“After the example of our Holy Father Francis, the Sisters strive to combine the contemplative life with the active in perpetual adoration and the works of mercy.” Blessed Maria Theresia used these words to explain the objectives of the Congregation in its first Constitution, written in 1865. As Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, we continue this charism, or gift, that the Holy Spirit gave to our foundress and, through her, to the Church. In a culture where activity seems constant, social media keeps people connected, and commitment is questioned, we take up the challenge of our foundress to witness to a balance of contemplation and activity. The works of mercy gain value and meaning through perpetual adoration of our Eucharistic Lord. Without this foundation in prayer, visiting the sick or instructing the ignorant are recognized as good because they benefit humanity and the individual person. However, when all is centered in the Eucharist, every action becomes contemplation of the Face of Christ. More than humanitarian or philanthropic projects, the works of mercy become both an encounter with Christ and an occasion to bring Christ to the other person. Jesus Christ then becomes the center of each interaction and relationship. While activities may continue, they are taken up in Christ. Jesus Christ connects individuals, whatever means of communication they choose. And the Christian is committed to forever deepening the life of Christ within self and others. Like St. Francis, we say, “Let us begin, for up to now we have done nothing.”
Dear Friends,

On December 8, 2015, Pope Francis inaugurated a “Jubilee Year of Mercy,” which will extend until the feast of Christ the King on November 20, 2016. This has provided many opportunities to reflect how we live the theme of this year, “Merciful like the Father.”

Mother Maria Theresia founded our Congregation to be centered on Eucharistic Adoration and the works of mercy. From the beginning days, the Sisters have been engaged in teaching and healing and other works of mercy, but the manner of serving has changed due to the needs of society and the Church. When the Sisters were not permitted to care for the sick in the local hospital, they began visiting the sick in their homes. Also during the early years, the German government would not allow the acceptance of new members. It was then that Mother Maria Theresia sent six Sisters to Lafayette, IN to allow the young Congregation to continue to grow and serve the needs of the Church. Through her complete trust in Divine Providence, the number of Sisters in America grew rapidly, and the Sisters began serving in hospitals and schools and through other works of mercy. Mother Maria Theresia’s motto, “He Leads; I Follow,” must also lead us today in how best we might live out our founding charisma. Pope Francis challenges us, “May mercy guide our steps, inspire our reforms and enlighten our decisions…May it also enable us to understand the littleness of all that we do in God’s greater plan of salvation and his majestic and mysterious working.” (Address to Roman Curia, Dec. 21, 2015)

Our success will not be determined by the number of schools or hospitals but in the way we love and serve. We are called to be “merciful like the Father” in all of our relationships.

I close with the words of our patron, St. Francis, “May there be no friar in the world, who has sinned, as much as it is possible to sin, that, after having seen your eyes, does not go away without your forgiveness, if he asks for it; and if he did not ask for forgiveness, you ask him if he wants to be forgiven. And if afterwards he should sin a thousand times before your eyes, love him more than me for it, but do not go away without your forgiveness, if he asks for it.” (Letters, I-19)

How inexpressibly great is God’s mercy toward us; how unlimited has been the mercy of the Divine Heart of Jesus toward me, miserable creature! I am convinced, therefore, that God will draw other souls to himself who follow his call and movements of grace more faithfully than myself, for I have been conquered by the force of his boundless love.

 letters, i-19

Did You Know . . .

In July 1994, the St. Monica Home opened on the Franciscan St. Margaret Health – Dyer campus. Named after the patron saint of mothers, St. Monica Home offers a medically sound and emotionally healthy environment for a pregnant teen to reside in while waiting for the birth of her baby. Residents learn to foster positive relationships and parenting skills under the guidance of experienced and encouraging advisors. They also have continuing educational opportunities and gain valuable work experience through our junior volunteer program.

How did you discover where God was calling you?

Earlier in my vocation search, when I asked Sr. Lois’ advice about how to discern God’s will, she told me to pray three Hail Mary’s every day asking God where and when He wanted me to enter. I returned to the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration for a retreat. While there, I asked myself, “Why hadn’t I considered this order?” In praying about it, God made the calling here feel just right. This community fit like a glove, or like a plant belonging in the correct garden. I desired the Poor Clare convent, but felt called to the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, not my will but God’s, a feeling that became stronger after entering. It was here that I saw why God called me to this order and not to a cloistered community. I realized God called me to this order, not on my desire but that I may see that it came from Him and not me.

When do you think your vocation began?

When I was twelve I met the Sister Adorers of the Precious Blood. And in high school I visited shut-ins with Sr. Jane. In her I saw a devotion to God who was serving elderly as His precious instrument. She invited me to a retreat at the Motherhouse in Mishawaka. In retrospect, I did not feel called at that time. Besides, I wanted to finish college.

What were your struggles in discerning a vocation?

In my sophomore year, I still felt the call and I visited many communities. But, in each case, I did not feel called to that order. I had to ask, “How do I know which community to join?” I graduated from Franciscan University in computer science, found a job, paid off college loans, and continued to visit communities, off and on feeling the call. I remember thinking that maybe it was just me wanting the religious life. However, one day out of the blue, God tugged at my heart, assuring me that He wanted me alone. I spent one year discerning if I should enter the Poor Clare nuns in Kokomo. After that year, the best way I know how to say it is that I did not have the “oomph” to go to Kokomo.

My Journey to the Convent: Sister Maria Faustina

Sr. M. Karol Ann was missioned at St. James Convent in Chicago Heights. She assisted in the finance department other areas of the hospital.

Sr. Mary Augustine went to St. Elizabeth Convent in Lafayette. She served at Franciscan St. Elizabeth Health and also had the opportunity to spend one day each week at Central Catholic High School.

Nothing could make a dad happier than knowing the potential assurance of heaven in seeing His daughter enter a convent.” - Chuck Herber

Sr. Maria Faustina’s father, Chuck Herber, has taught high school English for 50 years. On her recent home visit, he asked her about her vocation story which follows.

May God bless you with an awareness of His love and mercy and strengthen you to share this gift with all those you encounter.

Letters, I-19

St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, not my will but God’s, a feeling that became stronger after entering. It was here that I saw why God called me to this order and not to a cloistered community. I realized God called me to this order, not on my desire but that I may see that it came from Him and not me.
Works of Mercy over the Years

Top Right: Instruct the Ignorant – Sr. Mary John Pultorak shares the message of Divine Mercy with students at St. Boniface School, Lafayette, our oldest education apostolate in the U.S.


Top Right: Visit the Imprisoned – Sr. Agnes Marie Regan coordinates the Sunday morning televised Mass, which reaches those in prisons and nursing homes as well as the homebound.

Bottom Left: Feed the Hungry/Shelter the Homeless – Many of our Sisters assist local soup kitchens and shelters. Here Sisters prepare a meal at Hope Ministries in South Bend, Indiana.

Top Left: Visit the Sick – Our Sisters served in Honduras for almost 20 years, beginning in 1978. They visited the sick in their homes, ran a clinic, and established a school. Sr. M. Elizabeth Ann Schildmeyer is shown serving the poor at the clinic.

Bottom Right: Welcome the Stranger – Sr. M. Joseph Ann Vogel was one of the Sisters to serve as a missionary in the Philippines, where our Sisters began a mission in 1963. The mission became a province of our Congregation in 1993, and over 120 native Sisters continue to participate in perpetual adoration and works of mercy.
Top and Bottom Left to Right:
A bus full of Sisters from Mishawaka joined the Little Sisters of the Poor and others outside the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. on March 23 for a rally to support the Little Sisters’ right to continue to serve in accordance with their religious beliefs.
Sr. M. Lissetta Gettinger (M.A. Theology) and Sister M. Ignatia Henneberry (B.A. German, Business, Theology) graduated from Franciscan University of Steubenville on May 14. Sister M. Benedicta Duna (M.A. Theology) completed her degree last summer.
Our postulant, Wendy Rutherford, crowned our Blessed Mother at our annual May Crowning on May 1, 2016.
Some baby chicks visited Our Lady of Angels Convent! Sr. M. Lois Ann Baunach and the other Sisters enjoyed their visit so much that they asked for them to come back the next day!

Our Life in Pictures

The Feast of Corpus Christi, on which we honor “The Body of Christ,” has always had a special place in our community. Blessed Maria Theresia’s own Eucharistic devotion was shaped by that of her Uncle Arnold, who each Thursday traced the path of Olpe’s annual Corpus Christi procession. From her uncle’s example, our foundress learned that adoration of the Blessed Sacrament begins on one’s knees, but begs to be brought forth into our streets, our homes, and our hearts. The Corpus Christi Procession provides a concrete sign of what Blessed Maria Theresia desired for her religious community: “to combine the contemplative life with the active in perpetual adoration and the works of mercy.”

In his homily for this feast in 2013, Pope Francis said: “Jesus is in the midst of the people: He welcomes them, talks to them, He cures them, He shows them the mercy of God... People follow Him, listen to Him, because Jesus speaks and acts in a new way, with the authority of someone who is authentic and consistent, who speaks and acts with truth, who gives the hope that comes from God, who is revelation of the face of a God who is love - and the people with joy, bless God... Let us also strive to follow Jesus to listen to him, to enter into communion with Him in the Eucharist, to accompany Him and in order that He accompany us.”

Sisters participate in a Corpus Christi Procession in Lafayette, Indiana in the 1930s.
Corpus Christi at Mount Alverno, our convent home in Mishawaka, 2016.
Mission Statement
We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, participate in the mission of the Roman Catholic Church by living the Gospel after the example of Saint Francis and our foundress, Mother Maria Theresia Bonzel. We strive to combine the contemplative life with the active through perpetual adoration and the works of mercy in education, healthcare, and other ecclesial ministries.