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# Providence Moments

CONGREGATION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE | MELBOURNE, KY



Pictured: Provincial Superior Sister Barbara Rohe with jubilarians (clockwise from top left) Sister Mary Duddey, Sister Georgianna Abplanalp, Sister Ruth Nadicksbernd, and Sister Paula Gohs.

## LIVES OF VIRTUE

These Sisters have their own approach to the CDP charism.  
(Story on pages 6-9.)

**INSIDE—** Stories of our jubilarians, a reflection on charity, updates on our Associates, and more!

# God's People Provide

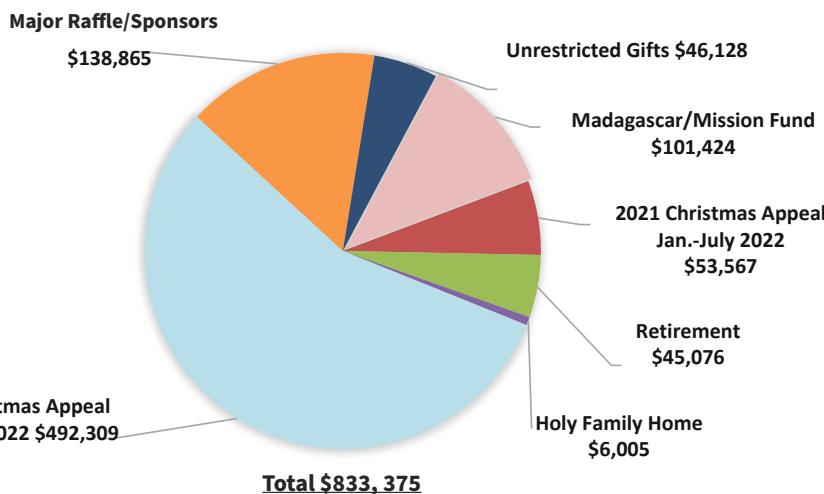
Dear Friends,

The concluding words in the poem of Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" offer a poignant reflection:

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —  
I took the one less traveled by,  
and that has made all the difference."

Your generosity and support enable us to travel that other road, making a difference in the lives of many people we serve through our various ministries throughout the world. This report offers a summary of the gracious kindness we received in 2022, despite a difficult economic year. We are truly grateful and assure you of our prayers!

—Sister Barbara Rohe



## Providence Moments

is the newsletter of the Sisters of Divine Providence in Melbourne, Kentucky. "As Sisters of Divine Providence we have a mission to be living witnesses to the Providence of God. God's love becomes real in us as we go out to be Providence to others through the works of mercy."

— Constitutions of the Congregation of Divine Providence

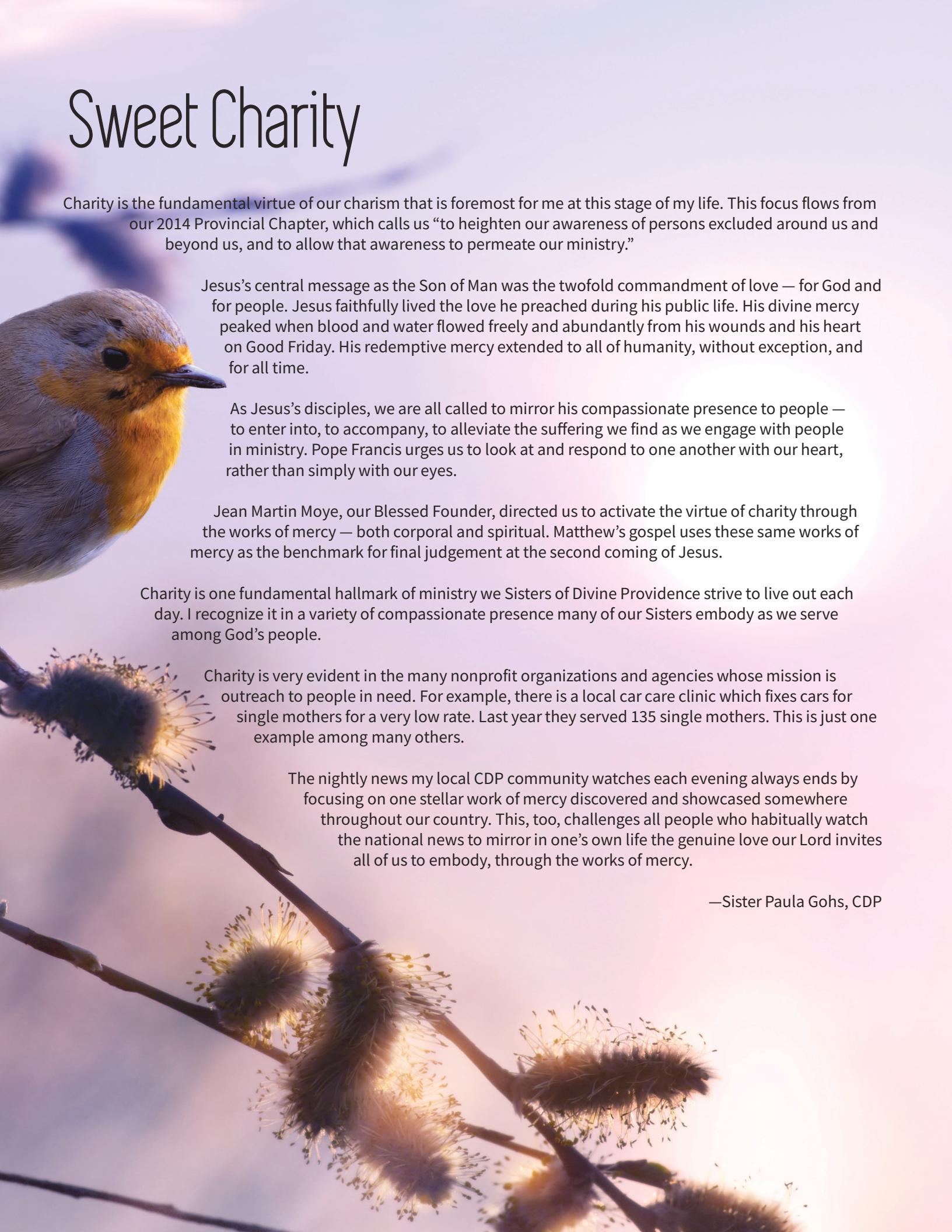
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# Sweet Charity

Charity is the fundamental virtue of our charism that is foremost for me at this stage of my life. This focus flows from our 2014 Provincial Chapter, which calls us “to heighten our awareness of persons excluded around us and beyond us, and to allow that awareness to permeate our ministry.”

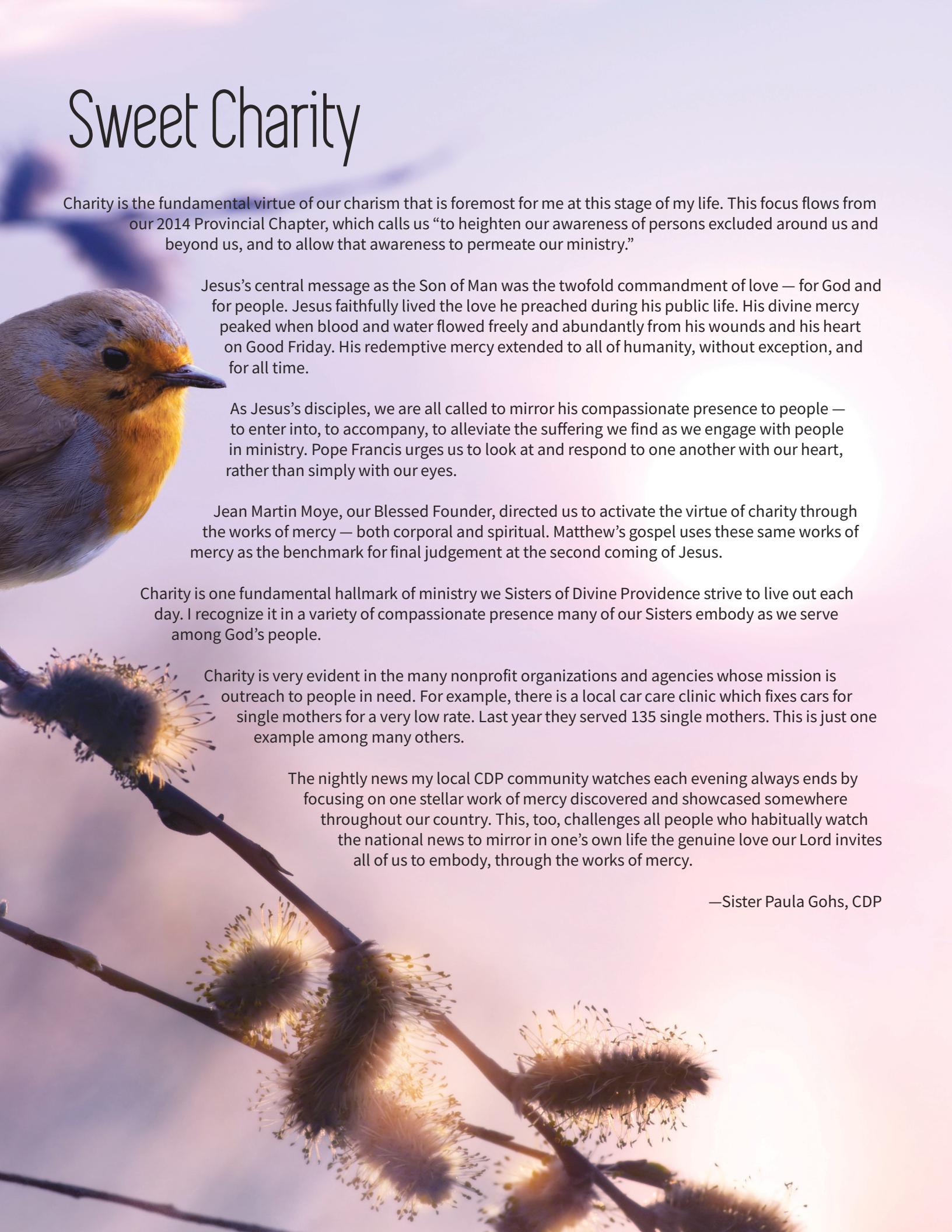


Jesus's central message as the Son of Man was the twofold commandment of love — for God and for people. Jesus faithfully lived the love he preached during his public life. His divine mercy peaked when blood and water flowed freely and abundantly from his wounds and his heart on Good Friday. His redemptive mercy extended to all of humanity, without exception, and for all time.

As Jesus's disciples, we are all called to mirror his compassionate presence to people — to enter into, to accompany, to alleviate the suffering we find as we engage with people in ministry. Pope Francis urges us to look at and respond to one another with our heart, rather than simply with our eyes.

Jean Martin Moye, our Blessed Founder, directed us to activate the virtue of charity through the works of mercy — both corporal and spiritual. Matthew's gospel uses these same works of mercy as the benchmark for final judgement at the second coming of Jesus.

Charity is one fundamental hallmark of ministry we Sisters of Divine Providence strive to live out each day. I recognize it in a variety of compassionate presence many of our Sisters embody as we serve among God's people.



Charity is very evident in the many nonprofit organizations and agencies whose mission is outreach to people in need. For example, there is a local car care clinic which fixes cars for single mothers for a very low rate. Last year they served 135 single mothers. This is just one example among many others.

The nightly news my local CDP community watches each evening always ends by focusing on one stellar work of mercy discovered and showcased somewhere throughout our country. This, too, challenges all people who habitually watch the national news to mirror in one's own life the genuine love our Lord invites all of us to embody, through the works of mercy.

—Sister Paula Gohs, CDP

# “I Entrust Myself to your Providence”



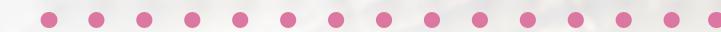
**Sister Ruth  
70  
Nadicksbernd**



Sister Ruth Nadicksbernd came to religious life as a sort of package deal. Her older sister Mary Ann preceded her into the convent and her younger sister Juanita followed her to St. Anne's as a CDP. Her brother Elmer was ordained a priest with the Society of the Divine Word.

She knew the Sisters from St. Bernard School in Dayton, Kentucky, where she had them as teachers for eight years. “I have always been touched by their faith and friendliness,” she says.

“I have felt Providence at work during my whole religious life, but particularly when I met with some very difficult situations. I was able to accept these difficulties because of my strong faith in the Providence of God.”



**Sister Georgianna  
60  
Abplanalp**



Sister Georgianna Abplanalp had to learn the basics of the Catholic faith at about the same time her class was tackling sentence diagramming. “I was baptized into the faith just before changing schools and entering eighth grade at St. Stephen in Newport, Kentucky. So I never imagined I’d become a Sister.”

She had no trouble catching up, though, and began her teaching ministry at St. Agatha Academy in Winchester, Kentucky. She held several teaching posts in Kentucky, Maryland, and Ohio. In the 1980s, she developed a keen interest in photography, an artistic outlet she pursues to this day along with her ministry at St. Anne's, saying, “I treasure the times I can pick up my camera and capture the beauty of the convent grounds.”



IAE TUAE  
MMITTO

# Jubilarians Celebrate Their Long Service

**Sister Mary Duddey** was named after her aunt (later Sister Mary Huber, CDP), a postulant at St. Anne. She attended St. Francis de Sales School in Newport, where she was taught by the CDPs. Early on, she discovered a desire to become a missionary and learned she could be a missionary in the USA with the CDPs. She became a registered medical records administrator and worked as the director of medical records and quality assurance at Clark County Hospital in Winchester, Kentucky.

Sister Mary also worked in Cincinnati at Bayley Place, Mother Margaret Hall, and Grace Place, a house of hospitality where she learned of the challenges facing refugee families. She worked closely with the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement program and later became a health specialist there.

**Sister Paula Gohs** entered the convent shortly after her high school graduation and, for twenty-five years, dedicated herself to teaching religion, English, and history in Kentucky high schools. During this time, she made valuable contributions through creative teaching and writing, including organizing successful school plays. After her teaching career, she engaged in parish ministry in La Joya, Texas, and then focused on bilingual catechetical ministry at the Cathedral Parish in Covington. Later, she became a Pastoral Associate at St. John the Evangelist Church.

One of her favorite Gospel passages is when Jesus invited Peter to get out of the boat and join him in walking on the water. “As long as Peter’s eyes were on Jesus, he could do the impossible. This has become a stellar symbol for me of the challenge of following Jesus — to get out of the boat over and over again, and to keep my eyes on Jesus.” 

**Sister Mary  
Duddey**  
60



**Sister Paula  
Gohs**  
60





Twenty-five year jubilarians in 1988:(seated, left to right) Sister Paula Gohs, Sister Georgianna Abplanalp, Sister Mary Duddey; (standing, left to right) Bishop William Hughes and Sister Mary Theresa Bowman, Provincial

## Jubilarians Reflect on CDP Virtues

Our jubilarians have lived long lives of service. They have 255 years of vowed religious life among the four of them. When we interviewed them about their upcoming celebration, we asked them to note one CDP virtue that has been especially important to them as they reflect on their lives. As Providence would have it, they each emphasized a different virtue.

Our jubilarian with the longest tenure is **Sister Ruth Nadicksbernd**, who entered the convent as a candidate in 1948. A self-described “tomboy,” Sister Ruth thought her life would include marriage and a lot of children, but during Lent one year she wrote her older sister and said she wanted to go to the convent.

She went out teaching quite early (in fact, Sister Virginia Ann Wolfzorn was one of her students, and she was just four years younger) and at her first Christmas was so homesick that she began to second-guess her new life.

But her older sister confessed that her mother never expected her to stay and was even still holding on to her old clothes. That steeled her resolve and she has never looked back.

The virtue she finds most central to her vocation is poverty. “Our family was anything but rich,” she says. “Actually, everybody in Dayton [Kentucky] was poor, but none of us knew it. And I’ve always tried to live a life of poverty.”

She confesses she found it hard to give up the veil and make the switch to lay clothing. “But my hearing was getting bad and it helped to not have all that cloth covering my ears.” But she still preferred quieter colors — blue or black — and a simple environment.

“I don’t have a lot of ‘trinkets’ or a lot of pictures on the wall or things that encumber me,” she says.

# POVERTY



She spent most of her life teaching, but at one point, her vivid and varied career led her to serve at the second-poorest parish in West Virginia, which was pastored by her brother Elmer. There she was housekeeper and sacristan, ran the food pantry, taught RCIA and high school religion classes — “I did everything but say Mass and hear confession.”

One story she thinks some may not know about her is a doozy. “I don’t remember the hour, but it was Thursday, March 13 [2022]. I was pronounced dead in the hospital. I went through a tunnel, I saw my mom and dad, I saw my grandparents on both sides of the family, and at the very end, I saw my very best friend, Sister Mary Frances Sobczak,” she says. “But I didn’t see God, so I knew I could not be dead.”

“Don’t bury me; I am not dead!” I shouted,” she recalls, “and I was home four days later.” The doctors said that it was not the medication, but “the prayer of the Sisters that kept you alive.”

**Sister Georgianna Abplanalp** chose another focus: “Abandonment to Divine Providence is my life,” she says. I had a mother who would say, ‘Can you change it? If not, live with it.’ I grew up with that so I think that everything that has come into my life has had a purpose.”

“I was baptized on August 11, 1956. I started eighth grade three weeks later.” Most of the girls in her class were going to the Academy Notre Dame de la Providence, but she didn’t think her family could afford the tuition.

There was a difference between the CDPs she met there and the Notre Dame Sisters she’d had in grade school. “They were both wonderful, but there was definitely a difference; I couldn’t quite put my finger on it.”

When tuition went up the next year, she knew she didn’t want to put any more financial pressure on the family. But Providence found a way: The Sisters put her to work. “I worked before school, after school, and Saturday mornings. I worked off my tuition for the next three years,” she says.

This gave her a chance to meet the Sisters outside the classroom. “They had a peace, a serenity, that touched me,” she says, “but I still never thought of becoming a Sister.”

One retreat at the convent later, and she couldn’t get the idea out of her mind. “I decided to enter, but I was afraid to face my family, especially my dad. We were very close and I knew he didn’t want to lose me. I entered on his birthday, August 15.”



## **Sister Georgianna Abplanalp with Easter treats, 2015.**

When he was dying, I was sitting with him. He didn't know who I was, but he said, "She made me the proudest person in the world the day she entered the convent."

Sister Georgianna spent decades teaching but says, "Right now, my mission is at Holy Family Home. I try to do things that will involve the Sisters in something outside themselves. I also minister at dialysis [fourteen years and counting]. I get to know some of the patients very well. Every day they ask me for prayers."

As for her life's ministry, she says, "I have not regretted a day. I can't imagine doing anything else."

For **Sister Mary Duddey**, simplicity is the central virtue. “Be who you are and what you are,” she says. “This is sometimes difficult for me because I’m so introverted; being open with people just doesn’t come naturally.

A life in community may always have been in the cards for Sister Mary. She was named after an aunt who had just entered the convent and her family was also linked to the CDPs through her mother and father's cousins.

who were Sisters of Divine Providence. Plus, she says, "I always liked doing things for other people."

She says with a smile, "I always thought I'd have a life of service, But the religious side of things took a bit more getting used to."

Sister Mary knew that becoming a CDP would likely involve some teaching, and she got an early start. But later she attended St. Louis University to learn medical recordkeeping, as Our Lady of the Way Hospital in Martin, Kentucky, needed help with its medical records.

She rarely did just one thing, though. "I like to be always doing something," she says. "I'm very task-oriented." So while working in hospital administration, she also consulted for nursing homes and other health care facilities.

Later she took on another challenge: helping refugees from Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the Congo build new lives in the United States. Working with the Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Services, she learned about the horrors these people had faced and the

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courage and resilience they showed in rebuilding their lives.

"Hearing their stories was terrible sometimes," she says. And while the doctors had interpreters, sometimes they needed things explained a bit more directly. "I'd use my hands or paper — whatever it took to reinforce the verbal message they were getting. I helped them navigate the financial system and learn how to buy groceries. It was a lot of social work."

For her, living a simple life comes down to following the Gospel and "Be aware of yourself and the present moment and what you can do."

Charity is the virtue most dear to **Sister Paula Gohs**, so much so that she contributed this issue's reflection on that subject (see page 3).

As an elementary student at St. Bernard in Dayton, Kentucky, she was impressed by her CDP teachers. "Each Sister was a stellar teacher," she says. "I loved them all."

But it was her father who made the biggest impression on her. "As I knelt beside Dad in church, he would always be intensely focused on the altar. I knew there was something very special between Dad and God. I was intrigued and wanted whatever that was."

She loved using her creativity to teach religion and English and help the Drama Club kids gain self-confidence. Sister Paula credits her pastoral ministry experiences on the US-Mexico border with stretching her in a very different direction.

"Ministry has stretched me in multiple ways," she says. "I am very, very happy to be part of our CDP community." 

SIMPLICITY

CHARITY





## Solomons Associates Share the Charism

The Sisters of Divine Providence arrived at the newly opened Our Lady Star of the Sea School in Solomons, Maryland, in 1933. At first, they taught children in the basement of the church. Over the years, Sisters from that congregation also served in a variety of ministries at the parish, with the last four members of their community serving in ministry to the sick, hospital ministry, pastoral ministry, and by tutoring children.

A robust community of Associates built up around these Sisters. While the Sisters left the parish in 2020, the Associate community keeps their charism alive.

In a Mass marking the Sisters' departure, it was noted, "The greatest gift we could offer the Sisters, our four friends and those who have served before them, is that we live as they taught us, as they witnessed, as they sought to share with us, as they do tomorrow when they continue to serve God faithfully, leaving what they know and venturing out into an unknown but exciting future full of faith."

Anne Etzel shares that she hesitated when asked to join, worried it would be one more thing on an already packed to-do list. But, "One day a copy of Providence Moments arrived in my mail. On the back page was printed a prayer — "Abandonment to Divine Providence."

"I was overcome by the sensitivity and suitability of this prayer to modern life," she says. "When I learned it was composed by Fr. Moyer in the 1700's I was astounded. I am convinced that Providence, through this beautiful prayer, gave me the grace to answer God's invitation to become an associate."

Reflecting on Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, located on a scenic spot on the waterfront of the Patuxent River, Sister Barb Rohe said, "It's beautiful, not just natural beauty. It's the people who've lived there and worked side-by-side with us over the years who are also beautiful." 

# Called to Eternal Life

“Eternal rest  
grant to them, O Lord,  
and let perpetual light  
shine upon them.”



## SISTER MARY BELLE BORROS

Sr. Mary Belle (Sr. Paul Marion) Borros died peacefully at Holy Family Home on March 28, 2023. Born Mary Belle Elizabeth to Marion and Pauline (Wichmann) Borros of Covington,

Kentucky, in 1934, she was a professed member of the Congregation of Divine Providence for sixty-eight years. Sixteen years of teaching ministry saw her serve at four elementary schools in Kentucky and Ohio, as well as principal of St. Michael School in Ripley, Ohio (1968–1970).

A deeply spiritual woman, in 1973 she was one of five Sisters missioned by the Congregation to begin its Aletheia House of Prayer in Melbourne, Kentucky. Called in 1978 by her Provident God to minister to the more than 140 women

living at the Jeanne d'Arc Residence in New York City, she took up her new mission with love and enthusiasm.

To better serve its residents, during the next eight years she became an auxiliary policewoman with the NYC Police Department, learned to speak Spanish, and earned a certificate in Spiritual Development from the New York Archdiocesan School of Spirituality. In 1986, she began what she described as “one of the most privileged times of my life, to minister to and learn from our elderly Sisters.” Her gentle demeanor, kindness, sense of humor, and ability to “go with the flow” suited her appointment as animator of the Congregation’s Holy Family Home in Melbourne, Kentucky. Serving the Sisters there until 1997, after a brief sabbatical she responded to yet another call of Providence, becoming Assistant Director of Activities at St. Charles Care Center in Northern Kentucky.

Sr. Mary Belle retired to Holy Family Home in 2014. She moved to the Holy Family Health Care Center in 2017. She will be missed by her religious community, the Sisters of Divine Providence, and her nieces, nephews, cousins, and many friends, especially her close friend and CDP Director of Associates, Donna Esposito.

# Care for Our Common Home



The Church calls us to be “stewards of the earth.” To deepen our commitment to being good stewards, and to celebrate Earth Day, Sisters, Associates, and friends from the Diocese of Covington and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati gathered April 20 at our Province Center.

Sister Lynn Stenken led the group in an opening prayer and introduced speakers Fr. John Converset, mccj, (CDP chaplain), Laurie Roche (Bellarmine Parish), Meghan Shaughnessy (St. Xavier High School), and Sister Kay Kramer, who shared their thoughts on climate change, how to engage parishes and youth in activities to care for the earth, and practical tips on what one person can do. We continue to learn and take action to care for the earth. Remember: We can all do something! 🌸

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## A Walk Down Memory Lane

