

# Lurana's Star

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF ATONEMENT  
41 Old Highland Turnpike  
Garrison, NY 10524  
[www.graymoor.org](http://www.graymoor.org)

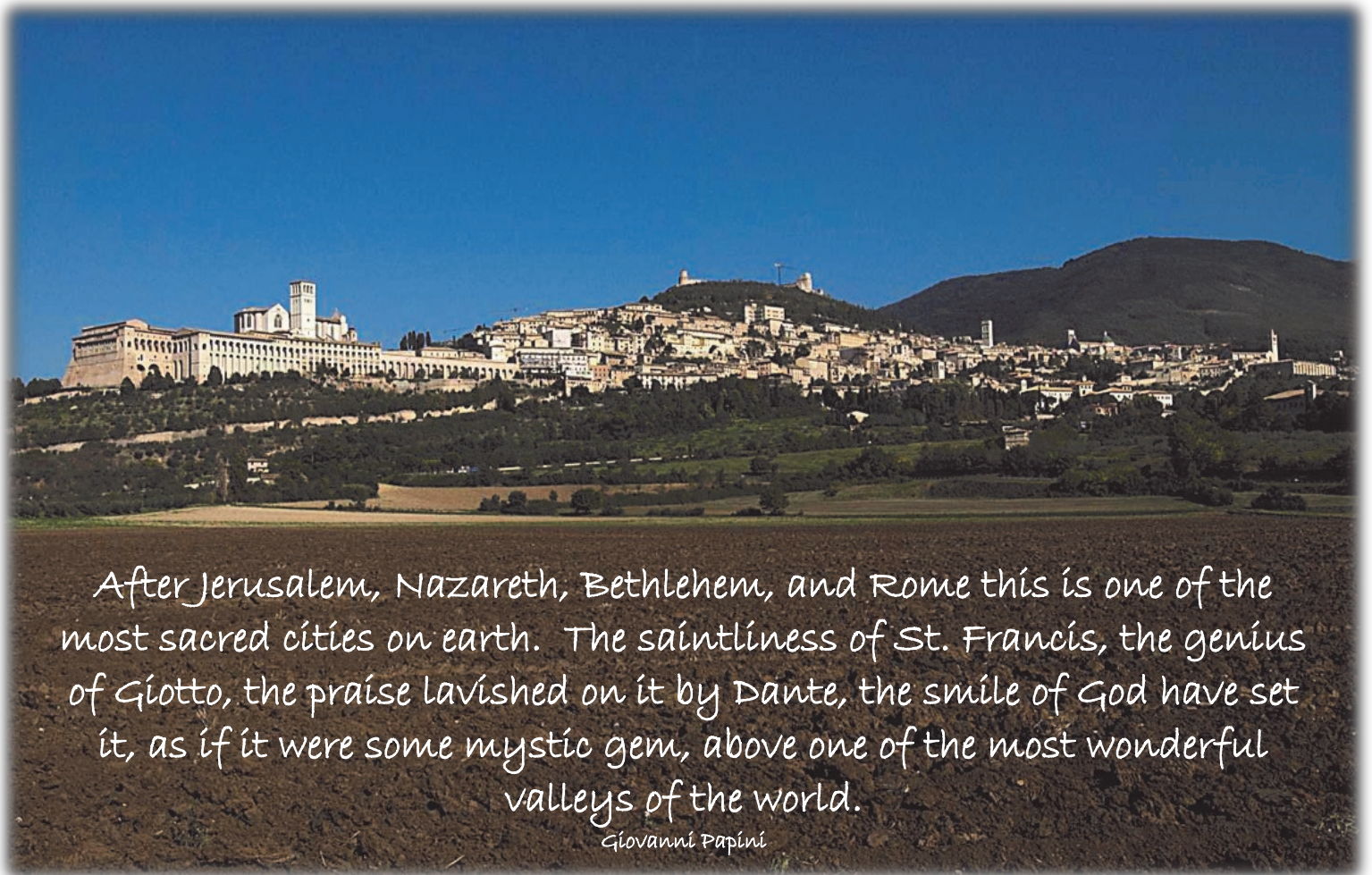
EDITORS  
Sister M. Eilish Sweeney SA  
Betsaida Cohen  
[developmentoffice@graymoor.org](mailto:developmentoffice@graymoor.org)

2014

FALL

No. 4

## *Assisi, Italy*



After Jerusalem, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Rome this is one of the most sacred cities on earth. The saintliness of St. Francis, the genius of Giotto, the praise lavished on it by Dante, the smile of God have set it, as if it were some mystic gem, above one of the most wonderful valleys of the world.

*Giovanni Papini*

**Franciscans...  
Missionaries...  
Lovers of Creation...  
Lovers of the Lord!**



*Sister Eilish Sweeney*

Dear Friend,

Greetings, prayers and best wishes to you and your family. I trust you enjoyed a pleasant and peace-filled summer.

During the summer months we, the Society of the Atonement, celebrated the Jubilees of six of our Sisters and seven of our Friars. We wish each of them the very best as they continue in mission and ministry.

Although a little late, I am pleased to enclose (see page 7) a sincere thank - you to all who supported our Benefit Concert on Sunday, April 27, 2014.

On May 11, 2014 Sister Attracta O'Neill from Co. Cork, Ireland died peacefully here at our Lurana Health Care Residence. Sister Attracta, one of our faithful cooks for over 33 years, both here at Graymoor and at our Washington Retreat House in our Nation's Capital, will always be remembered for two sayings: "Hello dear, did you have something to eat?" and "God bless you, you are so good."

On Tuesday, June 24th the beautiful Feast of St. John the Baptist, Sister Maria Anna Ribatti died at our Sisters' Convent in Quadrelli, Italy. Sister Maria Anna like so many of our Italian Sisters ministered at our Rome, Assisi and Quadrelli Houses.

After seventy - one years as a Franciscan Sister of the Atonement, Sister Agnes Marie Moric was also called home to God on July 25, 2014. You may recall reading Sister's

wonderful story in our recent edition of Lurana's Star when we shared our Canadian history with friends and benefactors. May these three missionaries now be enjoying the Peace that only God can give.

As we draw close to the beautiful Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, on October 4th, it seems appropriate to share with you the history and ministry of our Italian Missions: Assisi, Rome and Quadrelli.

Back in 1897, as she was discerning what God was calling her to do with her life, our future Foundress, Lurana Mary White had the opportunity to travel to Europe with her paternal aunt, Helen Haight. While Lurana's Aunt Helen continued on her tour of Europe, she, herself, remained in London. It was here that Lurana spent time with the Sisters of Bethany in Lloyd Square. The Sisters graciously welcomed Lurana to participate in their ministry, prayer life and their annual retreat. Before her departure the Sisters granted Lurana one very special request: The reception of a very simple brown habit which she wore for many years.

Prior to her return to America, her sister Annie traveled from America to accompany Lurana back to the United States. However, they both decided to continue their travels to Italy. Among their travels, they visited the magnificent city of Rome and the beautiful city of Assisi. Little did Lurana realize how both of these cities would later become very important in the ministries of her future congregation. Our mission in Assisi opened in 1931, our house in Rome in 1936 and eventually a third mission opened in Quadrelli in 1943.

If you are among the countless Americans who have experienced the hospitality of our Sisters either in Assisi or Rome, I hope this edition of Lurana's Star brings you fond memories of a special vacation and a time of grace-filled renewal.

God bless you and your family.

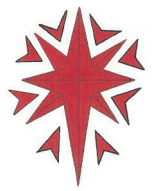
Gratefully,

*Sister M. Eilish Sweeney*





# Our Italian Missions



## *Assisi History:*

Full of gratitude and with great admiration for the Sisters of Bethany, Lurana departed from their convent in Lloyd Square, London and continued on her European trip with her sister, Annie, who had traveled over from America to accompany Lurana on her return trip to the States.

In her book, *A Woman of Unity*, Sister Mary Celine writes: “On May 6, 1898, Mother Lurana made her way through Genoa to Rome arriving on the Feast of Saint John. She could hardly wait to see Saint Peter’s. She had made up her mind previously that she would venerate the great bronze statue of Saint Peter in his chair. Sister Lurana walked quickly toward the statue of Saint Peter. Reaching it, she kissed the foot at the same time making an interior act of devotion and allegiance to the Prince of the Apostles and his successor, the reigning Pope, Leo XIII. She prayed earnestly too, at the tomb of the Holy Apostles, begging their assistance in fulfilling her vocation. On the Feast of the Ascension Lurana and Annie heard Mass in Saint Peter’s.”

A few days later the future Mother Foundress, Lurana White, came for the first and last time to Assisi, and immediately there was born in her mind the desire to have a house in the cradle of Franciscanism. In the late 20’s she herself wrote, “I have desired for years, indeed, ever since I went to Assisi long ago, to someday have a house in that holy place.” In June of 1931 this desire was realized. The congregation acquired the house on Via Alessi, 10 “Villa Recchi,” St. Anthony’s Guest House.

It is written, “As pilgrims approach Assisi, from afar and from every direction they can catch a glimpse of the city reclining at the foot of Mount Subasio. Assisi is a symbolic city, the goal of pilgrims who want to enter into intimacy with God through its Saints -- Francis and Clare -- through the air of spirituality that one can breathe in every little corner of the city.”

Many years later on June 2, 2006, the occasion of our 75th Anniversary celebration in Assisi, Sister Ellen Donahue, Minister General

shared the following with community, family and friends gathered for the celebration.

“Assisi, Assisi, Assisi. What a beautiful name for a beautiful city nestled in the breathtaking Umbrian Valley. This, for us seventy-five years ago, was a dream beyond our reach and yet our Mother Foundress, Mother Lurana Mary Francis White stretched to the stars in her drive to present the Atonement charism in many lands. Assisi was different, not in the sense of the economic depression spreading throughout her native country as she always stepped out in faith in the most bleak and desperate times and like Abraham obeyed a call deep within her to do something for God at all costs. Assisi was different and not in the sense of a need to establish a mission in a missionary land as surely Assisi had it’s own dynamic messengers in the persons of Francis and Clare but because of Francis and Clare she wanted to establish a house in this city filled with the indomitable spirits of this man and this woman.

How do you accomplish this task? Where do you begin? You begin with friends and oh, what friends God gave her in the person of Father Bernardino Ibal, OFM; Brother M. Stanislaus of the Child Jesus; and especially Rev. Arnaldo Rigo, TOR who arranged to purchase property in Assisi for a Guest House. I wonder what he thinks today as he looks down on St. Anthony’s Guest House restored and serving guests as an oasis of Franciscan spirituality, nourishment and hospitality even after a devastating earthquake. Through Father Rigo’s efforts permission was granted by the Bishop of Assisi to purchase the property on November 17, 1927. We count this Bishop as truly a friend. How the Sisters at Graymoor nestled in the Hudson Valley Highlands forty miles from New York City must have danced and sang like Miriam in the Scriptures when this paper arrived by Cablegram. Mother Lurana had instructed Father Rigo to tell the Bishop, if he asked what the Sisters intended to do, ‘I would say that circumstances would decide that and his Lordship’s wishes. We want to make use of the house for the good of the people, catechizing children, visiting in their homes, or any other work not institutional which the Bishop would want to undertake. Then of course the place should be fixed



# Our Italian Missions



up as a shrine of pilgrimage, as it is one of the holy places of Assisi.’” (Letter of Mother Lurana to Fr. Arnaldo Rigo, TOR, December 24, 1927)

History tells us: Back in 1931 our Co-Founder, Father Paul Wattson of Graymoor, talked to Sisters Aloysius, Mary Luke, Anthony, Francis Clare, Margaret Mary and Felicita on the memorable day, May 22, 1931, as they sailed for Assisi. His admiration for this city was evident in his talk and I quote, “Assisi is known the world over, not because it is an ancient city - almost antedating Rome itself in its foundation, but because God chose it as the birthplace of those two illustrious servants who have produced so many spiritual children and who have affected so largely the whole life of the Church.” (Talk given by Father Paul, May 22, 1931)

Today eighty-three years later our mission in Assisi continues to be a vibrant ministry to the many visitors seeking the peace and blessings of Saint Francis. (see page 6)

## Rome History:

Back in 1993, Sister Mary Grace Sangiorgi, one of our dedicated Italian Sisters, shared the following: “Our house in Rome opened in 1936 to serve the poor in a section of the city near the Vatican. From the founding years until 1940 the Sisters served the local people through activities centered around the church: visiting, recreation programs, religious instruction and liturgy. During this time a new, larger church was built after a fire destroyed the original one.



On the summit of Monte del Gallo can now be seen completed, the beautiful new Church and Convent of Our Lady of the Atonement. It is in aspect truly Franciscan, like the beautiful old

Spanish missions that graced the new world in sunny California, Florida, and other regions of the Americas where the first missionaries were the humble sons of the Patriarch of Assisi. One can see very clearly from here the majestic dome of St. Peter’s and a large portion of the Vatican City.

The mission activities of our Sisters are now in full swing. Daily one can see two figures in their brown habit and sandaled feet, going among the poor of this district gathering together those little ones, whom Christ so loves, to instruct and bring closer to Him, Who is *The Truth and the Light* and to carry a ray of sunshine into those unhappy homes where sickness or strife have vent or where any form of human misery is prevalent.



These good people love their church and theirs is indeed a living faith. It is beautiful to see the love and devotion they have for the august Mother of God.

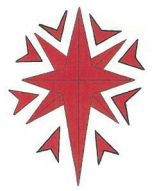
During World War II (1940-44), responding to needs arising from bombings in the area and the closing of schools in the city, the Sisters opened a kindergarten, gave secretarial and sewing lessons and provided a bomb shelter during the raids.

At the war’s end the house became an orphanage for 65 orphans. The Allies helped the Sisters in this endeavor. Also in the postwar period a medical dispensary was set up to provide medicines, medication, vaccinations, food, clothing and other needs for war survivors. A children’s camp program also became a part of the Sisters’ Apostolate in the years following the war.

In response to the 1950 Holy Year’s call for pilgrimages to Rome a small section of the house became a guest house. This ministry grew as an increasing number of visitors came to Rome. The guest house also became the source of income for the maintenance of the property and building, for the other services rendered and for the support of the Sisters.



# Our Italian Missions



By 1954 as orphans were placed in other settings to continue higher education, the main part of the house became a home for children coming from broken homes. At the same time, through Catholic Welfare Relief Services, an adoption program began through which 5,000 children in ten years were brought to the United States and adopted by Italian/American families.

The Holy year of 1975 brought an unprecedented number of pilgrims to Italy, and our guest house ministry evolved as the major work of our Sisters. Over the years its demands regarding the needs of guests, church and civil registration of guests, legalities, building codes, etc., have continually increased.

During the transition years from orphanage/children's home to guest house the Sisters also provided permanent residence for ambulatory senior citizens. As these guests required more than residential care, they were moved to nursing homes within the area.

While these hospitality and social services were provided, church ministries such as Franciscan tertiaries, Christian mothers, family association, apostolate of prayer, Children of Mary clubs, Catholic Action, scouts, sports and recreation programs were some of the activities in our Rome house."

In 2003, our administration made a decision to sell our property due to the decrease in vocations, and the illness and the aging process of our Sisters as well as the updating expense of the interior of our buildings being used for guests and hospitality ministry. An Italian congregation purchased our property in Rome and, thanks be to God, many of the services begun by our Sisters continue, including the daily use of our beautiful chapel by the local families.

Many Americans are familiar with our former guest house in Rome, Italy and many have also visited the parish church at Monte del Gallo, dedicated to Mary Immaculate.

## *Quadrelli History:*

On October 7, 1943, eight years after our Foundress was called home to God a third mission

was opened in Italy. This occurred in a very small but beautiful village almost mid-way between Rome and Assisi: Quadrelli. This was the hometown of Cardinal Nicola Canali who later was named as Cardinal Protector of our Congregation.

In 1942 Cardinal Canali contacted our Sisters in Rome to inquire if there was any possibility that our Sisters would consider opening a house in his native village of Quadrelli. Mother Monica, Mother General in those days, gave a positive reply. Soon thereafter our Sisters arrived in Quadrelli. The village itself was too small to have a Catholic School so the Sisters taught in the local public school and responded to the needs of the people.

It was the Cardinal's sister who provided our Sisters with temporary quarters in her own home for almost six years until funding was available for building a larger convent.



Regarding our new mission in Quadrelli, our ministry/work reports from our archives at Graymoor show "multiple ministries with children, orphans, young teenagers, young adults, elderly, visitation to homes, and camps for all ages, workshops for learning trades in sewing and knitting were also developed."

This little village of Quadrelli situated high on a hill amidst the magnificent beauty of the Providence of Terni has a wonderful story to tell.

In 1978, Marieli G. Benziger in her book, *Echoes Across the Alps* wrote: "It was the





# Our Italian Missions



Graymoor nun Sister Francis Clare by her presence of mind and heroic courage who saved the lives of thousands of American soldiers. Nazis were planted on this mountain outpost to trap our men. Sister got wind of the plot and planned an outstanding Italian meal “pasta” by collecting from the entire village, the left over food, cheese and tomatoes.



Sister Suzanne Morissette

This fragrant aroma trapped the Nazi official in charge. He demanded she cook and serve his hungry soldiers on a dangerous mission. That night they would waylay and butcher the American army on route to Rome. From the ramparts of this mountain outpost Sister knew the unsuspecting Americans would face disaster. He little dreamed she had been born in New York, of Italian parents. Thanks to her quick acting she served the entire German troops at her mountain outpost. Sent for the best barrels of wine to be rolled to her school where they were distributed to all the Nazis. They fell sound asleep and not one of them fired a shot, as the Americans passed on their way to Rome, while the Graymoor nuns were praying in their chapel for the safety of their own soldiers.”



Sister Maria Albina Paris

What a story. Will we ever know how many families’ lives were affected? Our Sisters continued to live, minister and were a vital part of the lives of the Quadrelli families for seventy-one years. Due to the recent death of Sister Maria Anna Ribatti, our administration back in July 2014 decided that it was no longer feasible to keep our mission open for one Sister. Sister Maria Albina, a native of Quadrelli, has now joined our Sisters in Assisi.

## St. Anthony’s Guest House, Assisi Today:



Recently, our Sisters in Assisi shared the following:

“Since our beginnings the guest house has been and continues to be a house of welcome and hospitality for travelers and pilgrims. We believe that it is this outreach to all persons which continues to give life

and form to our Unity charism. The season of hospitality extends from March until November.

For the most part the persons who inquire regarding staying in our setting are those pilgrims and seekers who come with a spiritual motive. The spiritual space of both the guest house and the Assisi surroundings help to nurture this attitude. For others, the quiet and open reception of the welcoming community is deeply appreciated.



Sister Alessandra Sciaboletta

Over the years, the guest house has maintained an ecumenical spirit in hosting gatherings and liturgies in our *Chapel of the Atonement* involving other Christian confessions: i.e., Anglican, Lutheran, Orthodox. The groups of persons who might ask for this service are not necessarily *in house* guests, rather they may be staying in another setting which does not have the possibility for ecumenical celebrations.

The Assisi community is engaged also in parish and diocesan life and ministry. We are nourished by the Eucharist celebrated in the local churches as well as in our Chapel. We share in the ministries of RCIA, home visiting, taking communion to the sick and shut-in, lectio divina, Sisters’ Council, as well as Franciscan family celebrations. There are, also, the spontaneous ministries of everyday which constantly bring surprise to our lives; i.e., walking with *lost* pilgrims, listening and visiting, going the *extra mile*. There are the occasional requests to assist in Italian-English translation, proof-reading, and teaching English as a second language.



Sister Bianca Grasso

Still today, we see hospitality as a vital and life-giving ministry, pilgrims and strangers continue to knock on the door hoping to find a safe place on their journey. As has been true in the past, many guests are referred by the good word of another. Each comes in his or her own time and each leaves a bit of their spirit behind. So it is, too, with the many Sisters and staff who have shared and served in the ministry. With the changing times the *Spirit of the Atonement* remains constant and true. We are reminded often that the ministry of hospitality is *entertaining angels in disguise.*”

*Sincere Gratitude from the  
Franciscan Sisters  
of the Atonement, Graymoor  
to all our Friends and Benefactors  
who supported our  
11th Annual Benefit Concert  
on Sunday, April 27, 2014*



*Betsy Cohen, Sister Eilish Sweeney,  
Margaret Purvis*



*Sister Nancy Conboy, Joanie Madden,  
Sister Eilish Sweeney*

***Pride of New York Stars:  
Joanie Madden, Billy McComiskey, Brian Conway,  
and Brendan Dolan - - Marvelous!***

***Cathie Ryan and Mary Coogan  
Cherish the Ladies - - Delightful!***

***Guest Star: Bruce Foley - - Wonderful!***

***Champion Irish Dancers: Ciara Green & Aileen Lavin  
An Energy and Excitement enjoyed by all!***



# In Memoriam

*Sister Attracta O'Neill*  
June 25, 1924 ~  
May 11, 2014

*Sister Maria Anna Ribatti*  
August 15, 1922 ~  
June 24, 2014

*Sister Agnes Marie Moric*  
November 20, 1919 ~  
July 25, 2014



May God lead their souls to Paradise

With sincere gratitude to all who cared for Sister Attracta, Sister Agnes Marie and Sister Mary Anna in their senior years

## Sisters' Gift Shop Graymoor

Shop 5 days a week 9am-4pm  
(closed on Monday & Tuesday)  
Call 845-424-3809  
[giftshop@graymoor.org](mailto:giftshop@graymoor.org)



## Mass Schedule

You have an open invitation to join us in prayer



*M-F 11:15*  
*Sat. 4:30*  
*Sun. 9:00*

Welcome to  
the Sisters' Chapel  
St. Francis Convent  
Graymoor