes here. I am also on the Leadership Team for the Associate program, serving the associates in the NY/NJ area. In 2009 I moved to Cincinnati Ohio where I am helping to develop spiritual programming for Young Adult Services and working in the area of vocations.

*A holy love for my neighbor burned within me. I
felt a great desire to seek out and love the Lord in
the poor, the sick and the unfortunate."*

Bl. Frances Schervier



Sr. Mary Maloney, FSP

I always wanted to be a nurse, get married and have 10 children, and go to China as a missionary...but God intervened! As a teenager, I volunteered at St. Peter's Hospital in Brooklyn. There I visited St. Peter's chapel, worked on two 12-bed wards ...and I saw the long lines of people waiting for the sisters to give food to the hungry each day. I wanted to help, and I 'heard' God calling me. God has blessed me absolutely! After getting my RN, I worked at St. Peter's and attended St. John's University at night and earned a BSN and then a Masters degree in the Administration of Nursing Services. I then spent the next ten years at St. Michael's Hospital as Director of Nursing and as Director of our School of Nursing...but still I yearned to serve God's poor directly.

So I volunteered for our missions in Brazil – and I spent 7 years there among God's poorest and sickest children. Working with our sisters in Brazil was a beautiful gift and the people gave me more than I could ever have given them! Then I was elected to our council, and returned to New York – serving on a council led by Sr. Rose Margaret Delaney. Following my term of office, I served as Executive Director of the Franciscan Federation located in Chicago IL. At nights I went to school and subsequently I earned a second masters in Franciscan Studies from St. Bonaventure University.

Then, I volunteered to go to Senegal to form our first mission in Africa with Sr. Elizabeth. I spent another 7 years ministering to people in small villages, establishing clinics and maternal-child programs. How I rejoiced to be with God's beloved poor again!

After I returned from Senegal, I got a call from a Franciscan Brother asking me to relieve a sister working at Park Slope Christian Help for a year. The purpose of CHIPS is to empower the poor, immigrants, and low-income working people...and within 3 months, I took over the management. One year became 21 years...and still counting! Religious life is a life commitment and there are no words to describe the experience. It's wonderful! God is always at your side. This really is the GOOD LIFE!!

*Let us thank God and love Him with all our hearts for these
great, exceedingly great, graces. . .* Bl. Frances Schervier



Sr. Mary Madonna Hoying

I am Sr. Madonna Hoying, and I decided to become a sister when making a retreat in high school. I knew very little about religious life at the time, I've learned over the years! I had two older sisters who were nurses, and liked what they did. I knew I did not want to teach - and so I chose to enter a 'nursing order' - the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. But, as only God can plan, I was asked to teach science and math in the SFP Aspirancy High School. Five years later, when the Aspirancy closed, I was sent to teach in the school of nursing - until a high school religion teacher was needed in St. Henry, Ohio. (☺) So, I changed my Masters from science to theology! And I have "taught" ever since - and loved it from the first time I set my foot in the classroom! God DOES know what is best for us because I think it was God's way to get me into the Franciscan family. I am thrilled to be a Franciscan sister because our major call is to live -- and to BE the gospel of Jesus!

The highlights of my years as a religious came from the people and relationships I've been graced to form. Whether it was the aspirants or student nurses or the great St. Henry teenagers and adults, my years with them were a blessing! Then two terms in leadership (when I lived in Brooklyn, New York) brought other wonderful people into my life. After leadership, I continued to meet grace-full people as I gave retreats in various religious congregations of both women and men. Indeed, my life has been full of many beautiful and great "sisters and brothers"—with whom I continue to journey! At present, I continue to be enriched by my ministry to the "spiritually poor" in works of spiritual direction, retreats, scripture and theology classes to new members of many Congregations and also teaching many of my own Sisters and Associates (whom I love!).

It's wonderful and amazing what God does in our lives when we are willing to let God lead us. Our wounded world and Church are in such need of peace and love - and **NOTHING** can bring healing better than God's love -- which comes through when we live the Gospel and try to be Jesus' love to others. As religious, we aim to do what Vatican II called us to do: "*In essentials, UNITY; in non-essentials, FREEDOM; and in ALL THINGS, CHARITY.*" Yes, come and join us to bring God's love!"

I grew up in White Oak, a suburb of Cincinnati Ohio. My family was part of St. James Parish, and we children attended St. James School. Our lives revolved around the parish, as did those of most of our neighbors. Our family included my sisters Mary (who became a nurse) and Bernadette (who was only 9 months old when I entered the convent) and my brothers Paul (who became a priest) and Frankie (who was born with Down's Syndrome). Because there were no Catholic High School for girls in the area, I went to the Immaculate Conception Academy in Oldenburg Indiana.

Following high school, I entered that Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. I really never had an opportunity to know them before I entered, but when I was about 9 years of age, my mother was a patient at St. Mary Hospital – and she told me often about the wonderful care the Sisters had given her, and about their unquestioning service to the poor. After my novitiate and first vows, I was sent to the Cincinnati College of Pharmacy. Following graduation, I became the chief pharmacist at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Dayton OH. In 1954, I was sent to Rome to study theology at Regina Mundi School of Theology, following which I returned to the States and taught theology to the young sisters as well as to the girls in our high school Aspirancy.

In 1968 we had our special general chapter in Rome and, at the end of it, many changes! Among the changes (at least for me) was that I remained in Rome with our young Italian sisters and delighted in the growth and development of the Italian region.

In 1974, I was elected to the General Council and moved back the Brooklyn NY where I remained for the next 11 years as a member of the Council. Then it was back to Italy again for the opening of a House in Assisi – and on to Senegal for a few months. As a young woman, I felt called to the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor because I wanted very much to serve the poor! Throughout my life I have been inspired particularly by these words of Blessed Frances Schervier: "I recognized my Divine Lord in the poor and suffering as if I had seen Him in them with my own eyes." Yet, as I look back over my life, I realize that I have had very few opportunities to give direct service to the poor. However, I also realize that in being open to what the Lord was asking of me, I was very often in a position to encourage and facilitate other Sisters service to the poor...serving those who serve the people of God! Sometimes I think, "You have duped me, O Lord, and I have let myself be duped!"(Jeremiah 20: 7-9)

And, along with the prophet, I am convinced that the Lord leads us in many, often strange ways to fulfill His Will. I think the most important thing is to be truly open, and to respond as Our Lady did in her "Fiat..." Let it be done unto me according to Your Word!" So today, still following God's Will, I am part of the community at Pincroft House of Peace in Cincinnati preparing for a Taize prayer service this Friday...And the words come to me from an old Italian song: "Today I have understood what life is – a marvelous adventure – because today I have understood what is love!"



Sister Marie Clement Edrich, SFP

May our risen Lord help us to rise to a new life so that as He arose from the tomb and left behind the winding-sheet that covered Him, we too may free ourselves from every hindrance and raise ourselves up toward Him." Bl. Frances Schervier



Sister Armida Sison, SFP

Sr. Armida Sison says that ‘To live out the Gospel through Franciscan values and to make the healing presence of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor known wherever I am...’ pretty well sums up my commitment to life as a religious sister. In 1992, I came to the United States, leaving behind my native country and my parents, two brothers and four sisters, relatives, and friends.

I worked for a law firm in New Jersey and in my free time, I volunteered at St. Mary’s Hospital in Hoboken. It was there that I met Sr. Felicitas Lichtenauer, who was managing the hospital gift shop. Her humility inspired me to explore religious life. Often, Sr. Felicitas would introduce me to people who came to the gift shop by saying, “This is Armi. She has a vocation but she does not know it yet.” Although I protested, I had always thought about a religious vocation, and in 1997, I began a period of serious discernment with the Vocation Director of the congregation and decided to enter as a candidate the following year.

I was sent to Cincinnati, Ohio, to serve my ministry year. I coordinated an After-School Program at a school run by Franciscan friars until 2001, when I made my first profession. In September 2002, I moved to New York and began teaching religious education to kindergarten and first grade children. On February 5, 2006, *World Day for Consecrated Life*, I made my final vows during a Eucharistic celebration at a mass held at St. Patrick’s Church.

At the conclusion of the Ceremony, Sr. Tiziana Merletti presented me with a special gift -- Sr. Felicitas’ ring for me to wear as a symbol of my commitment. Then, all the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor present gathered around me, extending their hands and singing the Blessing of St. Clare, “May Almighty God bless you... May God pour forth all graces on you abundantly, and in heaven, may God place you among the Saints.” I am now looking forward to joining two Franciscan Sisters of the Poor from Italy as we start a new Foundation in the Philippines – my native country. So I have come full circle – in some wonderful ways!

"The more freely you give yourself to God, the more intimately He will communicate Himself to you."

Bl. Frances Schervier

I am Sr. Adelaide Link, born in Carthagena, Ohio in 1935 into a deeply religious family of four brothers and three sisters. My sister, Martha (Sr. Jean) became an Aspirant to the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor when I was only 8 years old. I went to an elementary school with four grades in one room. I entered the Aspirancy in what would have been my freshman year of high school, but it wasn't until my second year that I decided I would become a Franciscan Sister of the Poor.

Sister Marguerite, one of my teachers, put me in touch with the Provincial. We decided that I should enter the Novitiate in March of 1951...I knew then that this was a lifelong commitment – and I still have that inner sense of knowing! I began my ministry in dietetics, went on to study nursing,, and finally earned a masters degree in social work.

I have served in Dayton OH, Detroit , MI, Brazil SA, Senegal Africa – and I have been serving since 1989 in Chinle, AZ on the Navaho Reservation at Talbot House Catholic Charities, and now I am working near Dayton, Ohio in a food pantry and homeless shelter. Over the years, I certainly have learned to incorporate the meaning of the "Serenity Prayer" – God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference – in my daily work! I have learned different ways to think and pray. From this, I developed a therapeutic model for healing; letting go of the 'baggage' of life and learning to claim – and acclaim – one's strengths in the goodness of God, our Creator.

My commitment to our charism, to heal the wounds of a suffering humanity, has deepened through the development of this circular, holistic healing model which incorporates the four directions with Mother Earth and Father Sky and all life in a spiritual hoop that never ends. Today I am serving in homeless shelters, homes for low-income elderly and social service centers in Cincinnati OH.



Sister Adelaide Link, SFP

*O great God, how shall we ever be able to render
Thee even in a slight measure some poor thanks
for all that Thou hast done for us?"* Mother Frances Schervier



Sr. Mary Lawrence Vanderburg

I was born in Columbus, Ohio to a moderately poor family. I had three brothers and four sisters and, for the most part, we had only each other for companions. Dad worked during the day hauling coal and he also had a small farm where he grew vegetables to sell at the market and for our family use. My Mom was a wonderful cook and housekeeper and she spent the summer canning and preparing foods for the winter. I attended Catholic grade school and a county high school. During my last years in high school, I worked at St. Francis Hospital where several of the sisters were particular influential ...and it was here that I first gave any thought to becoming a religious; however it was several years before I entered. God has a way of getting to you and He kept nudging me! My religious life has been filled with any rewarding events.

I was privileged to attend college at the University of Dayton and later at Xavier University where I earned a Masters in Hospital Administration. Outstanding among all of the wonderful and interesting things I have done, however, is the day of my Final Profession, when I gave myself wholly to God. It was a day of much joy, peace and love. My family was there to share my joy and the beginning of a wonderful life." After 55 years in active ministry, I returned to St. Clare Convent to retire. This was short-lived as I was soon elected to be Community Minister. This means that I have responsibility for the needs of the Sisters living here as well as overseeing the maintenance of the building. My term ended in August of 2009 and I hope to spend more time in reading and prayer.

I want to encourage young people to take opportunities to visit different Religious Congregations to find out more, and if they really are interested, to help them determine which one offers them the best means of reaching their goals. Religious life is not a bed of roses, but it also is definitely not a bed of thorns! Any life is what you make of it. One needs a generous spirit, a love of people (especially poor people) a willingness to make sacrifices, and above all a deep personal relationship with God.



Sr. M. Joanna Burkhart

I, Genevieve Burkhart, (later known in religious life as Sr. Joanna), was born at home, the fifth of the seven children of Cecilia Schwallie and Aloysius Burkhart . The family lived on a farm near Louisville, OH. My elementary education took place in the parish two-room schoolhouse. After finishing the eighth grade, I helped on the family farm. When I was nineteen I went to care for my Aunt Mary. After her death, my Uncle asked me to stay on to care for the children and manage the household. At the time, a religious vocation was germinating in Genevieve's heart so I stayed for awhile, but when I was twenty-three, I decided to pursue become a Franciscan sister - but I didn't know which congregation until my parish priest introduced me to the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. I chose to enter on August 31, 1944, mostly because of the fact that the crops would be harvested by then and the canning would e done

When I was received the habit, I also received a new name, and became Sr. Joanna. After completing her novitiate, I professed my first vows on May 3, 1947 and during the five years as a temporary professed Sister, I was missioned to serve the poor in Steubenville, Hamilton and Cincinnati in the social service houses located in those cities. I made my perpetual profession on May 3, 1952 and went to study dietetics at Fontbonne College in St. Louis MO. `

In 1960, I volunteered to serve the poor in Brazil , but I was sent to serve in the dietary department of Convento Cuore Immacolata di Maria in Frascati Italy. I learned to speak some Italian, and worked closely with the young Italian Sisters. I was in Rome during the Second Vatican Council, and for the death of Pope John XXIII, and the election and coronation of Pope Paul VI. In 1968, when the generalate offices were moved to the United States, I returned to Cincinnati to continue direct service to the poor.

When I was youngster, I didn't go to high school, so in 1969 I earned a GED from the State of Ohio. I was 50 years old at the time. Then, I studied Catechetics and went to St. Henry, Ohio where I taught religion to three hundred children a week. And finally I found my niche. After completing a program in Clinical Pastoral Education, I joined the pastoral care staff at Providence Hospital, and in 1975, I was the first woman to be certified by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains. Later I served at Mercy Franciscan Western Hills. For 27 years, I walked the halls of these hospitals, soothing patient's fears, comforting them, and consoling dying patients and their families.

One night in 2003 I woke up during the night and realized I had a stroke. I was home alone. I couldn't talk and my hand was paralyzed. I tried to call someone but no one would pick up the phone. I finally went to the apartment across the hall and the man who lived there called 911. Following hospitalization, I was given speech therapy for three months, and then I was now on my own. So, I moved the St. Clare Convent. Speech was a challenge for me, but I always tried - and most people were very patient. I celebrated my Sixty Year Jubilee on May 8, 2004. And on October 30, 2009 at the age 88, I went to see my Lord!