

# Collaboration

*Sisters of Providence, St. Vincent DePaul*

## Transformative Power of the Liturgy

*Fellow beggars and pilgrims on the journey...*

This was one of many provocative descriptions of the liturgical experience used by Sister Miriam Martin, during an afternoon of reflection and renewal hosted by the Congregational Liturgy Committee.

Approximately 60 Sisters and members of our Sunday assembly gathered in McKinley Hall, at Providence Motherhouse, on October 22 to share their thoughts on the Transformative Power of the Liturgy. Miriam is a Presentation Sister of Newfoundland who teaches at and is also Director of the new Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality at St. Paul's University in Ottawa.



**Sister Miriam Martin, PVBVM**

Beginning with a Mary Oliver poem, *When I am Among Trees*, she spoke of how she is continually transformed by her surroundings. We heard how our environment and our everyday rituals give form to our lives. Likewise, our Sunday Ritual – the Eucharist, the source and summit of our Christian experience, empowers and molds us, as individuals, families, and communities. It deepens

our identity, defining “who we are” as we establish an order and shape a way of being in the world.

Each time we come to the table of the Eucharist, we are formed increasingly into that likeness of Christ. Ritual is a gift of transformation, and a gift to be distributed. The structure of the ritual speaks to our spirituality and the environment of it speaks to our attentiveness.

The four movements of the Eucharist each offer its own opportunity for transformation. Gathering to celebrate calls us to move from “me” to “us”. The Word calls us not only to listen, but to dialogue. Bread and wine prepared, transformed, and shared, nourishes us to unity in Christ. Finally we

are dismissed to love and serve.

Liturgy is a pathway that can be a shelter for a while, but is always leading us onward. We are sent to go and do in our communities, in our countries and in the world. As agents of change, we ourselves are transformed.

*Albert Dunn, Coordinator of Pastoral Liturgy & Mariola Gozdek, Liturgy Coordinator Archdiocese of Kingston*

---

### contents

**2**

Letter from  
Sister Barbara

**7**

Province  
Welcomes Novice

**11**

The Argentinian  
Experience

**14**

Intercultural  
Living Explored

**16**

German Providence  
Communities Meet

## *From the director*

**Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP**  
**WPC executive director**



Peace and all good things to you! Recently, as many of you know, I had total knee replacement surgery, so I had some extra time to read during my recuperation period. I just want to share with you some threads of that reading and my ponderings from it.

**Thread One:** Dioum, a conservationist in Senegal, wrote: “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.” These words made me think that for so long many of us were, and still are, teachers and nurses helping others to understand. We know that understanding leads to love, and that love leads to care and compassion. It seems that in our world now there is so much fear and it tries to separate people on every level.

**Thread Two:** Isaiah has been front and center of our Scriptures recently and speaks of a bear and cow being neighbors and a baby sitting aside a viper (Is. 11:1-9) At first glance I think Isaiah is teaching us about peaceful coexistence; direct opposites uniting as one. Could it be that in our present age of bitter divisions, Isaiah is encouraging us to shake hands with those we tend to avoid? As a bear and cow enjoy neighborly peace together, so too, are we invited to practice wholesome neighborliness. Could it be that we are actually called to envision a future in which we coexist together and thus inspire hopefulness?

**Thread Three:** Recently in a Trivia game I learned that the motto of South Carolina is *Dum spira spero*, “While I breathe, I hope.” This motto encourages us to breathe in hope’s inspiration, zestful powers and strength. Hope possesses power to conceive of new possibilities and to dream of a better world.

When I read the stories in this newsletter, I feel hope! I celebrate hope! The Women of Providence in Collaboration, in its members, gives witness to a brighter future, to a wholesome neighborliness, and to the zest, strength and power to co-create a better future for our tomorrows. They “teach” by being God’s hope, joy and justice in the world. They help us all understand that movements of gratitude, compassion and goodness unite all of humankind.

Our providence charism teaches us that creation is an excellent teacher. Our common home here on Earth needs us all to live thoughtfully, and to teach future generations to do the same—to conserve, to love and to understand. With God’s breath, and its hopefulness filling us with zest, we can co-create a world of peace and hope now and in the time to come.

Happy reading!

*Barbara*

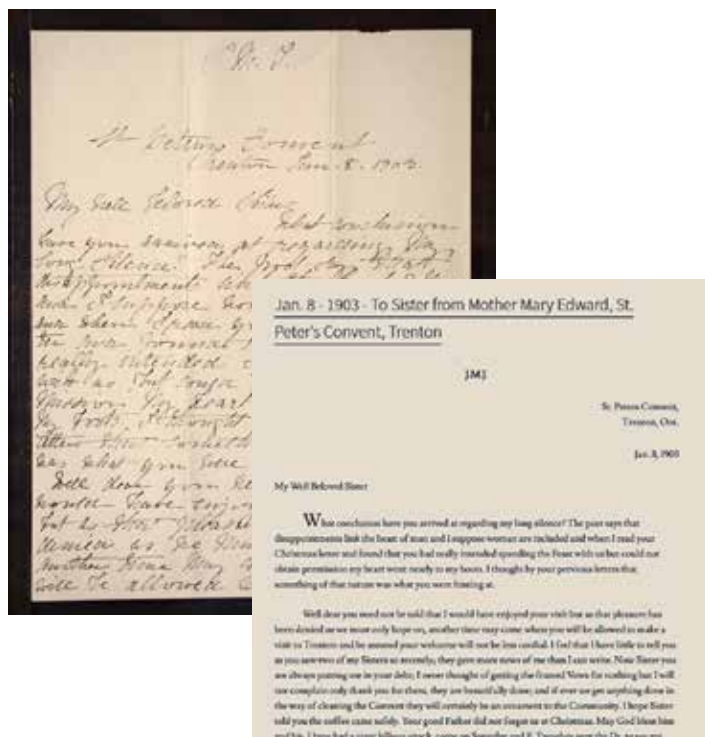


## ***Catherine McKinley's Letters and Archival Online Outreach***

In the Archives of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul the majority of our early records are handwritten and are not always easy to read. Since the 1980s numerous Sisters and archives staff have transcribed many of these records by deciphering the handwriting and typing copies of these documents. These transcriptions are an invaluable research tool and an amazing resource. The "Our Story" section of the congregational website is a great tool for sharing some of this material with the public. Our newest feature on the website is the "Catherine McKinley Letters", consisting of transcriptions of all of Catherine McKinley's incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Catherine McKinley, known as Mother Mary Edward, was the first General Superior of the congregation and was also involved in the governance of the congregation for most of her religious life. Throughout her life as a Sister of Providence she served as General Superior, General Treasurer, General Secretary and First Assistant. She was instrumental in all of the congregation's major building projects and in the establishment of missions in the first forty years of the congregation's history. She was known as a successful fundraiser and oversaw numerous construction projects, including three major additions to the House of Providence and the construction of the stunning Mother of Sorrows Chapel. Under her governance St. Vincent de Paul Hospital Brockville was founded in 1887, and teaching missions were founded in Perth in 1892 and in Belleville in 1900. She personally founded missions in Holyoke in 1873 and Trenton in 1902 and dealt with the Holyoke mission becoming an independent congregation in 1892. She died in Trenton on November 21, 1904.

Her letters chronicle the development and growth of the congregation in its foundational years. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of Catherine McKinley's death, the Archives transcribed and compiled all of her incoming and outgoing correspondence from 1884 to 1903. (Unfortunately the Archives does not have any correspondence from her first term as General Superior.) Transcriptions of this correspondence are now available to the public on the website. The letters are completely searchable and there are year and subject filters to aid in navigating the letters. They give the reader a fascinating glimpse at the struggles and achievements of the growing congregation.



***The original handwritten letter and the transcribed letter as posted on the archive website.***

Transcriptions of the necrologies of every deceased Sister are also available on the website. Necrologies are biographical sketches written by the General Secretary shortly after the death of each individual Sister. For ease of access we used the term 'obituaries' on the website instead of 'necrologies'. All the obituaries, from the death of the first Sister in 1870 to the present, are accessible and searchable on our website. Each obituary is accompanied by a photograph of the Sister, or of a place she worked if no photograph of her was available. If you haven't checked it out please do!

The Archives has also created a "Mission History" feature on the website, organized geographically with profiles on each of the congregation's missions. This section is still a work in progress, as we continue to add histories of various locations. There are other interesting items available in the "Our Story" section of the website, including a photo gallery of the development of the religious dress of the Sisters of Providence. Please visit [www.providence.ca/our-story/](http://www.providence.ca/our-story/) to read Catherine McKinley's letters, the obituaries, and mission histories.

--Veronica Stienburg



## **Future of Providence Associates Topic at Associate Leadership Conference**

Twenty-eight women, who are Associate leaders or potential Associate leaders in Congregations belonging to the Women of Providence in Collaboration (WPC), gathered in Westfield at Genesis Spiritual Life and Conference Center from September 18-20 to attend WPC's 2017 Associate Leadership Group (ALG) Conference.

Sister Pauline Lally, a Sister of Providence of Saint Vincent de Paul in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, was the main speaker. Her three-part talk on "Providence Spirituality and the Call to Justice" grounded participants' subsequent roundtable discussions as they considered the future of the Associate movement in the Church, and some possible answers to the questions—"Who are we and where are we going?" posed by the Conference theme.

Sister Pauline examined four areas of importance to the leaders' dialogue: The Call to becoming a Providence Associate; The Associate Call to Justice; Clinging to God and Righting the World; and Mystics and

Prophets. Emphasizing that Association is "a call from God and of God," she said "Associates are initially drawn to the Providence charism or spirit of their respective Congregations because they are already living the charism in their daily lives."

In her presentation she reminded all present that "You cannot define Providence but you can describe Providence from your lived experience." Commenting on vocations, she believes there is not a shortage of vocations but rather that God is calling the Church "to something new" and that something new includes the strong emergence of Associates, particularly in North America.

Another presenter, Associate Barbara Baker, also from Kingston, noted the key role Directional Statements play in determining any organization's future, and outlined a step-by-step process Associate leaders may consider using if their respective Congregations do

*Continued on page 6*



**WPC's Associate Leadership Group Conference drew participants from Canada as well as the United States. Some are photographed here listening intently to speaker Sister Pauline Lally, SP.**

## Ritual of Creation Opens Missioning Day Ceremony

This year's Missioning Day Ceremony was unique in that it turned on the theme of creation, prompted by the horrendous impact of three hurricanes, two record breaking earthquakes, and rampant wild fires, and by the world-wide movement of Christian Churches' united attention on the Season of Creation. This global observance, held at the prompting of Christian Churches and others, took place from September 1 to October 4, the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, patron of the environment.

Missioning Day, held at Providence Place in Holyoke, opened with a ritual focused on the cries of the earth and the poor as articulated by Pope Francis, particularly those clearly set down in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*.

During the ritual, the Sisters' and Associates' prayers joined with those of Christian Churches, and others around the world, in voicing their common concern regarding the devastation of the environment, our planet. The program opened with the assembly singing the hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth" as four participants carried into the chapel sanctuary—from four directions—symbols of creation: a lighted candle, symbolic of fire; a filled glass pitcher, representing water; a flowering plant, for earth; and a small sculpture of a tree with blowing branches, to symbolize air.

Sister of Providence President Kathleen Popko said the

ritual was "a call to prayer and action for creation." She recalled the "wild weather" the U.S. and the Americas had "experienced over the previous month—hurricanes, fires, and earthquakes," pointing out that those events made it "doubly fitting" for the focus of the Missioning Day program to be on creation.

"Moreover," said Sister Kathleen, "we join with Christians and all others who are praying for the world to wake up to the reality of climate change, and who want to take collective action to care for our home, Earth."

The creation theme also resonated with the Congregation's 1993 Directional Statement that urges Sisters and Associates "...to make all [their] decisions in light of their impact on women, Earth, and those who are poor."

At the conclusion of the creation ritual, Sisters and Associates turned their attention to the Congregation's Missioning Day ceremony. Traditionally, the observance takes place annually and is held on a Sunday close to September 27, the Church's feast day for Saint Vincent de Paul, the Sisters' patron.

In this year's observance, Sisters and Associates recommitted themselves to the Community's mission and charism and welcomed two Associate Candidates—Yvonne Boudreau and Elizabeth "Liz" Walz— to full Associate status.

*Continued on page 6*



**Sister Senga Fulton (left), holding one of the day's symbols of creation, pauses before entering the sanctuary to stand with the other procession participants. From left are Associate Al Blanchard, Sister Margaret McCleary and Associate Carole Mimeault.**



## **Future of Associates**

*Continued from page 4*

not have Directional Statements specific to their Associates.

Sister Jo Ann Showalter, a Sister of Providence from Mother Joseph Province in Washington, followed by reviewing the 2015 CARA Report (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) on the tremendous growth of the Associate movement, particularly in North America. She told the Sisters and Associates present, "You are the dream of God—the presence of love which brings transformation and life." And, asked, "How are we called to live God's dream now and into the future? Are we allowing ourselves to look for, and live into, the rhythmic patterns of fruitfulness? Remember," she cautioned, "we have been called

to a specific time and place. It is up to each of us to reflect, welcome and proclaim that dream by how we love. What we do," she emphasized, "says more than what we say."



**Associate Barbara Baker pictured prior to leading one the Conference's prayer services.**

Sister Jo Ann proposed that the ALG dialogue on "How can Associates be more mindfully and intentionally formed to recognize that they are God's dream? What are some new and innovative ways we can begin inviting younger Associates?"

Sisters of Providence of Holyoke participants included: Associate Pat St. Amand, Director of the Associate Program and chair for the event; Sisters Julie Crane, Mary Martin de Porres, Geraldine Noonan; Associates Connie Canata, Gail Furman, Patty McGovern, Fran Popko; and Associate Candidates Louise Cooper and Liz Walz.

## **Missioning Day Ceremony**

*Continued from page 5*

In missioning the Sisters, Sister Kathleen addressed them, saying: "The witness of Christ has indeed been strong among you. Trusting in God's Providence and knowing that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit, I mission each of you present here, and all those Sisters who are not with us today, to the ministry you are engaged in at the moment."

Associate Director Patricia St. Amand, ASP, followed

by calling on Associates to renew their commitment to the Congregation. Standing together, they pledged to "...continue to deepen our awareness of the Mystery of God's Providence both in concert with the Community and as revealed in our daily lives."

The service concluded with Sisters and Associates standing and facing each other across the aisle to extend their hands in blessing of one another with the prayer: "May the Providence of God be with you in all its unfolding. And, may you be the sacrament of

Providence to those whose hands you hold, to our Community, our world, and the universe."

Associates then gathered in the chapel rotunda to sign their re-commitment documents prior to rejoining the Sisters and new Associates for a light supper in the Kingston Dining Room.



**Sisters and Associates during the final blessing.**

## **Province Welcomes Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo, of Cameroon, to the Novitiate**

In a joyous celebration in Seattle on December 12, Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo of Cameroon officially became Sister Marie-Thérèse, SP. The Sisters of Providence who first met her when she came to Seattle for a “Come and See” experience in 2008-09 were thrilled to welcome her into Mother Joseph Province. Marie-Thérèse had returned to Cameroon as a Providence Associate inspired by the spirit of the religious community’s foundress, Blessed Emilie Gamelin of Montreal, and the community’s charism to serve those who are poor.

In the ensuing six years, Marie-Thérèse has truly made a mark in the rural village of Lomié, including founding an organization in Seattle called African Solidarity in Action which built a well, providing the village’s residents with one of life’s most precious gifts: clean water. “Water is important, especially for the children who become sick from unclean water,” she explained. Providence General Superior Karin Dufault, surrounded by singing and dancing children, tried her hand at pumping the well when she visited Cameroon in 2013. Support for the wells, now three of them, led to tuition support for students in nearby schools (at least 33 students now) and to construction of a small clinic. Donations came from Sisters of Providence, Providence Associates and from friends in Europe, including Rome, where Marie-Thérèse had worked as a secretary.

Marie-Thérèse said her ministry in her native country was a good and satisfying one, and she was living the sisters’ charism, “but God was asking me to do more, to give my life as a consecrated religious with the sisters.” After prayer and discernment, she wrote a letter to the Sisters of Providence asking if she could return. She became a candidate on May 19, 2017, and began living in community with the sisters, spending time in prayer and reflection on sacred Scripture, attending gatherings and participating in some of their ministries.

“This is a night of joy for us,” said Sister Beverly Dunn, who has been candidate director for Marie-Thérèse. The novitiate entrance ritual at St. Joseph Residence was presided over by Provincial Superior Judith



***Provincial Superior Judith Desmarais gives Sister Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo the Sisters of Providence community pin as she enters the novitiate.***

Desmarais, who gave Marie-Thérèse the community pin and a copy of its Constitutions.

“We are very happy to welcome Sister Marie-Thérèse as a novice in our religious community,” Sister Judith said. “The novitiate experience is a continuation of discernment and intensive preparation for responding to the call of God, integrating contemplation and action in her personal life. She is ready and anxious to experience this stage of religious life, joyfully giving herself to God in community life.”

The ritual and the reception that followed underscored the international, intercultural and intergenerational nature of the Sisters of Providence. Before the ceremony got underway, Sister Marie-Thérèse taught guests in the audience, including members of her parish community at Our Lady of Guadalupe, to sing a song in one of Cameroon’s dialects. Three Ugandan sisters from the Daughters of Mary, who have a decades-long relationship with the Providence sisters, provided accompaniment on the drums. And at the reception after the novitiate entrance ceremony,

*Continued on page 10*



## **Province Welcomes Novice from the Cameroon**

*Continued from page 9*

Sister Marie-Thérèse led a spirited conga-style dance line of sisters and associates of all ages and nationalities, and friends from Cameroon.

A couple of days after entering the novitiate, Sister Marie-Thérèse headed to Edmonton, Alberta, for the Bi-Province Novitiate with Holy Angels Province where she joined another novice, Rezebeth Noceja. Sister Celia Chappell of Mother Joseph Province is the novitiate director. Because of visa regulations, Sister Marie-Thérèse's stay in Canada will have two parts to it during the year, and she also will spend some of the time back in the United States.

***In the photo (right), Sister Marie-Thérèse Gnamazo, leads a dance line at a reception celebrating her novitiate entrance. She is followed by Sister Maria Gorreth Nassali, a Daughter of Mary from Uganda, and Sister Huong Thi Nguyen, a Providence sister from Vietnam.***



## **Sister Susanne Hartung Visits Sisters in Holyoke**

Walking into Providence Place at Holyoke, MA, felt very familiar. I was welcomed with Providence hospitality by Sister Mary Caritas, who is a living legend at 94. Her life of leadership includes being administrator of hospitals, provincial and chair of the board of Catholic Health Association (CHA). And in the last ten years she built Mary's Meadow, a skilled-nursing facility for her sisters and others in need. To this day she walks with the speed of a 20 year old and has the wisdom we all wish for.

The visit with the sisters at Holyoke was suggested by Robert Hellrigel, chief executive of Providence Senior and Community Services. He had worked for them for many years and loved their mission. As a close friend of Caritas, as she likes to be called, he put me, mission integration officer, in contact with her.

It was a very special encounter to stay with the sisters and have them share their stories. When I drove up to 5 Gamelin Drive, Providence Place, I knew I was home.



***Sister Susanne Hartung (left), of Mother Joseph Province, embraces Sister Mary Caritas of Holyoke, MA.***



## CDP's Launch Young Adult Ministry

God Space is a community of young adults coming together for meals, social experiences, service projects, shared prayer and listening under the guidance of Sister Leslie Keener, vocation minister. Seekers, sharing spiritual journeys with each other, through genuine connection and prayer will create a space of belonging in this fragmented world.



A house in Cincinnati was recently set up for this new ministry. The source of inspiration for this project was her work in campus ministry and her relationships with students and recent graduates who are looking for something more.

As a spiritual director, Sister Leslie saw a need to connect people searching for this deeper spirituality



and for a "God Space" besides their place of worship. As our Founder, Blessed John Martin Moye, said to our first sisters, "The first spiritual work is to teach those not sufficiently instructed, and to do this sometime in a conversational way."

## Development Office Spreads the Good News Message

Spreading the message of our ministries and inviting others to join us as we proclaim the Good News especially to those who are needy has been the constant theme for twenty five years.

The welcoming face and voice of the development program has been Sister Emerita McGann, who travels many miles to spread the message; writes acknowledgements and preaches in parishes throughout the United States sharing stories and inspiration.

The rewards have been overwhelming in the outreach offered and received from numerous former students, family members, parishioners where our Sisters have been involved, and those who while at a weekend Mass heard her stories, especially about her journeys to Madagascar.

Yes, many projects have been possible because of the generous outpouring of others; but the underlying emphasis has always been on sharing news of our ministries and needs. The resulting generosity and supportive relationships continue to be wonderful blessings.



**Sister Emerita McGann, CDP**

## Puerto Rico Ministries Continue

In the midst of their own devastation and loss following Hurricane Maria's destruction in Puerto Rico, the Sisters continued serving the people of the island.

By working with Water with Blessings, the Sisters received hundreds of water filters and training materials, mobilized volunteers and traveled to help those in desperate need due to lack of drinking water.

In Utuado, one of the most destroyed cities in Puerto

Rico, the Sisters' efforts provided more than 100 water filters and water storage containers. Going from house to house, the Sisters and volunteers distributed and trained everyone on how to use the filters.

Although clean drinking water is a critical need, Sister Elsa Medina shared that the personal touch also made a huge difference to the suffering people. Taking time to listen to their stories, knowing they were not alone, had a great impact on the people and the Sisters.



---

## Feeding the Homeless

For nearly 10 years, the Sisters in general prayer and service ministry at Providence Heights have volunteered their time by making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Dr. Jim Withers' Operation Safety Net—a program that provides medical treatment to the homeless in Pittsburgh.

On the third Tuesday of every month, Sisters gather in an "assembly line" and make and individually bag the sandwiches. The bread is donated by a local grocery store chain and the peanut butter and jelly are donated from local parishes and food drives.

The sandwiches are delivered to Pittsburgh, where they are offered to the homeless while receiving medical care by the health care providers of Operation Safety Net.

Sister Betty Sundry, Director of Social Concerns, started this direct service ministry. Currently, Sister Mary Kriley serves as the ministry's coordinator.





## **The Argentinian Adventure**

Being the human face of Providence means reaching out to others and leaving the comfort of our bubble. In the case of the missionary sisters, it also meant leaving their country, their language and their customs. We invited Sister Marcelle Deschênes (Antonine) to come talk to us about her missionary years in Argentina. She comes from Quebec, Canada, and now lives at the Salaberry Residence in Montreal. She is 88 and still active: she still accompanies sisters to their medical appointments. She is very attentive to people she meets, speaking to women of all backgrounds and asking about their well-being, since she has always been interested in the women's conditions of life.

The Argentinian adventure started in 1961, during the Second Vatican Council. The Argentinian Bishop Perez met, in Rome, the Canadian Bishop of Hull, Quebec, Monsignor Lemieux, and asked him if religious women could serve in a hospital in southern Argentina. When she became aware of this request, Sister Laura de Jésus, Superior of Hull Hospital, asked the General Council of the Sisters of Providence to respond favorably to this appeal, for the Argentinian people's good. This project was accepted and materialized the following year.

Sister Marcelle was ready. She had entered the Sisters of Providence a few years after the end of the World War II. Before departing for Argentina, she had already accumulated 12 years of service in the orphanages of Joliette and Trois-Rivières, Province of Quebec. Sister Marcelle Deschênes and five other Sisters of Providence arrived in Patagonia in Southern Argentina in July 1963, in order to organize health care in the city of Comodoro Rivadavia. The other five sisters were, in alphabetical order, Sisters Germaine Bourgoïn (Germaine-Thérèse), Bernadette Deschênes (Laura de Jésus), Margaret Kelly (Patrice-Marie), Eliane Lanteigne (Simon-Marie) and Virginia Paul (Monica Mary). Fifteen other Sisters of Providence followed them in Argentina over three decades.

They arrived at the early stage of the city organizing its health system. During the sixties, the Vecinal Hospital was in a disastrous state of dilapidation, of immense poverty. The sisters were housed in another hospital, the Regional, which was not open yet: "The



***The beginning of the SP Mission in Argentina.***

Ladies of Charity had bought us six beds the day before we arrived, because the place was empty" said Sister Marcelle. The sisters worked hard to improve the care offered at the Vecinal hospital, but the building was in such a state of deterioration that the roof of some rooms might collapse. The sisters worked to move services and patients to the Regional hospital by pressuring the authorities. Even before being allowed to move patients in, the first victory was to do laundry in a modern laundry, with soap. They had to negotiate the gas supply and wait for the construction of a local factory to have enough power to run all the equipment. Eventually, they received medical equipment and they could even open an operating room. However, due to political instability and frequent changes in hospital management, the move took five years to be completed. The new hospital profited greatly from the expertise of the Canadian sisters, reaching an unequalled level of care in the city.

The sisters worked intensely. "Sister Laura de Jésus

*Continued on page 12*

## **The Argentinian Adventure**

*Continued from page 11*

worked day and night to ensure that nurses lacked nothing: at night, she tuned up units measuring blood pressure until 11 pm,” recounts an article for the local newspaper, *Crónica*, which was published in January 2008<sup>1</sup> about the presence of the Sisters of Providence, during the reunion of sister Marcelle with former employees of the hospital.

The newspaper quoted a nurse who started working at the opening of the Regional hospital, in 1968, who stated: “It was the golden age of the hospital...” The article also mentions: “The strict formation of the Canadian sisters is underlined by those who got to know them. In their own way and according to their education, everything had to be straight, in order, clean, with respect. Fundamentally, the service provision had to include understanding of and love for the patients.” They also trained nurses, who gained national certification, allowing them to work in any region of the country. They also built a blood bank.

More than 20 Sisters of Providence ministered in Argentina. Their work in those areas inspired some young women to join the Sisters of Providence. In the early 1980s, a group of Providence Associates was also established.

After her 18-year stay in Argentina, Sister Marcelle continued her ministry in Chile for 18 years, before moving to Cameroon. She worked four years in Africa before returning to Quebec. Her links with the Argentinians are not over; in addition to her visit in 2008<sup>1</sup>, she still maintains a correspondence with five people she met during her ministry in Comodoro Rivadavia, over 35 years ago. This confirms the affirmation of a former employee of the hospital: “The nurses were trained to take care of the sick tenderly, staying as long as necessary.” Sister Marcelle didn’t hesitate to stay the needed time in Argentina, nor does she hesitate now to reach out to others.

Providence of God, I believe in you.

1. «La última Hermana de la Providencia y enfermera del Regional regresó a Comodoro» *Crónica*, jueves 3 de enero del 2008. (only in Spanish) <http://diariocronica.com.ar/index.php?r=Noticias/verNoticia&q=3004>

ROBILLARD, Denise. *Adventurers in the Shadow, From Obedience to Discernment, The Mission of the Sisters of Providence, 1962-1997*, Outremont: Carte Blanche, 2001 (also in English).

Sister Marcelle participated in a video, in which she talks about Argentina and about how the sisters in the missions experienced Christmas. The link is provided here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owAGcy\\_Obv8&index=19&list=UUGwryhZJL5r0owWh32XJr1w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owAGcy_Obv8&index=19&list=UUGwryhZJL5r0owWh32XJr1w) (also in English)



*Sister Marcelle Deschênes (center) with some Hospital staff.*



## Following Jesus and Emilie

*"I was in prison and you came to me!"*

In recent years, towards the end of the month of October, some of us Sisters of Providence (who are volunteers to the Leclerc Detention Facility in Laval, North of Montreal, and before that the Tanguay Prison (Montreal), take advantage of the customary generosity of our companion Sisters of Providence of the Motherhouse and of the surrounding area, as well as other religious congregations (about fifteen) who live in our large house.

Yes, we solicit their help to collect donations (goods or money) to prepare a "gift bag" for each of the numerous women (about 240) who are incarcerated at the Leclerc Prison. In this special living environment, not every donation is allowed, but the volunteers give from their hearts and with the friendships they have formed through the weeks and months of going on Saturday nights for the Sunday Mass.

Around mid-December, the volunteers throughout Montreal go to the prison to prepare the gift bags

with the donations we received or the items bought with the money, so that every prisoner gets the opportunity and joy to experience beautiful moments despite her particular situation.



**Sister Claudette preparing Christmas gifts for the prisoners.**

This coming December 24, the volunteers, the Pastoral Committee, and the detainees who want to do so, will meet at the chapel to participate in a special Christmas Eucharist for Jesus' birthday, the Emmanuel (God with us and within us).

Subsequently, inmates will return to their respective areas for the distribution of gifts by the volunteers. It is with joy and even a palpable emotion that the friends of Jesus and of ours will receive the fruit of collecting donations. These gifts will then be supplemented by the purchase of several items allowed in this special environment.

Following in Blessed Emilie Tavernier Gamelin's footsteps, who visited political prisoners in her time, when we spend Christmas with really poor persons and as we get closer to Jesus, we receive much more than we can give.

*--Claudette Chénier, SP, Volunteer at the Leclerc Detention Centre in Laval*

## **Congregation Explores What it Means to Live Interculturally**

At the 2016 General Chapter, the Sisters of Providence created a chapter direction to increase the Congregation's "awareness that we are an international, multi-cultural community." Our New Membership Team has been reading the book "Living Mission Interculturally: Faith, Culture, and the Renewal of Praxis," by Anthony Gittins, which discusses a way of intercultural living underpinned by faith, virtue and a range of new skills for faith communities.

It was Providential, then, last June, when we received an invitation from LCWR to participate in a 30-month project called Engaging our Diversity: Interculturality and Consecrated Life, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Consecrated Life at Catholic Theological Union. We applied and were accepted along with 24 other religious communities.

A team of five SPs was formed to move the idea forward: Sisters Editha Ben, Tracey Horan, Joni Luna, Janice Smith and myself. We attended the conference on November 2-5, sponsored by the Hilton Founda-

tion. Each Congregation was to prepare a case study prior to attending the workshop and then three case studies were reviewed by participants.

Sister Teresa Maya, LCWR president, and one of the conference presenters, cited a study led by Notre Dame de Namur Sister Mary Johnson. "By 2026, a quarter of sisters in the United States will be foreign-born, up from 8 percent today. And with that slice comes huge implications for formation, ministry and community," said Sister Teresa.

Each Congregation prepared a proposal to increase awareness and discussion on living interculturally for their community. Our General Council had already begun planning to initiate a conversation on the topic of Interculturality at our 2018 Annual Meeting and had been in the process of selecting a presenter. The Interculturality Team is very energized by their learnings at the conference, and are eager to share this with the broader community.

The conference was a wonderful opportunity to be gathered with men and women from all over the world. It was a good reminder that as religious, we need to explore what it means to live interculturally, lifting up the giftedness of current members and embracing the diversity among us.



*From left, Sisters Joni Luna, Janice Smith, Editha Ben, Tracey Horan, and Jenny Howard*



## Associate Relationship Growing Strong

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and Providence Associates celebrated 10 years in relationship November 17-19, 2017.

In celebration, a new wall display was unveiled in Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, on the way to the shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin.

In the words of the vision statement, Providence Associates “further the charism of the Sisters of Providence by co-creating a hope-filled world, building relationships, cultivating community, and living lives that challenge them to embody the face of Providence as they seek to be love, mercy, and justice in the world.”

Currently 250 women and men walk with and share in the charism and mission of the Sisters of Providence. Some of them are shown here. In November, a new group of Candidates has also begun the journey. We are blessed to have each other!



*A large group of Associates attended the anniversary celebration.*

## **24th Providence Meeting in St. Jean de Bassel, France**

A total of 21 sisters from seven German-speaking communities (Ribeauville, Portiux, St. Jean de Bassel, from France; Schönbrunn, Münster, Mainz, from Germany, and Baldegg from Switzerland) attended the meeting last September. Sisters Hildegard Ewald, Siegfrieda Wildner and Angelika Hufgard attended from our community.

The topic, "Trusting in God's Providence", was looked at from different aspects and with different methods. In mixed groups of five to six Sisters we talked about the Gospel of Providence, Matthew 6: 25-34, talking of the lilies in the field. For this we had an interesting interpretation of Pope Francis, which opened up new aspects, which we then discussed in the small groups.

Forming four groups, we could choose from suggested creative elements to present the portrayal of the theme of trust. One group presented a dance to a French Providence song, another group painted pictures and collages, a further group portrayed a 'trust story' using only sound and a group mimed trust as we find it in the Gospel. When all groups had presented their results, they were very much applauded.

Together, we had a special experience of travel by bus to Sarrebourg, where the Marc Chagall Peace Window was explained to us and received our wholehearted admiration. In the museum we could see a large tapestry with a picture of Chagall. Later we went to the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Portiux, which was the first visit to their place since the Providence meet-



ings started. The Sisters there greeted us very warmly and served us graciously. They were delighted that we had come.

So far, only two Sisters from Basel, Switzerland, who spoke German, had come to these Providence Meetings. The community is the French branch of the Founder, the priest Jean Martin Moy, 1730-1803, who also founded the community of St. Jean de Bassel in Lorraine. From this foundation all Providence Communities, including Ribeauville, take their origin. This is illustrated very clearly by a tree with roots and branches.

Sister Angéle of Ribeauville has agreed to put together a small brochure that describes the individual foundations and their historical context. This brochure will be ready next year for the 25th anniversary of the Providence Meetings. The anniversary meeting will take place in the retreat house in Bingen on the Rhine and will be prepared by us with the help of the preparatory group. The topic will be: "What can we, as Sisters of Providence, learn from Hildegard of Bingen"? We are looking forward to the next meeting!

*--Sr. Angelika Hufgard, CDP*





## Pre-Novitiate Entry With Boundless Confidence in God's Providence

December 3 marked the beginning of Advent, but it also marked a new beginning for me as I was formally received into the Pre-Novitiate formation program for the Congregation of Divine Providence. Advent has always been a special liturgical season for me, so it was very meaningful that the entrance ceremony was held on that particular day. Just as Advent is a time of hopeful anticipation for Christians, I find that my time as a Pre-Novice will hold the same sentiment for me—hopeful anticipation for what is to come as I deepen my relationship with this congregation and with our Provident God.

The first time I visited our Sisters, I knew that the CDPs were different from any other place I had visited, and that there was something special about this place. It always felt as natural and “at home” to me as being with my family. As I learned more about the mission of the CDP, the charism of Providence, and the inspiring things our Sisters have done throughout our history, I felt deep in my soul that this is where I belonged. I have deep gratitude that God has invited me to this wonderful place.



***Melissa Cessac with her mother Sue Cessac***

One particularly profound moment for me in my time here thus far was at our General Chapter last January. When the final version of our Chapter Statement came out, I was moved to tears because I knew that I had waited my whole life for a mission that I fully believed in and to which I wanted to give my life. A

*Continued on page 18*



***Melissa Cessac receives blessings from the Congregation members as she is welcomed into the Congregation.***

## Paying Providence Forward

Several years ago, a request came from the Leadership Conference of Women Religious for communities to help Sisters from developing countries to obtain higher education. The Congregation of Divine Providence (CDP) is blessed to be in a position to contribute to this effort by hosting Sisters from Vietnam, Tanzania, and Uganda. The CDP has also hosted Sisters from around the United States as they have studied or on sabbatical. Having guests with us broadens our world view and allows us to share the gift of hospitality with our visitors.

In December 2014, we welcomed Sister Constansia Cyliro of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Bernadette from Tanzania, Africa. Her original intent was to study for a Masters in Education from Our Lady of the Lake University. Three years later on December 9, 2017, Sister Constansia Cyliro FSSB\_\_ with Sister Frances Lorene Lange CDP Sister Constansia was awarded a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership. Her intent is to use her skills of leadership and administration in her Congregation's school, St. Bonaventure Middle School, where classes are taught in English.

Sister Constansia will return to Africa in January 2018. Before leaving San Antonio Sister stated, "I feel good. I believe I can help my community and especially those in education. The Masters in Leadership will help me prove to others that it can be done. I am



***Sister Constansia Cyliro, FSSB, with  
Sister Frances Lorene Lange, CDP.***

better equipped to deal with different people of all ages and behavior. I can also help educate my community which is of prime importance. Leadership among women in Tanzania is very limited. Now I can make a difference in the future of my community, the students and those in the surrounding area."

*--Ana Maria Sanchez, ACDP*

---

## Pre-Novitiate Entry

*Continued from page 17*

year later, I still believe this, and I look forward to discovering the many different ways to bring this statement to life "with boundless confidence in God's Providence..."

As I move forward in formation, I am very eager to immerse myself in the history, charism, and life of the Congregation of Divine Providence. I am so very grateful for the many ways I am nurtured, challenged, and guided along the way by our Sisters. With hopeful anticipation, I look forward to all that is to come!

*--Melissa Cessac, Pre-Novice*



**Women of Providence in Collaboration  
Providence Event  
June 15-17, 2018, Kearns Spirituality Center  
Allison Park, Pennsylvania**

*Echoing the Providence of Peace  
in an Intercultural World!*

**Speaker will be  
Megan McKenna**  
An internationally known  
author, theologian,  
storyteller and lecturer,  
she teaches at several  
colleges and  
universities and leads  
retreats, workshops and  
parish missions.  
Megan was appointed an  
Ambassador of Peace for  
Pax Christi in 2002.



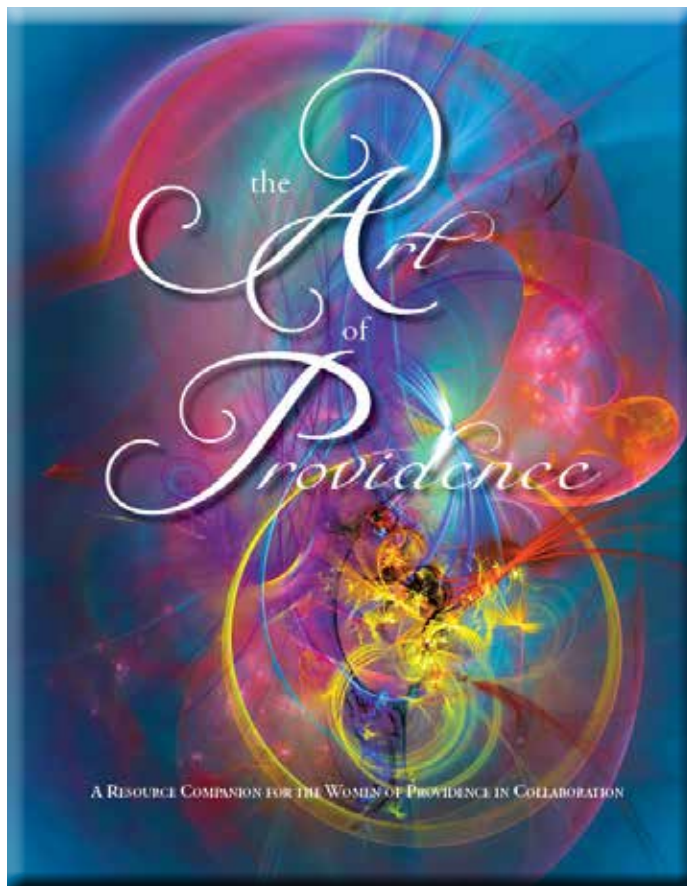
*Join the echo!*

Plus, a special Saturday  
evening program honoring  
Bishop Thomas Gumbleton!



# *The Art of Providence*

Women of Providence in Collaboration is excited to announce its new publication, *The Art of Providence*. This is a beautiful resource book of prayers, poetry, prayer rituals, music, photos, reflections and artwork by various Sisters and Associates in our Providence congregations. The authors have shared their talents with us in a variety of ways. Each of them seeks to express their understandings of Providence through particular art forms.



The contributions witness to the movement of Providence among and within us and we are pleased to share them with a wider audience. Whether you use the book as a resource in your ministry or for your own personal spiritual reading and prayer, you will encounter the God we name Providence.

This 165-page beautiful resource book could be a valuable book for local convents, retreat centers, formation houses as well as it would make a wonderful gift for someone.

## **The Art of Providence**

**US \$18 single book, plus US \$5 shipping/handling; add US \$1 shipping for each additional book up to 10 copies  
US \$15 per book if ordering more than 10 copies; add \$5 shipping/handling; for each additional book over 10,  
add US \$1 shipping/handling**

\_\_\_ **Copies of The Art of Providence**

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Send order form  
and check payable to:**  
(No cash or credit cards.)

**Women of Providence  
in Collaboration  
Barbara McMullen, CDP  
3415 Bridgeland Drive,  
Bridgeton, MO 63044**

For 10 or more books,  
call 314-209-9181 or email  
bmcmullen6650@aol.com

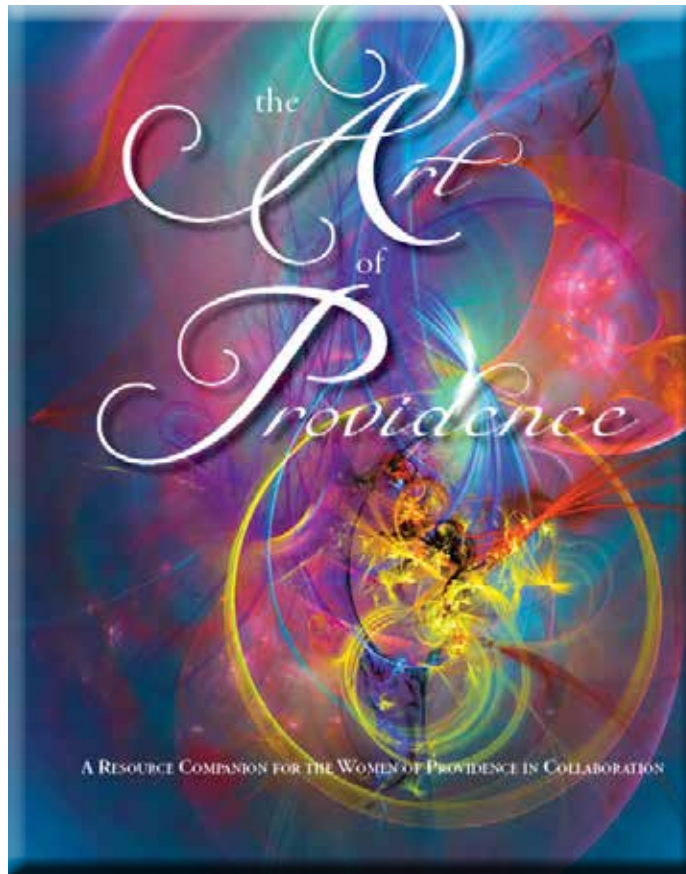




# Providence & Compassion

Within this new and inspiring publication, nine Women of Providence share their understanding of Providence and Compassion through the lens of their lived experience in ministry and community life. These shared personal reflections will expand awareness and appreciation of the intimate link between Providence and Compassion in the lives of not only the author but also within the life of the reader.

Compassion has been personified in Jesus and his ministries, and is central to the charism of Providence women wherever they minister.



You will see how Providence and Compassion are expressed in diverse ministries. You also can discover similarities with your own living and ministry experiences as well as gain new insights from each author. Questions for personal and communal reflection are included with each essay.

This 58-page collection on providence theology and spirituality is a good resource to use with people in formation, in local houses, our providence retreat centers, bookstores in our sponsored colleges and universities, mission departments in our healthcare facilities, and for personal growth and reflection.

## Providence and Compassion

**US \$13 single book, plus US \$3 shipping/handling; add US \$1 shipping for each additional book up to 10 copies  
US \$10 per book if ordering more than 10 copies; add \$5 shipping/handling; for each additional book over 10,  
add US \$1 shipping/handling**

**Send order form  
and check payable to:**  
(No cash or credit cards.)

**Women of Providence  
in Collaboration  
Barbara McMullen, CDP  
3415 Bridgeland Drive,  
Bridgeton, MO 63044**

For 10 or more books,  
call 314-209-9181 or email  
bmcmullen6650@aol.com

\_\_\_ *Copies of Providence and Compassion*

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

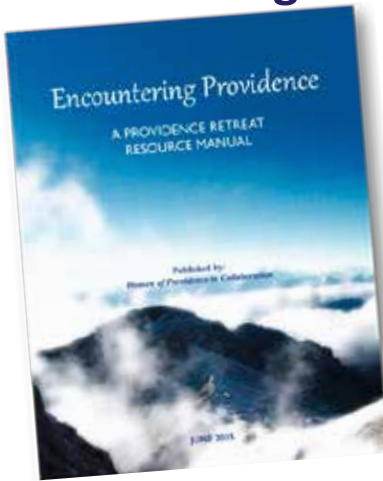
City State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

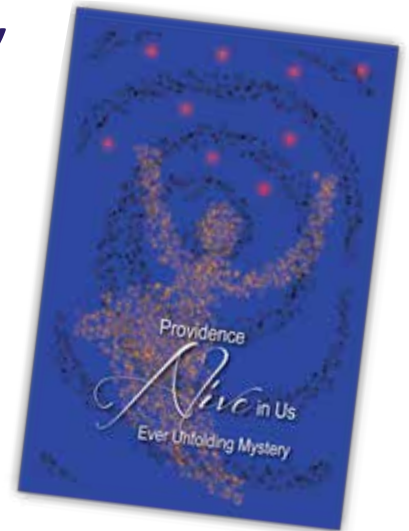
# Encountering Providence: A Providence Retreat Resource Manual



Women of Providence in Collaboration (WPC) is celebrating its 35th Anniversary year with the recently compiled retreat resource manual. Its 12 retreats, submitted by Sisters of Providence and Providence Associates, can be used in retreat centers, private retreatants, local convent retreats, motherhouses, healthcare mission departments, and colleges, just to name a few. The retreats vary in length. Topics range from Images of Advent and Living Contemplatively in a Technological Age, to Spirit Gifts Found in Jesus and Walking as Provident Guests on Earth. (A complete list of topics is available on the WPC website: <http://www.wpcweb.org/>) The black and white manual includes a leader's guide, handouts, prayers, and resources for music, poetry, readings, etc. The manual is printed on three-hole paper for easy placement in a binder of your choice. Each manual has an accompanying flash drive storing various color graphics, PowerPoint and video presentations, and ready-to-print prayer, reflection and leader templates.

## Providence Alive In Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery

The Women of Providence in Collaboration are excited to present their new book, *Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery*. This book is designed to promote and broaden the understanding of Providence theology and spirituality and how, over the years, it has affected our lives. The authors will lead us in this search for still deeper engagement with Ever Unfolding Mystery. Authors include Marie McCarthy, SP and Anji Fan, SP from the St. Mary-of-the-Woods in Terre Haute, IN; Ruth McGoldrick, SP from the Sisters of Providence in Holyoke, MA; Michele Bisbey and Myra Rodgers are CDPs from the Allison Park, PA, Sisters of Divine Providence; Alba Letelier, SP, Hong Nga Nguyen, SP and Annette Suebert, SP are from the Sisters of Providence who began in Montreal, Quebec, and spread throughout the United States. New contributors, as well as four reflections devoted to intercultural voices and experiences, also take us inside ourselves to probe deeper meanings of abundance, expansion of partnership with God in the very action of transforming our world, and the challenges of being the face of Providence within a different culture and in different settings. Truly this work will provide much food for thought as to how each of us lives the charism of Providence in the world today.



## Encountering Providence: A Providence Retreat Resource Manual

US \$50/book, plus US \$5 shipping/handling; add US \$1 shipping for each additional book up to 5 copies

## Providence Alive In Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery

US \$15/book, plus US \$5 shipping/handling; add US \$1 shipping for each additional book up to 5 copies

\_\_\_ Copies of *Encountering Providence – A Providence Retreat and Resource Manual*

\_\_\_ Copies of *Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery*

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Send order form  
and check payable to:**  
(No cash or credit cards.)

**Women of Providence  
in Collaboration  
Barbara McMullen, CDP  
3415 Bridgeland Drive,  
Bridgeton, MO 63044**

For orders of 6 or more books,  
call 314-209-9181 or email  
[bmcullen6650@aol.com](mailto:bmcullen6650@aol.com)



## Unique Opportunity for Women Religious and Others

*Consider taking a break with the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. You will slow down and take time to listen as you immerse yourself in an organic farm experience for 3-12 months. You'll live and work among the Sisters of Providence at White Violet Center for Eco-Justice in Indiana, to transform yourself ... transform the world. Check out [internships.whiteviolet.org](http://internships.whiteviolet.org) for more information.*



## Future Dates/Coming Events

### 2018

**February 23-25** WPC Providence Event Committee Meeting in Allison Park, PA

**April 4-5** WPC Governing Board Meeting in Kingston, Ontario, Canada

**April 12-14** WPC Vocation/Formation/Leadership Conference in Melbourne, KY

**June 15-17** WPC Providence Event in Allison Park, PA

### 2019

**TBD** WPC Governing Board Meeting in Westfield, MA

**Collaboration** is published by the Women of Providence in Collaboration ♦ [www.wpcweb.org](http://www.wpcweb.org)

*Executive Director:* Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP

3415 Bridgeland Drive ♦ St. Louis, MO 63044 ♦ 314-209-9181 ♦ [bmcullen6650@aol.com](mailto:bmcullen6650@aol.com)

*Member Congregations:* Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Allison Park, PA ♦ Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne, KY ♦ Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, San Antonio, TX  
Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Wakefield, RI ♦ Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence, San Antonio, TX ♦ Oblate Sisters of Providence, Baltimore, MD ♦ Sisters of Providence, Holyoke, MA ♦ Sisters of Providence, Montreal, QC, Canada ♦ Sisters of Providence (Emilie-Gamelin Province), Montreal, QC, Canada  
Sisters of Providence, Seattle/Spokane, WA ♦ Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN ♦ Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Kingston, ON, Canada ♦ Sisters of Providence, Edmonton, AL, Canada