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Providence Moments

CONGREGATION OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE | MELBOURNE, KY



Pictured: Sister Janet Bucher at Our Savior Church in Covington, Kentucky.

MAKING THE PATH BY WALKING Sister Janet Bucher reflects on her work at Our Savior Church in Covington, Kentucky. (Story on pages 4–5.)

INSIDE— An exciting new international community takes root in Poitiers, France; Sister Mary Agnes shares a hopeful message; and more.



Provincial Chapter: A Time of Prayer and Planning

Our Provincial Chapter in June yielded the opportunity to get a group photo of the Sisters gathered in Melbourne, Kentucky. While our many ministries can sometimes keep us physically apart, we know that we are all working together—and together with you, our friends and benefactors. 🌿

Save the Date for Beyond the Oaks 2025

We expect another packed house at the Newport Syndicate on May 17 for our annual social event, featuring an evening of food, friends and fun! Those unable to attend in person can still participate by bidding online for a host of enticing donated gifts. From exclusive experiences to unique treasures, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Our gift-giving meeting is on March 8 at the Province Center. Details coming soon! 🌿

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."

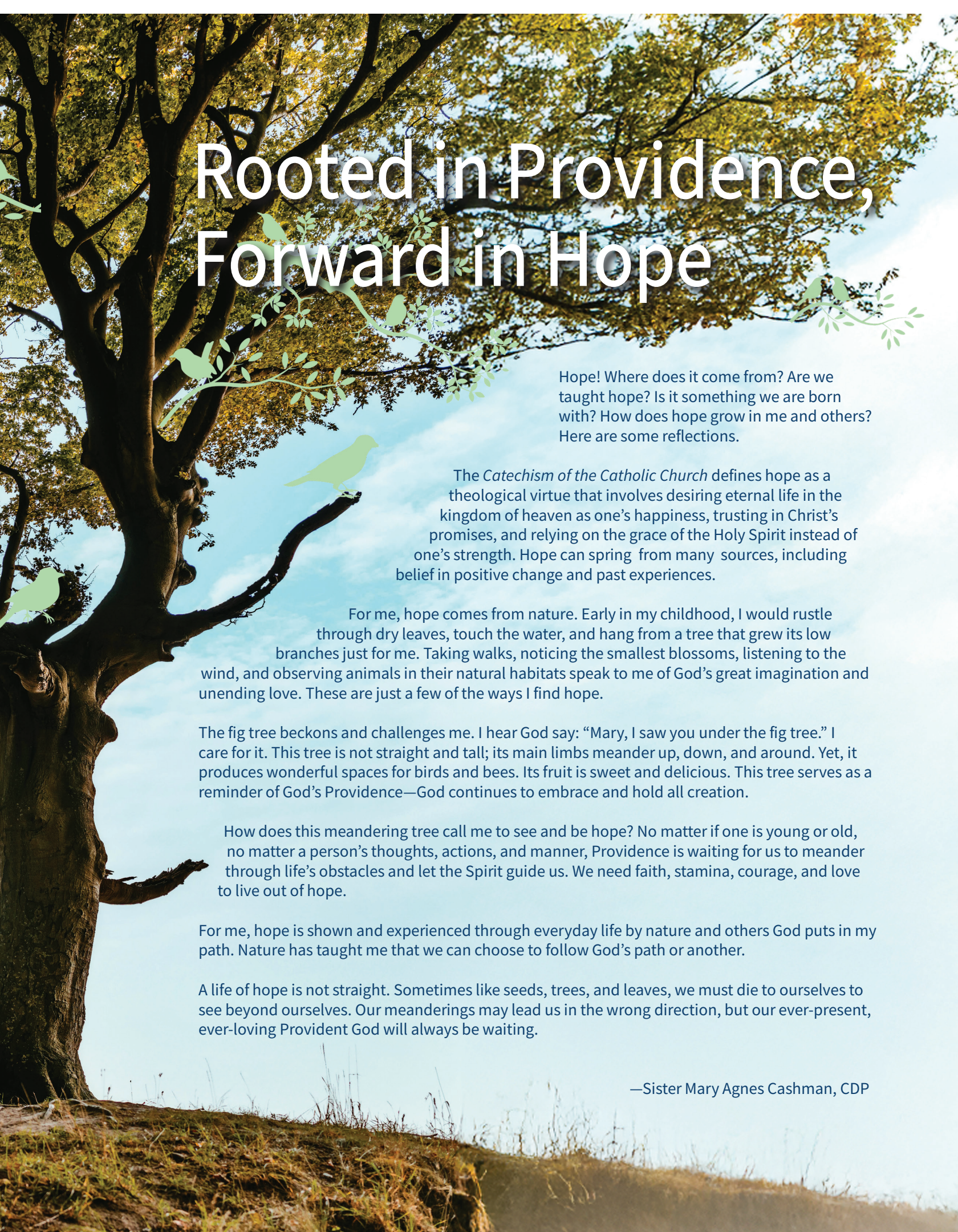
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Rooted in Providence, Forward in Hope

Hope! Where does it come from? Are we taught hope? Is it something we are born with? How does hope grow in me and others? Here are some reflections.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines hope as a theological virtue that involves desiring eternal life in the kingdom of heaven as one's happiness, trusting in Christ's promises, and relying on the grace of the Holy Spirit instead of one's strength. Hope can spring from many sources, including belief in positive change and past experiences.

For me, hope comes from nature. Early in my childhood, I would rustle through dry leaves, touch the water, and hang from a tree that grew its low branches just for me. Taking walks, noticing the smallest blossoms, listening to the wind, and observing animals in their natural habitats speak to me of God's great imagination and unending love. These are just a few of the ways I find hope.

The fig tree beckons and challenges me. I hear God say: "Mary, I saw you under the fig tree." I care for it. This tree is not straight and tall; its main limbs meander up, down, and around. Yet, it produces wonderful spaces for birds and bees. Its fruit is sweet and delicious. This tree serves as a reminder of God's Providence—God continues to embrace and hold all creation.

How does this meandering tree call me to see and be hope? No matter if one is young or old, no matter a person's thoughts, actions, and manner, Providence is waiting for us to meander through life's obstacles and let the Spirit guide us. We need faith, stamina, courage, and love to live out of hope.

For me, hope is shown and experienced through everyday life by nature and others God puts in my path. Nature has taught me that we can choose to follow God's path or another.

A life of hope is not straight. Sometimes like seeds, trees, and leaves, we must die to ourselves to see beyond ourselves. Our meanderings may lead us in the wrong direction, but our ever-present, ever-loving Provident God will always be waiting.

—Sister Mary Agnes Cashman, CDP



Making the Path By Walking

Sister Janet's Friendly Neighborhood Parish

Sister Janet Bucher, CDP, has been walking the streets of Covington, Kentucky, for over three decades—both literally and figuratively—with a spirit that embodies resilience, hope, and unshakable faith. As the parish administrator of Our Savior Church, Sister Janet knows that her footsteps echo not just on the pavement but in the hearts of the community she serves.

“Presence is a ministry,” she often says, and she lives that truth. Whether it’s visiting the women’s dorms at local jails, chatting with neighbors during one of her long walks, or making sure every detail of the Sunday service is in place, Sister Janet’s mission is one of connection. At Our Savior Church, a small but vibrant parish nestled near the Licking River, she is more than a leader—she is family.

When Sister Janet arrived at Our Savior in 1991, the church was at a crossroads. Originally founded in 1943 as an all-Black Catholic parish with a school that

offered an alternative to segregation, the community had evolved but faced dwindling numbers. But where others might have seen a struggling parish, Sister Janet saw potential. “Somehow Providence put all this together,” she reflects. With a blend of determination and creativity, she set about breathing new life into the church.

She embraced the rich cultural heritage of the parish, weaving African elements into the liturgy and decorations. The music—joyful, soulful, and spirited—fills the intimate space every Sunday. It’s not unusual for parishioners to leave saying, “I feel like I’ve really been to church!”

But Sister Janet’s ministry goes far beyond Sunday mornings. Every week, she organizes a potluck after Mass, where everyone is welcome to share food and fellowship. For over 25 years, she’s hosted a Martin Luther King Jr. discussion breakfast, inviting diverse



voices to tackle important topics like racism, prison reform, and healthcare injustice. These gatherings aren't just events; they're opportunities for dialogue, understanding, and growth.

Her tireless efforts also extend to social justice. Recognizing the need for an emergency shelter in Covington, she was instrumental in finding a temporary home for what would become the Emergency Shelter of Northern Kentucky. Though her schedule doesn't allow her as much time there now, she still supports its mission wholeheartedly.

And then there's the jail ministry. For nearly 30 years, Sister Janet has visited inmates, bringing a listening ear and a compassionate heart to those who often feel forgotten.

"Even if it's just one person," she says, "I can't tell you how often I've heard, 'This is just what I needed.'"

Her hands-on approach to ministry means she wears many hats: administrator, janitor, secretary, and even maintenance worker. Parishioners affectionately call her "Pastor Janet," a nod to her all-encompassing care for the church and its people. She jokes that her walking shoes get as much use inside the church as they do outside.

Looking ahead, Sister Janet's vision for Our Savior Church is one of continuity and growth. She hopes to see the parish's Black Catholic roots honored and its welcoming spirit maintained. "We want to keep the church visible and alive," she says. "The buildings won't last forever,

but the spirit of this place can."

That spirit—one of resilience, inclusivity, and joy—is a testament to Sister Janet's leadership. She has not only kept Our Savior Church standing; she has turned it into a beacon of hope. For those who cross its threshold, the message is clear: Everyone is welcome, and everyone belongs.

In Sister Janet's story, the threads of history, faith, and community are woven into a tapestry of hope. It's a legacy she continues to walk—one step, one conversation, one act of kindness at a time. 🌱



An International Community Blossoms in Poitiers

Unity in Diversity

In Poitiers, France, a newly formed international community of Sisters is fostering cultural exchange and collaboration. Established in December 2023, the group includes five Sisters from Madagascar, Sister Marie Claire Schwartz from the Province of Europe, and Sister Susan Baumann, a former Superior General of the congregation. Known for her passion for education and international cooperation, Sister Susan found working with this new group a natural transition.

A Festive Start

The Sisters recently celebrated Thanksgiving with a traditional American feast, showcasing their commitment to sharing cultural traditions. After an Advent-themed prayer and reflection, the group gathered to watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on YouTube and enjoy drinks and appetizers.

The meal was a highlight, featuring turkey, stuffing, cranberries, and a variety of sides, including sweet potatoes and Brussels sprouts. Homemade pumpkin and apple pies, served with vanilla ice cream, completed the celebration. "The meal was a hit—no one appeared in the kitchen to look for any supper!" Sister Susan said.

Learning and Adapting

In the beginning, there were many new and different things to discover and adjust to—heavy coats, gloves, hats, and scarves for the winter cold being one of the first! Sister Susan reports that there had to be an introduction to cooking with an electric stove and oven, using a washer and dryer, working on a computer, paying with euros, and navigating the transportation system.

The Sisters are also working to improve their French language skills, essential for their university studies. Their classes include peers from around the world, adding an extra layer of cultural enrichment. Activities such as visiting elderly residents and preparing group skits have provided valuable opportunities for language practice and building community.

Looking Ahead

This community reflects the congregation's commitment to build connections across cultures and offer new opportunities for growth. It allows the Malagasy Sisters access to educational opportunities not readily available in their home country.

"Understanding and accepting differences is essential for the future of the congregation—and the world," Sister Susan said. In their first year together, the Sisters in Poitiers have demonstrated how cooperation and shared purpose can create a strong and supportive community. 🌱

Called to Eternal Life

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

SISTER MARILENE CULLEN



Sister Marilene Cullen (Sister James Marie), a professed member of the Congregation of Divine Providence for seventy-two years, died peacefully at Holy Family Home on December 18, 2024. She was ninety-one.

Inspired by the simplicity, friendliness, and down-to-earth approach of the Sisters of Divine Providence who taught her at Assumption School in Mt. Healthy, Ohio, Sister Marilene entered St. Anne Convent in 1950. She dedicated her life to education, teaching and serving as principal in schools in Rhode Island, Kentucky, and Ohio.

She also helped establish and lead Our Lady of Providence Secondary School in Ghana from 1988 to 1994.

After returning to Kentucky, Sister Marilene enjoyed organic gardening, environmental education, and volunteering. She expressed her artistic spirit through her artwork, poetry, and a keen sense of humor. Known for her laughter and kindness, she cherished the beauty of creation and found joy in serving others. Sister Marilene will be remembered as a generous and witty woman deeply rooted in her faith.

SISTER GEORGIA MARIE MESSINGSCHLAGER



Born November 23, 1938, in Covington, Kentucky, Sister Georgia Marie Messingschlager entered eternal life on January 23, 2025, at Holy Family Home. She was eighty-six years old and had been a professed member of the Congregation of Divine Providence for sixty-six years.

She is survived by her brother Rick, her sisters, Sister Marie Rose, CDP, and Betty Hummel, and her nieces and nephews.

Sister Georgia Marie began her teaching ministry at St. Ann Elementary School in 1958. She later taught Latin and history at Our Lady of Providence Academy and then

Covington Catholic High School, where she was fondly known as “the nun.” In 1983, she became the first woman religious to teach at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati, continuing until 2014.

She volunteered at St. Bernard Food Pantry, supported the elderly at St. Matthew’s Parish, and inspired countless students through service projects and annual trips to western reservations. An avid gardener, she shared her produce, jellies, and jams as cherished gifts. Known for her compassion, joyful smile, and deep care for others, she formed enduring bonds throughout her life.

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