LAURELS

Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province

Fall 2026









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Ursuline Sisters
contemplatives in ministry

"Cultivating the Vine" of Ursuline education through St. Angela retreats

Each Ursuline school in the Central Province incorporates a mission-focused formation program for all its co-workers—administrators, faculty and staff. For nearly 20 years, the St. Angela Retreat program has been an integral part of this ongoing formation.

The retreats are a day-and-half overnight experience designed specifically for the co-workers to delve more deeply into the life and spirituality of St. Angela Merici and how her spirit and vision permeate the mission, core values and environment of an Ursuline school. Small groups of eight to 12 co-workers participate in each retreat, which is held off campus at a retreat center where participants have the opportunity to get away and unwind, and learn, reflect and share on what it means to be cultivators of the vine of Ursuline education today.

Sister Diane Fulgeni leads each retreat with each school's director of mission present to offer a familiar, onsite presence and help facilitate the schedule and details of the retreat. "The relaxed atmosphere helps the participants to share with one another in ways that nurture the community spirit that is one of the core values of an Ursuline school," Sister Diane says.

"Several years ago, some of the co-workers from our schools began to ask for a follow-up retreat to take a "deeper dive" into St. Angela and the legacy of Ursuline education. As a result, an "Angela Retreat 2.0" is now being offered in the schools that wish to take advantage of this opportunity," she says.

Reflections from the directors of mission and other co-workers highlight how integral these retreats have become to the overall mission-focused formation in Ursuline schools as well as being relaxing, enjoyable experiences:

"The Angela Retreat says a lot about our priorities here at Ursuline. Our message to our coworkers is that we care about each one of them, our mission, and our community. Every retreat makes me appreciate the Spirit of Angela among us more and more."

"The Angela Retreat is at the heart of mission work at Ursuline in Dedham. Sr. Diane beautifully and gently invites all co-workers into the life and legacy of St. Angela. This joyful experience of community and charism captures the imaginations of participants to such an extent that they effortlessly bring this spirit back into their everyday ministry at school."

"My favorite aspect of the Angela retreat was learning about Angela Merici's life, her deep faith, and her commitment to formation and service. I especially appreciated the reflections on her values of simplicity, humility, and dedication to others, which were inspiring and gave me practical ways to think about living my own life with purpose. The retreat atmosphere also allowed for meaningful personal reflection and connection with fellow participants."

"I enjoyed that UA gives their employees time to not only learn more about St. Angela but to get to know their work family."

"I did really enjoy getting to have the outside time and free time to breathe and meditate. It was nice to have time to practice Angela's contemplative spirit."



Sister Diane Fulgenzi poses with Ursuline Academy of Dallas staff attending an Angela Retreat.

"I loved getting to know some of my colleagues better! I also love Sister Diane."

Sister Diane herself reflects on the gift it is to be a part of these Angela retreats each year. "We are blessed to have such open, committed and mission-focused co-workers in our schools to carry on the legacy of Ursuline education into the future. I look forward to each retreat and to the opportunity to share how St. Angela's life, vision and spirit are at the heart of our mission," she says. "It always touches me how deeply they feel an integral connection to St. Angela and the vital role they play in truly 'cultivating the vine' of Ursuline education today."

A Message from the Provincial

In recent days, as I am walking or driving in my neighborhood, I notice subtle signs of the coming of autumn. Here and there, some leaves are beginning to change color. Mums are showing up in garden stores and in yards; the days are noticeably shorter than they were just a couple of weeks ago. For many, this is a welcome transition. As much as we love summer and even feel a tinge of regret at its passing, we welcome all that fall brings.

We Roman Union Ursulines in the United States are also experiencing a transition. As is the case with many other religious communities in this country, we are facing the reality of reduced numbers. At the time of this writing, there are a total of 99 sisters in our three U.S. provinces: Eastern, Central and Western. Faced with this reality, we have worked with our Roman Union General Government to form a new structure of government in the United States. As of Oct. 1, the three U.S. provinces will cease to exist, and we will become one United States region.

Sister Dianne Baumunk in California leads our new team. Sister Patricia Schifini in New York, Sister Margaret Johnson in Idaho, and I will serve as the councilors on this team. For us, there is a certain excitement in being able to "do something differently" when it is needed, as St. Angela advised us. Of course, we also experience a bit of sadness at the loss of what has been, but in faith we look forward to the "big surprises" that St. Angela promised.

As you will see from the stories in this issue of "Laurels," our sisters remain engaged in mission. Even as structures change, one thing that will not change is our daily lives of prayer and service. We will continue to care for our sisters in what we now call the Central "area." Even as we expand our horizons to include sisters from all over the country, we will maintain our geographical boundaries and our office located in St. Louis.

We count on your prayers as we move into a new way of being a community of Roman Union Ursulines in the United States.

Peggy Moore, OSU

Sister Peggy Moore, OSU
Provincial



Sister Peggy Moore



Sister Dianne Baumunk



Sister Patricia Schifini



Sister Margaret Johnson

Academy's tricentennial celebration kicks off in New Orleans

The celebration has begun in New Orleans as Ursuline Academy marks the arrival of 12 Ursuline Sisters from France 300 years ago with 18 months of tricentennial-themed events.

The academy, founded in 1727 in what would become New Orleans, is both the oldest continuously operating school for girls and the oldest Catholic school in the United States. The original Ursuline convent and academy was in the French Quarter, moving three times to its current location on State Street.

The tricentennial celebration began in September to coincide with the academic year and will continue throughout 2027. The opening event was a Tricentennial Traditions Day Mass on Sept. 4 at St. Louis Cathedral, followed by a second-line parade to Antoine's Restaurant, where Sister Carolyn Marie Brockland received a key to the city from Mayor Helena Moreno. Later in the day a community gathering was held at the school.



Chansey Augustine/City of New Orleans

Sister Carolyn Marie Brockland receives the key to the city from the mayor of New Orleans.

A full calendar of events with the tricentennial theme is planned for the rest of this year and next, and a documentary will be produced.

Thank you to all of our generous donors. Your faith and support of our mission fill our hearts, and we are grateful for your presence on our journey.

Congratulations to our Jubilarians

In 2026 we celebrate the jubilees of eight of our sisters who have ministered to God's people a total of 545 years. Throughout their years of commitment to Ursuline life and ministries, these daughters of Angela have made a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals.

80th



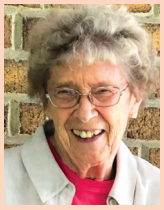
Sister Lorraine Pomerleau
Lewiston, Maine

75th



Sister Theresa Sarich
Alton, Illinois

70th

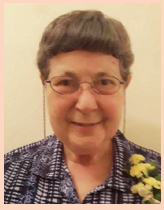


Sister Jane Wiessing
St. Louis, Missouri
(died April 15, 2026)

65th



Sister Ginger Cirone
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Bernadette Marie Fronmüller
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Brendan Jacoby
Springfield, Illinois



Sister Rose Marie Moran
Baltimore, Maryland

60th



Sister Theresa Davey
Springfield, Illinois

Green beans become gift that keeps giving

Soon after arriving in St. Louis from New Orleans last year, Sister Regina Marie Fronmüller started looking around for places where she could be of service to the poor. She soon joined long-time volunteer Sister Diane Fulgenzi at St. Anthony of Padua's food pantry—never expecting she would find a use for her talent as an artist in this ministry, but that's exactly what happened.

"It all began with a box of beans," Sister Regina says. "I was in the back unpacking produce, as I do most Mondays, when a load of plump green beans arrived in wooden crates. Usually they are in mesh bags, so this was unusual. After opening the crates and putting the beans in gallon bags to distribute, I asked someone where the crates should go and was told they were trashed.

"My wheels started turning. What possibilities were there for slats of wood? They were rough in texture, some split in certain areas. Splintery. Warped. Yet rich in tone values of brown. They were crying out not to be trashed." So, she walked off with two crates that day with thoughts of turning trash into treasure.

Sister Regina envisioned turning the boards from the crates into unique pieces of art and quickly set about disassembling them using pliers, screwdrivers and anything else she could find in her toolkit that would do the trick. "It was tough getting the individual boards off, but I ended up with eight of them," she says. "The boards are really rough, so I wore gloves and worked out of the trunk of my car to keep the splinters out of my apartment."



Sister Regina Marie Fronmüller paints in her bedroom studio.



Series #1: Green Beans

Next up was preparing the rough boards to accept paint. She gingerly sanded the delicate boards several times, she says, but they were still too rough. "They wouldn't accept the watercolor and grabbed the bristles of my bamboo brush like a mad cat." After more sanding and the application of gesso as a primer, each board became a canvas for a new creation.

"My vision was to paint green beans on the boards and find a way to use them to support St. Anthony's food pantry," she says. Working in her "studio," a corner of the bedroom in her small apartment, she painted a series of pictures, each different, some with green beans alone on vines or in bunches and others with other produce or flowers. She tied twine through existing holes in the boards, making them ready to hang.

Intent on finding a way for her creations to support the pantry, Sister Regina had sets of eight printed cards made from the paintings, which she refers to as Series #1: Green Beans. She is donating them for sale at the pantry's auction in February, where the originals may be auctioned as well.

"A gift of the pantry for the pantry," she says, as she contemplates more ways she can turn her gift as an artist into gifts for others.



Sister Regina unpacks the beans from the wooden crate.

New ministry a big surprise

By Sister Jean Hopman, OSU

The year 2025-2026 has been for me one of endings and beginnings, inner and outer exploration, and as St. Angela spoke of, "big surprises." After serving on our provincial leadership team, I was granted a time of sabbatical at the Redemptorist Renewal Center in Tucson, Arizona. Upon my return to St. Louis at Christmas time, I began to explore where God might be calling me. A gift I have is being bilingual. I felt God nudging me to use this gift to help others with limited language skills.

One of the big surprises was being led to the Rural Parish Clinic (RPC). The RPC, founded seven years ago, is a ministry of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, entrusted to the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan. It draws on the legacy of the Rural Parish Workers of Christ the King founded in 1942. The RPC seeks to meet the medical, dental, social, emotional and spiritual needs of uninsured residents in the archdiocese regardless of religious background. Through our two mobile clinics, we serve low-income individuals without access to affordable health care. A dedicated staff and faithful volunteer nurses, doctors and dentists serve those in need in six counties in rural Missouri.



Sister Jean Hopman travels regularly with the Archdiocese of St. Louis' Rural Parish Clinic.

Although I do not have a healthcare background, I serve in a variety of ways: welcoming patients as they arrive, assisting at the registration table and providing translation services. I am humbled to serve our clients—brothers and sisters with little means—get to know their circumstances and assist them with comprehensive health care which otherwise would be out of reach.

Later this fall I will begin working with prospective volunteers, guiding them through the screening process. The deep faith of the volunteers I work with is an inspiration for me. Our interactions with one another and with the patients challenge and support me in my own faith journey. I leave the site each day feeling buoyed by their commitment and grateful for the opportunity to help create this growing community built on love of God and service to those in need.

Meet us in St. Louis!

Ursulines from around the Central Province gathered in St. Louis for a province meeting at Pallotine Retreat and Conference Center in July. In addition to province business, prayer and reflection, the three-day meeting allowed time for the sisters to catch up with those they hadn't seen recently and enjoy each other's company over meals and evening games.



Sister Peggy Moore gives a presentation on her trip to the Roman Union Enlarged General Council in Brazil.

Central Province sisters gather for a group photo.





Sisters Maria Teresa de Llano, Karen Schwane, Mary Ann Dooling, Diane Fulgenzi and Rita Ann Bregenhorn wind down with a game of Mexican Train.



Socializing during lunchtime are, from left, Sisters Theresa Davey, Brendan Jacoby, Ann Barrett and Lois Castillion.



The Ursulines attended Mass in the chapel at Pallotine during their three-day meeting.



Sisters Maria Goretti Hotop, Maria Teresa de Llano and Bernadette Marie Fronmüller



Sisters Karen Schwane and Theresa Sarich

Continued on page 10

Meet us in St. Louis! continued



Sister Elizabeth Susan Hatzenbuehler



Sisters Julie Hickey and Theresa Davey



Sister Nancy Vandeveer



Sisters Deana Walker and Karen Schwane



Sister Rita Ann Bregenhorn



Sisters Elisa Ryan and Brendan Jacoby

Sisters and students mix it up at social events

When mulling over ways to foster interaction between Ursuline Sisters and students, Joni Mullen, director of mission integration and global education at Ursuline Academy in St. Louis, decided to create an event around the popular "dirty soda" trend.

"Last semester we began meeting monthly for 'Sodas with the Sisters,' she says. "Some sisters who had recently moved here from other Ursuline schools said they really missed the girls and wanted to know how they could connect with them. We invited the Ursuline Sisters to come once a month and join students for dirty sodas, which the girls love. This is a new drink trend with coffee creamer and soda mixed together."

The social gatherings take place during activity period on late-start days, when students can choose their own pursuits or meet in clubs. About 40 girls attended the socials last year, with close to a dozen Ursuline Sisters joining them over the course of the semester. After concocting their sodas, the students and sisters settle in for some good conversation.

"At one of the gatherings we had a Q and A session, and the girls had so much fun talking with the sisters. We also played trivia and one of the categories was Gen Z words, which the sisters loved," Joni says. "One time we played 'two truths and a lie,' and the sisters had the girls dying with laughter!"



Sister Elisa Ryan enjoys mingling with students during "Sodas with the Sisters."


Sister Lois Castillon swaps stories with the girls at her table.

Joni says the gatherings will continue this year, with one scheduled for each quarter. "Sisters love being around youth, and this is a good way for them to connect with our young women. And spending time with the Ursulines gives the students an appreciation of all that has been and what the sisters' have done."

Food for the Soul

A morning of volunteer service at Feed My People's south St. Louis County location was food for the soul for Ursuline Sisters and co-workers from the Central Province offices in mid-December. Feed My People is a Christian food pantry and food store operating since 1982, with a second location in High Ridge, Missouri.

During their morning of service, the volunteers helped set up the Giving Tree room and sorted donations for the pantry. As is the custom, the group returned to the offices afterward to share what they had learned, reflect on the experience and express gratitude for the opportunity to be of service to those in need.



Sister Ann Barrett helps man the phones.



Sisters Diane Fulgenzi, Peggy Moore and Susan Kienzler, and Sharon Hartman prepare boxes of food for clients.



Michael Puetz and Rich Gibson do some heavy lifting in the thrift store.

Around the Province



Sisters Jean Hopman and Mary Ann Dooling were among the many Catholic sisters and other concerned citizens who participated in a prayer vigil at the ICE Detention Center in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, in March.



No hometown visit to Springfield, Illinois, is complete without stopping in for a visit with Sister Kevin Ritterbusch. From left are Sister Rita Ann Bregenhorn, Sister Kevin and Sister Regina Marie Fronmüller.



A chance to visit the former Central Province novitiate in Crystal City, Missouri, is always welcome. Here Sister Susan Kienzler takes in the beautiful surroundings during a staff retreat in May. The sisters and staff had the opportunity to return In September when the property's new owners again invited them to their annual Labor Day gathering.



Sisters Maria Teresa de Llano, Elizabeth Susan Hatzenbuehler and Karen Schwane were guests of the Ursuline Academy of San Antonio Class of '66 when they held their 60th reunion on the property of the old Ursuline Academy in the downtown area in April. After the lunch at the Café Giraud, the group was given a tour of the grounds and the museum.



Sister Peggy Moore, second from left in the middle row, participated in the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union's Enlarged General Council meeting in Ribeirão Preto, Brazil, in May. Ursuline provincials and group superiors gathered from around the world for this three-week meeting in preparation for the 2027 General Chapter in Rome. The General Chapter will set the priorities and direction for the Ursulines' spiritual mission, ministries and governance for the next eight years.

Why I Support the Ursulines

By J. Adger Brown

On a bleak winter day in 1935, during the height of the depression, a 14-year-old girl named Josephine Zula boarded a train in Bangor, Maine. Her parents, a working-class family of modest means at best, had made the decision for my mother to attend boarding school at Mount Merici Academy in Waterville, Maine. Riding by herself to her new school, she was met and escorted to Mount Merici where she was enrolled for the term beginning in January.

The decision for her to go to Mount Merici was prompted not only by a desire to further her Catholic education, but also because it allowed her proximity to orthodontic treatment not available in her hometown of Bar Harbor.



Josephine Zula

When I was growing up, my mother would tell me stories of her times and adventures at Mount Merici. I believe much of her spiritual and emotional New England toughness was formed during her years there under the supervision and guidance of the Ursuline Sisters.

The depression era was a challenging time for our country and translated into shortages and a lack of luxury that filtered down to the sisters and girls at Mount Merici. That aside, a theme that came through in my mother's stories was that there was always sufficient food, clean clothes, loving care and a sense of purpose rooted in camaraderie, prayer, and simple unshakeable faith in God as reflected in the lives and example of the Ursuline sisters.

At Mount Merici, mother was introduced to the tradition of meals at a long, polished refectory table where food was passed from one girl to the next, usually leaving the more meager portions to those at the end of the table. The sisters believed in fresh air, so windows were left at least partially open even during the winter. Iron beds were equipped with a washstand and basin of water which would occasionally ice over on the colder nights. These minor challenges, however, fostered the resiliency that I could discern in my mother even in her later years.

After Mount Merici, my mother attended the University of South Carolina in Columbia, where during the war, she met and married then-Sergeant Adger Brown, then raised a family, grew old, and passed away in 2006. The education she received, and more importantly the spiritual training and discipline derived from Mount Merici under the supervision of the Ursulines, gave her the strength of character which carried her through life up until the end.

The Ursuline sisters of Mount Merici played a pivotal role in the religious formation that my mother passed to me as her son, and which in turn has been passed to my children, and now to my grandchildren. Four generations of my family owe a debt of gratitude to the Ursuline sisters for their love and dedication to the field of education and to the children under their care.

J. Adger Brown, Jr. is a retired vocational consultant, father of three, grandfather of six, and longtime supporter of the Ursuline Sisters who lives in Columbia, South Carolina. If you would like to share why you support the Ursulines, call our development office at 314-821-6884.

Sisters join in Serviam Day in St. Louis

Foiled by a predicted snowstorm on Jan. 24, the International Serviam Day planning group in St. Louis set a new service date of April 18, which turned out to be picture perfect!

Sisters Diane Fulgenzi, Mary Ann Dooling, Rita Ann Bregenhorn, Lois Castillon and Regina Marie Fronmüller were among the more than 50 Ursuline Academy of St. Louis students, alumnae, faculty, family members and friends who gathered in the school's auditorium for the rescheduled morning of service.

International Serviam Day is sponsored by Ursuline schools and communities in the United States and many other countries as a way of observing the Feast of St. Angela, who founded the Ursuline order in 1535, and honoring the Ursulines' tradition of service.

Projects included making sandwiches for St. Vincent de Paul, packaging and writing notes to go with new blankets for St. Louis Children's Hospital, making "period packs" for the St. Louis Area Diaper Bank, and making cards for veterans and nursing home residents.



Many hands make light work on the sandwich line, top, while another group packs blankets with love notes.

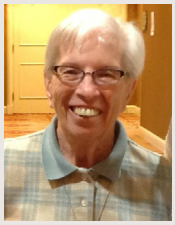


In Remembrance

"For in heaven a new crown of glory and joy is prepared for all of them, one by one."

—St. Angela Merici

You can read the sisters' obituaries at **www.osucentral.org.**



Sister Doris (Dodie) Landers
Nov.13, 1932 –
Feb. 1, 2026
Professed Jan. 14, 1990



Sister Agnes Murray
July 2, 1931 –
May 23, 2026
Professed Jan. 16, 1952



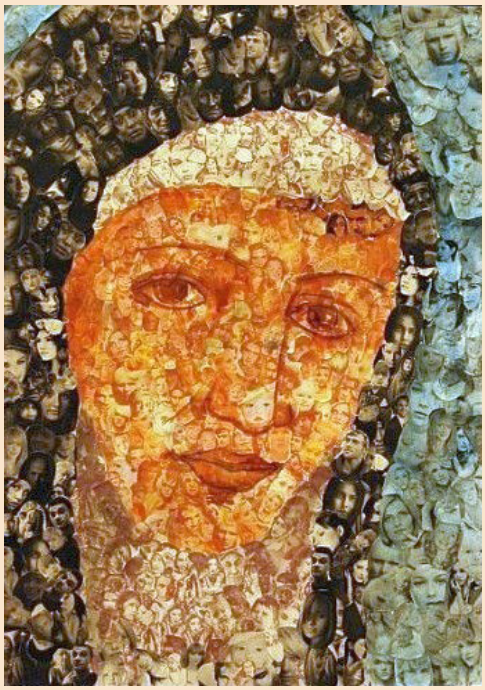
Sister Jane Wiessing
April 17, 1935 –
April 15, 2026
Professed Jan. 16, 1956

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Laurels **Editor**
Susan M. Whelan



Faces of Angela, Judyta Skiba,
Poznań, Poland

As Ursulines of the Central Province, members of a worldwide community of Catholic sisters, we are women whose lives and mission are rooted in the gospel of Jesus and the spirit of our foundress, Angela Merici. Grounded and empowered by our relationship with God and with one another, in prayer and community, we seek to be a compassionate, reconciling presence of God in our world.