



# Celebration

In 1933, Mother Eveline Fisher answered the appeal to open and staff SS. Peter and Paul School in Tucson by sending Sisters Emily Miller, Cecilia Vincent McCartney, Estelle Hensler,

home missionary work. In addition to catechism classes for public school children, they conducted Sunday school classes for the Yaqui and the Mexican children of the area. Sisters also taught catechism to children who were deaf or blind, children with disabilities, and children being treated at the Tuberculosis Preventorium.

## Sisters of Charity CELEBRATE 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Another ministry was the vacation schools. Sisters and trained lay teachers conducted classes within a radius of 200 miles of Tucson in the cities of Clifton, Safford, Ajo, Chandler, Morenci, Wilcox, San Carlos, and Payson, as well as teaching the Catholic students attending Davis, Carrillo, and El Ril (now Manzo) public schools.

In less than a decade, the Sisters of Charity had opened St. Mary's School in Chandler and a house for social work among the Mexicans and Native Americans in Ajo. The sisters also made regular visits to residents of local nursing homes and sanitariums.

James Marie Malone, Ermanilda Knepley, Francis Mary Coleman, Mary Inez Clark, and Rose Catherine Ward there.

Twenty-two years later, the sisters would be credited with opening nine schools in Arizona, including Immaculate Conception (Ajo), St. Mary (Chandler), St. Catherine (Phoenix), St. John the Evangelist (Tucson), and Seton High School (Chandler). Sisters of Charity also staffed Salpointe High School (Tucson). From Arizona, sisters were able to accept ministry opportunities in California and Texas—further increasing the scope of their service to others.

Excitement, enthusiasm, and even a bit of apprehension marked the first trip West as these eight sisters prayed intensely while their train crept over a newly built bridge—the site of a previous train wreck!

In the spirit of the Seton family motto, "Hazard yet forward," the sisters went to where they were needed. This spirit of service set the stage for future forms of outreach to the poor, hungry, and underserved.

Early outreach efforts were begun and sustained by sisters whose names are still held in esteem by residents of Arizona. Many are the stories of the sisters and their efforts to carry the

These pioneer sisters quickly added new dimensions to their work for the Church of Arizona, engaging in what might have been called

*Continued on page 4*

Visit the Ministry section at [www.scs.org](http://www.scs.org) to view historic photos showing our ministry in the Southwest.

## Milestones in the history of the Sisters of Charity in the Southwest

**1933**  
Eight sisters begin ministry at SS. Peter and Paul School (Tucson).

**1944**  
Sisters open catechetical and social service center at Immaculate Conception Mission (Ajo) to serve population of predominantly poor Mexican American and Native American families.

St. Mary's School (Chandler) opens.

**1949**  
St. Catherine School (Phoenix) opens.

**1950**  
Three Sisters of Charity staff newly opened St. John the Evangelist School (Tucson).

Sisters of Charity join faculty at Salpointe High School (Tucson).

**1953**  
Immaculate Conception School (Ajo) opens.

Casa Elizabeth Seton (Tucson) opens to receive postulants from the West.

**1954**  
Two Sisters of Charity begin ministry at Seton Catholic High School (Chandler).

Flood damages the sisters' convent at St. John the Evangelist Parish (Tucson).

**1955**  
Since 1933, Sisters of Charity open nine schools in Arizona.

Six Sisters of Charity begin ministry at St. Pancratius School (Lakewood, CA).

Seton Catholic High School (Chandler) dedicated.

**1956**  
Sisters of Charity begin ministry at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School (Scottsdale).

**1957**  
Three Sisters of Charity open St. Therese School (Phoenix).

**1961**  
Construction completed on Immaculate Conception School (Ajo).

Seton Catholic High School (Chandler) becomes tri-parish diocesan high school.

**1962**  
White habits replace black habits to accommodate heat in Arizona.

**1964**  
St. Mary's School (Chandler) is renamed Basha Elementary School.

**1967**  
St. Mary Parish (Chandler) dedicates new convent for the sisters

*Continued on page 2*

# 75 Years of Ministry in the Southwest

## Emerging ministry in eco-justice

Water. Air. Environment. These and other "green" issues shape the ministry of Sister Mary Elizabeth Lawrence. Appointed the first Eco-Justice Coordinator of the Sisters of Charity, she spends six months in Arizona and six months in Pennsylvania. Sister Mary Elizabeth works to increase awareness about everything from water use to light bulbs to local and international efforts to protect the earth.

Beyond the study and dissemination of practical information about ecological issues, she also introduces her audience—the sisters, schools, and parish groups—to the compelling reasons to see all of the earth, including

its inhabitants, as part of one living and endangered system.

She hopes to develop programs and retreats to deepen people's understanding of both the eco-justice agenda and its urgency. In a cactus-dotted desert or a hemlock-shaded woodland, Sister Mary Elizabeth prays and works to guarantee a sustainable future for generations to come.



## The work continues

Today, Sister Eleanor Gibbons serves women in need at 1st Way, a women's crisis center. Sister Regina Marie Boslet works with the Renew Program to assist those who strive to deepen their faith and live the Christian life more fully. Sister Esther Marie Phillips reaches out to homebound individuals who need a visitor, need support, or wish to receive the sacraments. Sister Alice Ruane, pastoral assistant at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, works to support the preservation of the original mission church of Scottsdale. Sister Consuelo Pacheco strives to bring alive the beauty of the land and of the people of the Southwest in her ministry of art.

A recognition of new needs of the Church in Arizona has led Sister Marie Theresa Rishel, the pastoral associate at St. Margaret Parish (Mesa), to help immigrants deal with local government. Through the Valley Interfaith Council, she works to eliminate anti-immigrant behavior and racial profiling from law enforcement policies. In

Tucson, Sisters Marie Theresa and Claudia Rushlow participate in local groups that work to overturn workplace enforcement laws that are coercive and divide families through mass immigration raids.

Just as the first Sisters of Charity came to Arizona in 1933 to serve wherever needed, the sisters of 2008 reach out to the people of the Southwest as the "Charity of Christ Urges" them.

*Sister Mary Elizabeth Lawrence's experience at the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice influenced her desire to explore ecologically sound practices for the Sisters of Charity.*

## Providing Life Directions and a Way

Sister Claudia Ruslow directs Tucson's Life Directions program ([www.lifedirections.org](http://www.lifedirections.org)). She assists young adults, ages 13 to 35, in maturing into responsible, productive adults through self direction. Life Directions promotes a "Peers Inspiring Peers through Forgiveness" dynamic, helping young people move from the paradigm of violence to one of forgiving. Young people are encouraged to internalize the core values, thus maturing into adults capable of giving life to their families and communities.



"I feel very close to St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, whose ministries addressed the needs of people poor and at risk," she comments. "I find it encouraging and rewarding to see young people other-focused and excited about helping other young adults."

Addressing another portion of the life spectrum, Sister Eleanor Gibbons' ministry occurs at 1st Way of Maricopa County ([www.1stWay.net](http://www.1stWay.net)). At the center, Sister Eleanor joins others "to provide education and assistance to any teen or woman who is pregnant or thinks she may be, through the free, loving, and non-judgmental provision of education, peer counseling, and practical services." Both mission and tone coincide with her "Charity" identity.



This ministry supports life. Free ultrasound scans often result in a decision to carry a baby to term. Baby and maternity clothing, pre-natal vitamins, and essential baby items help young mothers to manage when funds are scanty. Parenting Classes and the Whole Parents Anonymous 12-Step Program guide parents to make thoughtful, intelligent choices in raising healthier children and striving for greater serenity. The integrated approach respects and enhances life, reflecting the love of God in practical ways.



Sister Miriam Grace Brandt

*Thousands of children in the Southwest have benefited from the education they received from Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill.* What eight Sisters of Charity began in 1933 continues today, especially through the work of six sisters in the Dioceses of Tucson and Phoenix, including:

- ✦ Sister Laura Coughlin, social studies teacher at Salpointe High School (Tucson);
- ✦ Sister Marian Grace Brandt, principal of Our Lady of Perpetual Help School (Scottsdale);
- ✦ Sister Roban Kubic, counselor at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School (Scottsdale);
- ✦ Sister Mary Norbert Long, principal of St. Mary-Basha Catholic School (Chandler);
- ✦ Sister Miriam Richard Soisson, counselor at St. Mary-Basha Catholic School (Chandler);
- ✦ Sister Joan Marie Madden, registrar at Seton Catholic High School (Chandler).

## Milestones in the history of the Sisters of Charity in the Southwest

- 1971** Sisters of Charity sell property once used as Casa Elizabeth Seton.
- 1972** Immaculate Conception School (Ajo) closes due to dropping enrollment. After 10 years of teaching catechism in the summer program among the Apaches at San Carlos, Sister M. Clarita Kelly begins full-time ministry there, which lasts through 1986. Seton House West (Tucson) opens as a vocation center.
- 1977** Arizona Sisters of Charity hold workshop, Indian Awareness Day (Tucson), to foster understanding of Native American Culture. Sisters of Charity withdraw from Immaculate Conception Parish (Ajo).
- 1978** Sisters of Charity hold workshop (Guadalupe) to inculcate awareness of the Mexican-American heritage.
- 1980** Two buildings at Seton High School (Chandler) are destroyed by fire.
- 1981** \$3000 in damage is done to Seton High School (Chandler) by vandals.
- 1982** The Diocese of Phoenix breaks ground for the new Seton (Tri-City) Catholic High School (Chandler).
- 1983** Seton House West relocates to Tempe. Seton (Tri-City) Catholic High School (Chandler) is completed.
- 1984** Basha Elementary School is renamed St. Mary-Basha Catholic School (Chandler).
- 1985** Sisters of Charity withdraw from St. Pancratius School (Lakewood, CA). Sister Gertrude Foley organizes and directs the School of Ministry at Kino Institute (Phoenix) through 1992.
- 1986** Sister Mary Seton Wacker teaches high school English at Red Cloud Indian School on Pine Ridge Reservation (South Dakota) home of the Lakota Sioux.
- 1987** Through a grant from the Sisters of Charity, St. Nicholas of Myra Child and Family Centers (Tucson) is founded.
- 1988** Sisters of Charity withdraw from St. Catherine Parish (Phoenix).
- 1989** Sisters of Charity open Casa Victoria (Tempe) as a center for art.
- 1991** Sister Mary Helen O'Donnell serves as pastoral minister at San Solano on the Tohono O'dham Reservation in Southern Arizona through 1992.
- 1992** Sisters of Charity withdraw from St. Therese School (Phoenix). Sisters of Charity minister in the Indian Oasis Baboquivari Unified School District for one year.

*Continued from page 1*

## Milestones in the history of the Sisters of Charity in the Southwest

- 1994** Sister Mary Norbert Long, principal of St. Mary-Basha Elementary School (Chandler) since 1984, is named Phoenix Diocesan Principal of the Year.
- 1995** Enrollment at St. Daniel the Prophet School (Scottsdale) grows from nearly 80 students in 1988 to 215. Sisters of Charity withdraw from St. John the Evangelist School (Tucson). Sister Diana Taufer begins working with Bonifacio Alvarez, Yaqui maestro, incorporating Yaqui values and ceremonies into Catholic catechism in an attempt to bring the Yaquis and the Church closer.
- 1999** Sisters of Charity withdraw from St. Pancratius School (Lakewood, CA).
- 2002** Sisters of Charity withdraw from St. Daniel the Prophet School (Scottsdale).
- 2003** Sisters of Charity celebrate 70 years of service to the people of the Southwest.
- 2007** Sister Mary Elizabeth Lawrence named Eco-Justice Coordinator for Sisters of Charity.
- 2008** Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill serving in the Southwest number 18:
  - ✦ Sister Regina Marie Boslet, Renew Program Coordinator, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish
  - ✦ Sister Marian Grace Brandt, Principal, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School
  - ✦ Sister Laura Coughlin, Teacher, Salpointe High School
  - ✦ Sister Kathleen Dorman, Ministry of Care, St. Mary Parish
  - ✦ Sister Eleanor Gibbons, 1st Way Women's Crisis Center
  - ✦ Sister Seong-A Koh, doctoral student, U. of Arizona
  - ✦ Sister Roban Kubic, Counselor, Our Lady of Perpetual Help School
  - ✦ Sister Mary Elizabeth Lawrence, Eco-Justice Coordinator, Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
  - ✦ Sister Mary Norbert Long, Principal, St. Mary-Basha Catholic School
  - ✦ Sister Joan Marie Madden, Registrar, Seton Catholic High School
  - ✦ Sister Barbara Miller, Director, Infant Baptism, Adult Initiation, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish
  - ✦ Sister Maria Consuelo Pacheco, Art Ministry
- ✦ Sister Esther Marie Phillips, Director, Ministry of Care, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish
- ✦ Sister Marie Theresa Rishel, in transition
- ✦ Sister Alice Ruane, Pastoral Assistant, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish
- ✦ Sister Claudia Ruslow, Director, Life Directions
- ✦ Sister Miriam Richard Soisson, Counselor, St. Mary-Basha Catholic School
- ✦ Sister Mary Lucilla Wertz, in transition

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### September 14

Mass commemorating centennial of  
DePaul School for Hearing and Speech

*Sacred Heart Church, Pittsburgh, PA*

### September 20

Sounds of Charity concert to benefit Sisters  
of Charity and their Far East Missions

6:30 p.m. — reception & silent auction

7:15 p.m. — Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra  
and guest soloist Mary Gornick

*Cecilian Hall, Seton Hill University, Greensburg, PA*

### September 27

Sounds of Charity concert to benefit Sisters  
of Charity and their Far East Missions

6 p.m. — dessert reception & basket raffles

7 p.m. — Guaranteed Irish, Mike Gallagher,  
and the Sally Folan Grab Irish Dancers

*Seton-LaSalle High School, Pittsburgh, PA*

### September 28

Mass & reception to celebrate 75 years  
of ministry in the Southwest

1 p.m. — Liturgy followed by reception  
in Gramer Hall

*SS. Peter and Paul Church, Tucson, AZ*

### October 3-13

Flea Market drop off

*Activity Room, Caritas Christi, Greensburg, PA*

### October 16-19

Annual Flea Market

*Activity Room, Caritas Christi, Greensburg, PA*

### October 19

Mass & reception to celebrate 75 years  
of ministry in the Southwest

2 p.m. — Liturgy followed by reception  
in Maguire Hall

*Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Scottsdale, AZ*

## Sisters of Charity Celebrate 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*Continued from page 1*

Word of God to the people. Sister Clarita Kelly dedicated herself in full-time ministry to the Apaches at San Carlos Mission on the Reservation for 10 years. Sister Diana Tauffer spent her final years in Arizona partnering with Bonifacia Alvarez ("Boni") to bring the Church and the Yaquis together.

These early pioneers of the Charity community laid the ground work for the sisters of today who continue to minister in familiar and new ways in the Southwest. Many hold new titles such as pastoral assistant, pastoral minister, social minister, or minister of care.

## Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

DePaul Center  
463 Mt. Thor Road  
Greensburg, PA 15601-1293  
724.836.0406  
412.243.4651 (Pgh.)  
724.836.8280 (FAX)

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## Painting, sculpture express Southwestern themes

Sister Maria Consuelo Pacheco entered the Sisters of Charity from Tucson. An accomplished artist herself, she taught art in elementary and high school to every grade and served as Guidance Counselor at Seton High School (Tempe).

In addition to being artist-in-residence at the Mexican-American Cultural Center (San Antonio, TX), Sister Maria Consuelo has held major shows. A series of paintings, "The Suffering Christ," was displayed at Seton High School and at the Chicano Museum (Phoenix), while sculptures



based on the Dead Sea Scrolls were exhibited at Arizona State University's Hispanic Research Center.

Sister Maria Consuelo has created busts of St. Louise de Marillac and of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Her bust of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton graces the first-floor atrium at Caritas Christi, the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity.

At present Sister Maria Consuelo's paintings emphasize themes from scripture and motifs from ancient Mexican culture. Her murals "Creation Series" are on display this year at St. Augustine Catholic High School (Tucson).