

WINTER 2024 - 2025

A Lifetime of Faith & Service from Shenandoah, PA

From the streets of Shenandoah, PA—a town well known for nurturing Bernardine Franciscan vocations—the journey of **Sister Danielle Marie Kubelsky** began. Surrounded by the love of her devout Catholic family and inspired by the Bernardines who taught her at St. Stanislaus Elementary School, young Danielle believed she was called by God to become a Sister.

With her family's encouragement, Danielle jumped at the opportunity to attend the Sisters' high school in Reading, PA. After graduating, she eagerly embarked on her path to Sisterhood. Though her initial dream of nursing was redirected, Sister Danielle embraced education, earning degrees from Alvernia College and Marywood University.

For 66 years, Sister Danielle has embodied the Franciscan spirit of service. Her impact spans generations—from elementary classrooms to college halls, Sister has ignited a love for learning in countless students. As a counselor, she guided young people through life's challenges with wisdom and compassion. Many of her most treasured memories come from her time serving at St. Thomas More Elementary School and Holy Name High School in the Allentown Diocese.

Sister's talents extended beyond the classroom. She served as Alvernia College's registrar, the Congregation's Executive Secretary, and a U.S. Province Leader. Today, Sister coordinates the health benefits and government programs for the Congregation, ensuring that the Sisters and their employees receive the best possible care.

When asked what has given Sister Danielle the drive to work so diligently in all her varied roles, she exclaimed without hesitation: **"Living the Gospel is my life, my mission, and my passion!"**

The transformative power of faith and service are values that continue to shape the lives of individuals and communities today. These values gracefully and fittingly exemplify Sister Danielle Marie Kubelsky. †



Sr. Danielle Marie (right) assists **Sr. Marie Cacciatore** in signing up for PA insurance. Sister Marie recently returned to Reading from Michigan.



Building Communities of Faith in the Amazon



Born in Dom Feliciano, Brazil, the journey of **Sister Lusete Morelli** with the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters began in her childhood. "When I was very young, I would visit the Sisters and bring them cookies that my mother had baked," she recalls fondly. This early connection blossomed, and after finishing high school, Lusete answered God's call to dedicate her life to God as a Bernardine Franciscan Sister.

After earning a BS degree in Education & Guidance and a postgraduate degree in Pastoral Theology, Sister Lusete's ministry became diverse and far-reaching. For over 39 years, she worked in the schools, directed the Sisters' formation program, served as a member of the Provincial Council, and ministered as a missionary in the Dominican Republic.

Sr. Lusete (right) meets with Novice, **Jasmim Oliveira**.

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Building Communities of Faith in the Amazon *continued from page 1*

Today, Sister is working in the heart of the Amazon where she encounters her greatest joys and challenges. "We support 13 communities," she explains. "Our mission involves religious instruction, Sacrament preparation, migrant pastoral care, and the training of leaders and catechists."

The challenges are significant. Communities are spread far apart, and the furthest mission is 139 miles away. The dirt roads are impassable during the rainy season,

yet Sister Lusete faces these obstacles with unwavering determination. **"My greatest reward," Sister remarks, "is serving a community of simple, welcoming people, who are eager and ready to embrace God's love."** Trusting in God's loving Providence, Sister Lusete continues each day to form deep and beautiful communities of faith. Indeed, the legacy of our first missionary Sisters, who arrived in Brazil in 1937, lives on through the ministry of Sister Lusete Morelli. †



Bernadine serves on *National Board*

have one of its members serve at the national level.

As a religious US-based organization, the Franciscan Federation is a diverse group of Franciscans who seek a deeper understanding and love of the Franciscan movement in our world today through collaboration.

Sister Sandra has been an integral part of the Franciscan Federation for 16 years where she was a member, and then chairperson of the regional Steering Committee. In 2012 Sister was invited to serve on the Federation's Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee.

Originally from Wisconsin, Sister Sandra has been a Bernardine for nearly 60 years. After working as a nurse and then midwife for the first 25 years of her religious life, Sister spent three years teaching nursing to young women in Romania. Upon her

return, Sister became the Director of Justice, Peace, and Earthcare for the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters. In addition, she was appointed Director of Bernardine Center, a food pantry and soup kitchen in Chester, PA—a job she holds to this day.

As a current member of the Congregational Leadership Team, Sister Sandra is the Assistant to the Congregational Minister.

"These involvements," Sister remarked, "have not only enhanced my leadership skills in serving God's people, but have also, and more importantly, deepened my experience of Franciscan Gospel living."

Thank you, Sister Sandra, for the energy, creativity, and diversity that you bring to your ministry and to the Mission of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters. †

Congratulations to **Sister Sandra Lyons** who was recently **elected to the National Board of Directors of the Franciscan Federation.** It is a distinct honor for the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters to

Welcome to St. Joseph Villa

The Bernardine Franciscan Sisters warmly welcome **13 Missionary Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, a Precious Blood Sister, and a Daughter of Mary Sister** to their retirement home in Reading, PA. What a blessing to have these wonderfully spirited Sisters join with our retired Sisters to devote themselves to the ministry of prayer as they live out their vowed commitment to our Lord at St. Joseph Villa. We hope you feel doubly blessed to have so many prayers coming your way! Please feel free to send your special intentions through our website www.bfranciscan.org or a phone call.



From the Office of Development & Mission Advancement

Dear Friend,

As I look back over this past year, my heart is filled with gratitude for the many blessings God has bestowed upon our Sisters and the people we serve. Through your generosity and compassion our elderly and infirm sisters are receiving the care they need, and hundreds of disadvantaged people in our missions are receiving the basics of life.

Here at our office, we are busily preparing for our annual fundraiser, *Bernardine Bonanza*. Exciting things are happening, and we are most grateful to the Board, the Bonanza Committee, our sponsors, and our donors for the event's success. Visit www.bfranciscan.org for details.

Congratulations to the winners of our Summer Mission Raffle: **Marie Gozzi** of Stafford, VA (\$2,000), **Jane & Edward Garbacz** of Conshohocken, PA (\$1,000), and **Stanley Kozuch**

of Bedford, IN (\$500). Many people in need will benefit from the raffle's \$31,000 profit.

I especially want to thank those families who have directed their memorial gifts to the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters when their loved ones have died. Let us honor and pray for these beloved individuals who have died this past year: **Irene Agostinelli, Anthony Bruno, and John Rule.**

As we enter the new year, I want to thank you for your friendship and your ongoing support. Your loyalty to our Sisters means more than you will ever know. Thank you. I wish you blessings of health and God's peace—always!

Sr. Maria

Sister Maria Bartos, OSF
Director of Development



Sr. Maria Bartos, OSF, Development Director, chats with new Bonanza Committee member, **Karen Goodhart**, as they prepare for *Bernardine Bonanza 2025*.



Donor Perspective “They really cared about you!”



Denise Gasper of Schuylkill Haven, PA has been a dear friend and dedicated supporter of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters for over 42 years! Her connection to the Sisters goes back to 1982 when Denise began her professional career as a speech therapist at St. Casimir School in Shenandoah PA. As a young Penn State graduate with a degree in Communication Disorders, Denise was grateful for the guidance she received from her principal, Sister Arnoldine. Through the years, she became good friends with Sister Arnoldine and other Bernardines at St. Casimir's.

Denise also worked at St. Stanislaus School in Shenandoah and Mahoney Catholic School in Mahoney City, where the Bernardines were teaching. Thus, it is no wonder why she came to know and love the Sisters.

Denise credits the success of her career and her growth in faith to the Bernardines whose Franciscan values she endeavored to emulate in her own life. When the opportunity arose, she became a Bernardine Franciscan Associate and met regularly with the Shenandoah group.

In reflecting on her work as a speech therapist, Denise recounted how deeply inspired she was by the Sisters' dedication to their students. **They were always willing to make extra time for individuals who found difficulties in their studies. “They really cared about you,”** she remarked, **“and that is the reason why I give. I always feel God's Presence when I am with them.”**



Bernardine Franciscan Sisters

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St. Bernardine Legacy Society



Eight years ago, **Amy L. Dodrer** of Reading, PA became a dear friend and gracious supporter of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters. Amy became acquainted with the Sisters through her friend, Debbie Geiger, as they both taught religious instruction at Holy Rosary Parish in Reading where the Bernardines were also serving. For 25 years, Amy worked as an art director for USA Today in New Jersey. Following that, she worked in admissions at the Caron Foundation in Reading for another 12 years.

We are most grateful to Amy for her friendship and for becoming a St. Bernardine Legacy Society Member.

"I am a Legacy Member because I believe in the life, the goodness, and the caring hearts of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters! Let's ensure that the Sisters have the necessary resources to continue their work among God's people and to provide care for their elderly members."

LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE. BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!

For more information or questions, contact Sister Maria Bartos at 484-334-6815 or bfdevelop@bfranciscan.org

SAVE THE DATE



FRIDAY MARCH 7, 2025

The PLEX at Alvernia University
465 St. Bernardine Street, Reading, PA

Benefiting the BERNARDINE FRANCISCAN SISTERS