

# The Guardian

Newsletter of the  
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
At St. Peter Church, Chillicothe, Ohio  
Fall 2019

## Serving God with a Smile!

— Sr. Zephрина Mary

Like many other brides, I wore a white habit, symbol of innocence, purity, and joy. I assured it was the happiest day of my life. I pronounced the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. I promised to be faithful to my spouse Jesus until my death. I remembered the words of St. Ambrose, “a virgin is one who gives her hand in marriage to God,” vow of chastity that makes me a bride of the Jesus. A chaste person is not free from temptations but overcomes them. The virtue of poverty lies in my detachment from the goods of this world. I’m happy with what I have and I’m happy with what I don’t have. Of the three vows, the principal one is that of obedience because I offered to God my most precious possession, “my own will.” I promise to live chastely and without property. I loved Christ and desired to be His servant.

The convent bells rang persistently all through the day to tell me when to work, pray, even to play. Every day I pray to Jesus that, “Jesus give me your love, peace, and joy. I value prayer in my life because prayer is as the food of spiritual life. Prayer necessary as the air we breathe and as the blood in our bodies because prayer will nourish our soul with grace of God. Consequently, prayer is an important element for a strong vocation. The virtue of holiness is very significant and it includes joy, love, compassion, and humility. In my religious life, I learned that a religious life can be the happiest life possible when I am able to give myself totally to God, loving trust with each other, and joy with all.

The full realization of the true happiness of the consecrated life is very real, a very precious thing, is undoubtedly part of the hundredfold which Christ has promised



to those who leave all and follow Him. Each morning that I put on my holy habit is a new reception day for me; each renewal of my vows at Mass, or meditation, and visiting a chapel, all these are happiest moments of my life. They renew and increase my happiness. The Holy Eucharist is the greatest gift that we can have which Christ himself giving to us His very own body and blood to us for nourishing our soul. My greatest and most valuable moment is when I receive Jesus in to my heart, and He comes to me and gives strength every day to live for Him and strengthen my vocation to follow Him daily.

Home is a bonding place of in everyone’s lives because home captures the mind and heart. It is the cradle of life because it is the most memorable place in one’s lifetime. My beloved father, Thomas, died when I was four years old. My beloved mother, Mary, died when I was thirteen. I was the youngest among six children in my family. God enveloped me with His care and protection through



*The Almighty has  
done great things  
for me and Holy  
is His name. –  
Luke 1:49*

### Mailing Addresses :

**SR.SHANI MARY  
F.I.H GENERALATE  
PALATHARA  
THATTAMALA.P.O  
KOLLAM-691020  
KERALA, INDIA**

**SR. AMELIA MARY  
ST. LUKE CONVENT  
150 W. 75th ST.  
INDIANAPOLIS, IN  
46260**

my Grandma, Sarah as well as my brothers and sisters. My Grandma took care of me dearly. When I was seventeen, I was thinking about my future life like other teenagers. I felt a divine call within me to serve God.

My vocation, like most was both ordinary and extraordinary. As a divine plan, one day a religious sister Febi Mary, came to my house with one of my friend, Sheeja to know about whether I like to enter the convent. Sister Febi Mary was a member of the congregation of the Franciscan sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary at Pattathanam in Kollam. I was so thrilled to give my life to God as a religious sister. When I let family know my desire to be a religious sister, my Grandma and my sisters were not happy about my decision. They motivated me to ask myself, should I go? Was God really calling me to lead a religious life? I knew in my heart that God is calling me and I was thrilled to respond His call. My oldest sister, Regina asked me, "How can you leave us? Do you not love us? I said to her, I love you all and My God, that is why I am going to God's house. My beloved grandma asked me that, "Are you able to lead this sacrificial life?" I said, "Yes I can." The previous day of my arrival to the convent, I went to the church for Sunday mass together with my sisters as usual. I spent the entire time praying for courage to enter in a new life. After the mass, I said goodbye to my beloved family members with a joyful heart, a heart full of love for Jesus and a full confidence for a consecration to God.

As I look at my congregation, I realize that my sisters are teaching in schools, colleges, staffing in hospitals and working in social work institutions. All are praying each day: praying the Divine Office, praying the rosary, praying our special community prayers, assisting at mass, and united each morning in Christ whom they received into their hearts. These are charming women in love with God and human-kind. They do all things with a smile in their various fields of teaching, nursing, and social service.

I had officially entered this new family. I had a Mother and hundreds of sisters. When I entered, Mother Delphine Mary was her first term of office. She served as our Mother General for two successive terms, a total of twelve years. She was a professor in college, administrator Psychologist, and above all a mother.

She was such a gifted person. Under her wise and enthusiastic guidance, the congregation grew: new schools, hospitals, old age home, orphanages, convents, social centers, and new missions established in the United States. Mother had many dreams about her sisters.

In religious life, community-life and prayer- life are very important aspects. It is one of the earthly blessings of community life, part of hundredfold promised by Christ. We have an annual retreat that encompasses seven full days of silence, prayer, meditation, and rest. This is the period of great mental, physical, and spiritual relaxation time. Every day, we have holy mass, adoration, and the hours of Divine Office are prayed in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The beauty of the psalms, hymns, and canticles and scripture made me realize that we were truly "singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord." We are not only praying for us but also for the entire world in the name of the church. Blessed Virgin Mary is the patroness of our Order. We have a special devotion to her and to Saint Francis of Assisi.

I thank God for His special call and grace to lead a religious life and follow Him daily with a smile. Life is a gift of God, who is the author of our life. I give my life to God by responding to his divine call; I am listening and following His footsteps daily with a joyful heart and a prayerful mind.



Sr. Zephрина interacting with those visiting the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry





At the Youth Rally the night before the March for Life in Washington DC



March for Life 2019—Washington DC



Sr. Leonard and Fr. Hahn get pulled up on stage at the Dinner Theatre



The Knights of Columbus hold a Clergy Appreciation Dinner

“Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received--only what you have given.”  
**Francis of Assisi**



Corpus Christi 2019 Eucharistic Procession in Chillicothe





Sisters visit to celebrate Sister Zephрина's 25th Jubilee



Painting the town Yellow with Fr. Dooley and the school children.



The Sisters say farewell to Fr. Dooley in July as he heads to his pastorship at Our Lady of Peace in Clintonville.



Helping at the St. Vincent de Paul Summer Food Drive



Sisters participate in the Annual Rosary Procession on October 6 in Chillicothe



# Five Years at St. Peter's to Love & Serve the Lord!

— Sr. Leonard Mary

## Peace and all Good!

Yes, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2019, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of the establishment of our Convent with a Holy Mass in our Chapel by Rev. Fr. Hahn. When I look back, as the only one who was from the beginning, I can see the wonderful love and mercy of God surrounding us in all our ways. We experienced the tender loving care of our priests- Rev. Fr. Hahn, Fr. Hartge, Fr. Dooley, Fr. Herge, and now Fr. Lynch and Fr. Beal. We thank all our priests. It is a blessing for us to serve the Lord under their guidance. Our parishioners are so wonderful! They take care of us in different ways.

When I think about our Mission here, it is an amazing experience. We have seen that our visits and prayers have made many persons happy; especially in the VA hospital, the Adena Hospital, at Good Shepherd Manor, Ross Correctional Institution, and the Nursing Homes in Chillicothe and Waverly. We have experienced how they began to love God as well as how much they loved us. Many have gone from this life during these years as the children of God receiving the Holy Sacraments.

It is a great blessing that we are in a Community founded on Adoration and Presence to the poor. The food pantry in our parish and the Outreach in Pike County-Waverly, give us a lot of opportunities to talk with poor and lonely persons. I am sure that many have realized that God's mercy is greater than their problems. Many

of them have experienced God's love through our presence. We thank God for all the many blessings showered upon us from above. I remember all our benefactors with deep sentiments of gratitude. May God bless them all!

As the religious Community of the F I H Sisters, our days begins with Eucharistic Adoration, Liturgy of the Hours and Meditation. We take turns for night adoration in our adoration chapel. It gives us more strength to serve the Lord and our brothers and sisters with more love and compassion.

It is a great blessing that we could begin a Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Third Order (SFO). We have nine perpetually professed members in the Fraternity and they are in active service in the parish. Now we have three more new members who are in Formation.

We are very grateful to our parish office staff. For any of our needs they are there. May God bless them all!

We cannot forget our dear Mrs. Chantalle Noel, Mr. George Hassey, and Mrs. Lisa Diehl who were so close to us and were called to their eternal reward recently. May their souls rest in Peace and their families be consoled by God.

We are greatly blessed by our parish family who are supporting us every single day of our lives. Our prayers and love with you always! It is who you are making it possible for us to be here. May God bless you all!



July 2014



September 2019





Sr. Zephрина renews her vows with Bishop Brennan on September 28, 2019 at St. Peter Church



The Sisters process in at the beginning of the Jubilee Mass and present roses to the Blessed Mother.



The FIH Sisters sing the National Anthem of India in their native language at the close of the Jubilee Celebration



Sisters participating In the games at St. Mary's Waverly parish picnic



"The Lord lives! Blessed be My rock! Exalted be God, The rock of my salvation - 2 Samuel 22:47



# My Summer with the Sisters

— Jacob Stinnett

The sun shines brightly in Chillicothe, but the brightest thing that greeted me each morning during my summer placement was the smile of one of the sisters. As I made my way over to the church in the mornings, invariably one of the sisters would already be praying, and she would greet me with a smile and a warm “Good morning, Brother!” The sun shines brightly, but it has nothing on the loving care of Sister Zephрина, Sister Leonard, Sister Saima, and Sister Ruhitha. The sisters do so much good work at the parish, helping with the food pantry; communion visits at the hospitals, nursing homes, and house visits; spending time with the students at Bishop Flaget School; running a Bible study at the prison... this list could go on for the rest of the page. I was and still am truly impressed by all that the sisters do, and most importantly the love with which they do it.

Getting to spend so much time with the sisters this summer, I got to appreciate the beautiful calling to religious life up close and personal. Being raised a Catholic, and really just from being a human person, I have always had respect for religious sisters. They do the work that needs to be done, but that others, like myself, are not always willing to do so readily and joyfully. One cannot but have respect for religious sisters. But this summer, I grew in a new appreciation for religious sisters, and the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart especially. I witnessed not only their great and noble work, but also who they are, how their presence can transform a situation, and over time, a whole community.

The sisters live out *par excellence* St. Peter’s parish motto: “A community founded on adoration and presence to the poor.” It is because of the time they spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day that they are able to bring His presence with them into the world, that they are able to be Jesus for others. I have moments that are more prayerful than others, days when I feel closer to the Lord than others, days when I am more honest or spend more time with the Lord than others. I am only as good a witness to the Lord as I get to know Him and spend time with him, be in His presence. The sisters know and live this reality so well. They are true witnesses to Jesus because of the time they spend with him. Their presence in the Chillicothe and Waverly communities is so transformative because of the love they have received and given back to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The active work that the sisters do in their presence to the poor is so effective because their first “work” is in the chapel, spending time with our Lord.



The Sisters send Summer Seminarian Jacob Stinnett back to the Seminary in style.

It was a real privilege for me to spend the summer at St. Peter parish. Getting to know all the good people of Chillicothe and the many good and holy priests that serve the parish. All of them have had their lives changed and made better because of the sisters. There were so many instances this summer which testify to the sisters’ impact: the smile on the face of a hospital patient when Sister Zephрина’s smile enters the room, the contagious laughter of Sister Saima, the gratitude of a food pantry patron who has received Sister Ruhitha’s help, and of course, Sister Leonard, whose vision of Heaven and her ability to communicate it is one of the strongest I have ever met. I too am a beneficiary of that smile, that laughter, that help, and that vision of Heaven. I am very thankful to God and to the sisters for such a wonderful eleven-week experience. The Son shines brightly in Chillicothe, and He does so in a special way through the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart.



Jacob was the Masters of Ceremony at Sr. Zephрина’s Jubilee Mass with Bishop Brennan

## Are you a Sister Guardian?

Thank you to those who are past and current Sister Guardians. Sister Guardians help provide for the FIH Convent in Chillicothe, Ohio. This allows them to minister to those in need and on the margins in Ross and Pike Counties, visit the sick and homebound, minister to the imprisoned, and other works of Mercy. Your support is greatly appreciated and needed.

If you are not currently a Sister Guardian, there is always room for more! Sister Guardians can make a three year commitment of \$5,000, \$3,000, \$1,000 or another amount per year. Sister Guardians can also make one time donations.

If you would like to become a Sister Guardian, contact Fr. Hahn or Donna at St. Peter Parish office, 740-774-1407.



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Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary  
St. Peter Catholic Church  
285 W. Water Street  
Chillicothe, OH 45601

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