

New History of the Whitehall Franciscans

A Celebration of Franciscan Spirit, by Leindecker Gimper, Ph.D., is the documented history of the religious congregation of women residing on 33 acres of land in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, and known as the Whitehall Franciscans. The story of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God spans the years between 1922 and 2000 and was compiled by a lay person, a graduate of the former St. Francis Academy. The sisters were administrators and teachers in this first Catholic all-girl high school in the South Hills, recognized for its teaching excellence and situated on their motherhouse grounds.

The influential roles played by the sisters' Catholic faith and Lithuanian heritage is captured in detail in this 12-chapter book, each chapter featuring a general superior and the accompanying events for her tenure. The congregation was initially

formed to serve the Lithuanian immigrants. One chapter is devoted entirely to the Brazil Mission which is now a province with its own motherhouse based in Sao Paulo.

Theological terminology is defined and explained throughout the narrative together with the discussion of social forces which impacted upon the congregation. Photos and numerous references are utilized to substantiate the authenticity and enhance the clarity of the written word. Personal interviews conducted with both community members and lay people augment the primary and secondary sources of information.

Several themes are evident in the text: government, members and formation, religious life, apostolic ministries and temporalities. A comprehensive and extensive appendix contains maps, biographies of the general superiors, a

listing of ministries in the United States, Brazil and Lithuania, identification of clergy associated with the establishment and growth of the congregation, and the names of all the women who began their religious lives with the Whitehall Franciscans.

The reader is introduced to the courage, tenacity and religious spirit of the sisters as, together with other religious and laity, they survived many hardships and trials and participated in diverse ministries locally, nationally, and internationally in such areas as education and health care. The book concludes with reflections by the author on the highlights of this phenomenal journey of selfless, dedicated women following the examples of Saints Francis and Clare.

A Celebration of Franciscan Spirit is available, \$20 postpaid, from the Franciscan Sisters' Motherhouse: 412-885-7217.

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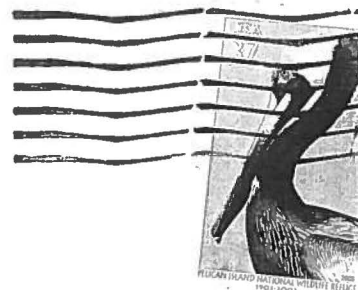
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