

125th Anniversary

OF THE SISTERS OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER
FEBRUARY 16, 1883-2008



General Councilors: Left: Sisters Klarita Holzheimer and Judith Marie Beck. Right: Sr. Teresina Marra, General Superior and Sr. Catherine Marie Hanegan, Assistant General Superior.

Dear Sisters, Relatives, SSM
Associates, Ministry Partners,
Benefactors and Friends,

In this special report you will find a summary of the most significant events that occurred in various parts of the congregation during our year of celebration. As you can imagine, it is only a small part of what has been actually realized in the different parts of the world where we are present. The signs of growth identified in each of the regions/province provide us with merely a glimpse of the depth of the experiences.

The logo and theme: "The Love of Christ Urges Us On!" selected for this occasion is the same as that used by the 20th General

Assembly which brought renewed energy and excitement to the congregation. The plan for the various activities was organized in such a way as to experience the creativity and cultures of the sisters, associates and ministry partners in each area of the congregation.

Throughout the year, we received many wonderful messages of congratulations and gratitude for the ministry and presence of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

As this year of celebration comes to an end with special liturgies and gatherings planned throughout the congregation, feelings of gratitude and praise remain within the hearts of the sisters and others who have shared the joy of this event. For my part, and, on behalf of the general council, I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation, because without you, this story could not have been told or shared. With deep faith and love I say:

Thank you, Lord,
Because you called us
and sent us.
Because you have been
with us always,
And kept the enthusiasm
alive in our hearts.

Thank you because you
sent us "offshore."
Thank you for the gift of
Mary, Mother of Hope,
For the spiritual heritage,
For the saints who inspired
Mother Frances
For those who abundantly
sowed
and went before us.

Thank you for the mission
that you entrusted to us
within the Church.
Thank you, because with
your gifts you allowed us
to make a difference in
other people's lives.
Yes, it is in giving that
we received
Even while we have
yet to give.

Sr. Teresina Marra,
General Superior

Region Italy

Opening Liturgy: The celebrations began at the parish in Rome where Mother Frances and her first companions would often attend liturgy in the early morning hours. The sisters, together with Srs. Helen Malolepsy, former general superior and Teresina Marra, gathered by Fr. Francis Jordan's grave (Founder of the Salvatorian Congregation, with whom Mother Frances collaborated in the first years in Rome) where they prayed with the Salvatorian Fathers. Lunch was served at Casa di Accoglienza Santo Spirito where Mother Frances and the first community lived for many years.

A Pilgrimage: "In the Footsteps of Mother Frances," provided an opportunity for the sisters to visit Mother Frances' places in Germany and Austria, to reflect together and to spend time with the sisters of the other regions. The warm welcomes they received were most heartening.

Jubilee Feast Day: Everyone in the region was invited for a grand feast on September 20th. Guests included the children's parents from the school; and relatives and friends of the residents of the nursing home. An exhibition was displayed on the

history of the congregation with sisters sharing their experiences in the different ministries of the region.

Signs of Growth in Region Italy:

- The experience of internationality through community meetings provided an opportunity to live the values of the charism: presence, simplicity, and hospitality.
- Greater collaboration among the different houses.
- Greater knowledge and sharing of the person of Mother Frances, her charism, and the mission of the

congregation; the joy of belonging to a small, but, lively congregation is a seed of hope for the future.



February 16, 2008. Visit to Fr. Jordan's grave at Curia Generalizia of the Salvatorians, Rome.



A group of Sisters visiting Vienna were welcomed and accompanied by the Sisters of Region Austria.



The regional celebration of the 125th Anniversary on September 14 with the participation of friends, acquaintances, families, civil and religious authorities.

Region Austria

Opening Liturgy: The Sisters of Region Austria began the Jubilee Year with a festive liturgy on February 17, 2008 at St. Lawrence Parish in Altsimmering.

“In the Footprints of Childhood:” A grand reunion of all the former kindergarteners took place on May 17th in the Garden of Simmering, the location of the former kindergarten. Even though the invitation was done primarily by word of mouth, approximately 200 parents, grandparents and children came. A power point presentation on the history of the SSM’s and a tour of both the convent and kindergarten enhanced the celebration.

“People as Living Signposts:” Sr. Annemarie Holzer, Regional Leader, in cooperation with several laywomen arranged an exhibition with biblical figures based on the theme of “People as Living Signposts.” All of the scriptural passages related to our Foundress, Mother Frances Streitel. About 200 people visited the exhibition from June 8 – 27th.

“Feast of the Generations” took place at Bruck/Leitha on July 19th with many people

attending, sharing photos, food and the sheer joy of being together.

Jubilee Pilgrimage: “Seeking the Way” The sisters of Region Austria and friends journeyed from Vienna to Bruck/Leitha via Margarethen am Moss on September 13-14th.

Signs of Growth in Region Austria:

- A greater sense of interest and togetherness
- Common activities supported by all
- Ongoing formation regarding the theme of justice



Guests enjoying the gathering at the location of the former kindergarten.



Opening liturgy at St. Lawrence Parish in Altsimmering.

Region Germany

Liturgical Celebrations: Bishop Gregor Maria Hanke presided at the opening liturgy on February 16th in Abenberg, as well as the celebration in Mellrichstadt on September 7th with the blessing of the statue of Mother Frances in the presence of the general council and many sisters from both Germany and Austria.

Social Celebrations: On several occasions we celebrated with our co-workers, friends, and benefactors, raising awareness of the significance and social impact of women religious.

Ongoing Formation: Two regional gatherings of the sisters were motivated by the themes of: 1) Celebration, What Are We Celebrating? 2) SSM's as Franciscan Women in the Church and the Contemporary World.

Signs of Growth in Region Germany:

- A deep respect and appreciation for the foundation years of the congregation, the total availability of the sisters for “mission” and the beginnings of the ministries.
- Appreciation of and love for community; a new sense of responsibility for working together and a greater openness to begin journeying with the laity.
- Greater interest in the internationality of the SSM's.



Sr. Vinzentina Kreller leading the liturgical procession for the opening liturgy.



Srs. Beate Neiberler, Monika Galster, Meinrada Böhnlein and 2 other sisters sharing documents during a community meeting.



Sr. Annarita Maria Padovan, Region Italy, greeting several sisters in Abenberg during a visit by the Italian sisters.

Region Brazil

Opening of the Jubilee Year: The sisters in Brazil scheduled the opening celebrations to occur simultaneously on February 16th in each of the local communities. Many people were involved in the celebrations through the sharing of memories, the joys of the present time and our hopes for the future.

Regional Gathering: From March 6-9 the sisters met as a region for prayer and reflection, during which time the regional council presented the virtues of Mother Frances. In the closing liturgy, Archbishop Washington Cruz of Goiania pointed out that through the sisters' presence and ministries, they bring to fruition the charism of Mother Frances in the Archdiocese. A special meal prepared by the families was served to students, faculty and friends of Mother Olivia Benz School and Mãe Dolorosa Convent, priests, women and

men religious, and SSM associates.

Holy Week: The community of Nova Xavantina, in collaboration with other religious and lay people organized a vocational mission. It was a good opportunity to present the most important aspects of the SSM charism. The traditional Franciscan March with youth was another means to celebrate the 125th Anniversary. In Salto, Sao Paulo State, the anniversary ceremony took place in St. Benedict's Parish, involving the youth from the town in musical and artistic activities.

Signs of Growth in Region Brazil:

- A stronger sense of collaboration among ourselves and others.
- The courage to go beyond ourselves and to be available to others.
- A greater sense of belonging to a religious family that is present and working within the Church and the world. This occurred because of the exchange of all the communications, photos, and invitations among the regions and province, as well as the messages received from the general superior.



Sharing a festive meal after the liturgy in Goiania on March 9, 2008



Celebration with the children.



Presentation of international symbols during the offertory procession at liturgy on March 9th.

Local Community of Ifunde, Tanzania

February 16th: In the midst of the rainy season when the first flowers the sisters had planted were blossoming, Fr. Babu blessed a statue of St. Francis and placed it in the convent courtyard, followed by the opening liturgy. The program for the year, which had been prepared by Sr. Francesca Marra, Blessed Memory, included a solemn celebration on August 6th, a local community gathering around March 6th; days of formation and celebration for the women of the village on Sept 28-29; celebration for the youth on Oct. 2,4,5 and a festive celebration on January 6, 2009, the Epiphany of Our Lord. Themes such as the Mysteries of Jesus, the Figures of Mary, St. Francis, St. Paul and Mother Frances all helped to convey God's love through the sisters' lives, the SSM charism and history.

The Most Solemn Day was August 6th, The Feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus, which had been prepared by eight committees in the villages. L.J. Minde, the Bishop of Kahama, blessed a statue of the Pieta and presided over the Eucharist. Srs. Teresina Marra, Annemarie Holzer, Letizia Porcu, Sr. Rosaria Cibin, and Renate Schleier arrived to participate in the celebrations and to assist with last minute details. Several times the Bishop referred to the sisters as "a mission of love sowing seeds of hope." The celebration lasted five hours with songs, dances, exchanges of greetings, feast-day food and gifts.

Signs of Growth in the Local Community of Ifunde, Tanzania:

- Realization that the congregation is working together. An experience of communion intensified by the sisters' presence from other regions/province in both joyful and sorrowful events.
- A renewed interest in promoting our charism within the realities of where we live.
- A witnessing of the growth that is occurring within the youth and the women.



Offeritory gifts for the sisters and the needy in Brazil, in gratitude for the life and service of Sr. Francesca Marra in Ifunde.



Procession from the parish to the house of the sisters.



The women of Ifunde prepared the dinner for the guests of the Jubilee Celebration which was celebrated on August 6, in Ifunde.

US/Caribbean Province

Opening Weekend (February 15-17) While Bishop Banks of the Green Bay Diocese helped open the year of celebration in Oshkosh, the province seat, with a liturgy at SSM Franciscan Courts, sisters and associates gathered to participate in a retreat weekend of reflection and prayer, celebrating our contemplative spirit. In other areas of the province sisters were acknowledged at their local parish. The students at St. Rose School in Grenada thanked the sisters for being a part of their founding history during a sports event.

Local Celebrations: Across the province the theme of the year's celebration, "For the Love of Christ Urges Us On," was heard in song and testimonials as local celebrations were held where the sisters and associates are present today. The Caribbean Local Community collaborated in three Franciscan Fiesta events in Grenada, St. Lucia and Trinidad which focused on stewardship of creation and participation in activities offered by the Franciscan Institute. The sisters in the Dominican Republic celebrated a 15 year presence with their volunteers. SSM presence in Roswell, NM was celebrated with historical displays and the SSM Associates remembered the

deceased sisters while decorating their graves in Wichita, KS. Milwaukee's rich past and present ministries were celebrated in Wabasha, MN with a liturgy with Bishop Bernard Harrington, but also with a Mississippi fish fry. Sisters and associates in OK gathered with Bishop Edward Slattery, friends and benefactors for a September celebration at St. Clare Convent. Once a month those in Denville, NJ area gathered to celebrate an aspect of SSM life and ministry—Eucharistic adoration was initiated at St. Francis Residential Community to pray for vocations. Throughout the year, hospitals within Marian Health System held events to celebrate the arrival of the SSM's in their communities. The associates celebrated their 25th Anniversary of the SSM Associate Movement as they made their annual renewals. Special outreach projects were identified to receive financial assistance from the sisters.

Renunion: (July 11-13) Sisters and associates were well represented at a summer reunion held at SSM Franciscan Courts, Oshkosh, WI. They welcomed former members who came to share stories of the past, to hear and experience how religious life and the church have evolved, and to look to the future as

Church. Many gave testimony as to how their association with SSM affected their personal lives and their present witnessing within the Church.

Signs of Growth in the US/Caribbean Province:

- Involvement of the SSM Associates in the province has been enhanced as they participated in the planning and implementation of anniversary celebrations. Several new associates were received into the province.
- Every event was a vocation witness opportunity. The hospitals extended themselves with recognition through receptions, liturgies, news articles and donations to our mission in the Dominican Republic. Videos/CD's of the congregational history were viewed by health system employees, leadership and boards.
- A three-year ongoing formation program was launched, which focuses on SSM spirituality, values and charism through the lens of St. Francis, St. Clare and Mother Frances and "Our Way of Life"—the SSM constitution. Sisters have voiced that they have grown in knowledge and appreciation of our heritage and way of life as they consciously try to integrate what they are learning.



Students from St. Rose Modern Secondary School, Grenada, march through town with a 125th Anniversary sign before competition begins at the Mini-Olympic games.



SSM Associate Pat Oster tag (center), Sister Flora Scheurer and Sister Daniela Kohler attentively listen to Sister Fortunata Abraham as she shares during the July 11-13th Reunion.



Sisters attend the annual "Street Party" by St. John Health System, Tulsa, where the sisters' history and 125th Anniversary Celebration is acknowledged in pictures/posters.

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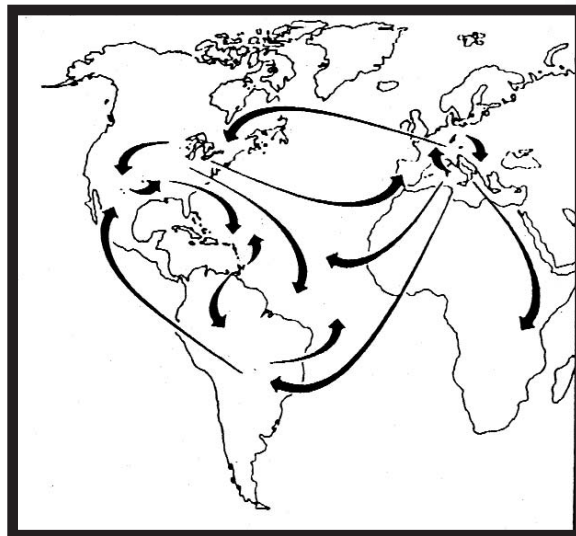


Foundress: Mother Frances Streitel
1844-1911

We, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, are an international religious congregation of women with 315 members, 4 novices and one postulant. As members of the Franciscan Family we desire to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the values of simplicity, humility, peace-making, hospitality and reverence for all creation.

Our Foundress, Mother Frances Streitel, envisioned a congregation that would be a new leaven for the Church through uniting a life of service with a contemplative spirit. Today we live and serve in 10 countries throughout the world. Together with our associates and thousands of ministry partners, we stand with the poor and suffering and work to make known the fullness of life to which all people are called.

Our congregational priorities for 2007-2012 are evangelization, greater sharing and advocacy for social justice.



For the Love of Christ Urges Us On!

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