Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis

“Preach the Gospel at all times and if necessary use words.”

St. Francis of Assisi
Divine light and the love of Rev. Luke Pescinski and Bishop Sebastian Messmer inspire the Polish School Sisters of St. Francis to give THEMSELVES in response to question:

“What will happen to the children?”
Mother Mary Clara and Mother Mary Felicia accepted the call to form a new congregation. July 1, 1901, the new congregation was named the Sisters of St. Joseph (under the patronage of St. Francis).
May 20, 1902

The people of God gather to celebrate the dedication and the laying of the cornerstone of St. Joseph Convent in Stevens Point, Wisconsin
By 1918, the sisters were teaching in 23 schools in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio.
Over the next few years, the membership of the new Congregation grew to 419 and additional missions were added in the states of Missouri, Connecticut, Texas, and Pennsylvania.
In 1915, the cornerstone was laid for the new St. Joseph Academy as a wing of the Motherhouse in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

In 1922, the Academy was accredited and opened.
In 1925, the name of the Congregation was changed to the Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

As the Silver Jubilee Year was celebrated in 1926, the sisters were serving in 49 parish school in five states.
By 1936, the Congregation had a central government with Provinces located in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Illinois. A General Motherhouse and Novitiate was established in South Bend, Indiana in 1943-44.
The call to Health Care Ministry began in 1938 with the opening of River Pines Sanitorium outside of Stevens Point, Wisconsin.
Between 1945-1966, the health care ministry expanded to include community hospitals in Ohio, Mississippi and small rural hospitals and nursing facilities in Loop City, Nebraska, Cheyenne Wells, Colorado, River Falls, Wisconsin, Wakefield, Michigan, and Rice Lake, Wisconsin.
In 1945, the Congregation’s name was officially changed to
Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis

This change was to comply with the 1931 draft of the Constitution where it was so named.
In 1951, the Congregation began to serve at St. Francis Mission School in Greenwood, Mississippi. They taught in a two-room schoolhouse and lived in a temporary convent-home.
In 1962, the Congregation responded to the call of the Church to all religious congregations to send 10% of their membership to serve in Missions off the mainland of the United States. Sisters were sent to serve in Puerto Rico and Peru.
Sisters are teaching in three Puerto Rican schools in 1962.
Sisters are called to serve the poor in Tahuantinsuyo, Peru.
The SSJ-TOSF presence continues in Peru.
1971- Sister Regina is missioned to Brazil and continues to serve there.
1981 – Sister Madge becomes a missionary in South Africa.
In the mid-1960s, Vatican II initiated a period of reflection and renewal for the Church and for all religious.

Our Congregation took the call of the Church seriously and initiated years of reflection and study on ways to adapt our community and apostolic life to the changing needs of the world and the Church.

“The whole body of Christ [we claim as] our rightful apostolate.”
1967 The Rice Lake Franciscan Sisters merged with the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis and the 32 sisters became members of the Chicago Province.
In the years after Vatican II, the Sisters expanded their ministries to meet the growing demands of the Church and society.

Sisters now serve in direct ministry to those in need in many areas of the United States and beyond. Specialized ministries are developed by sisters to respond to unmet needs.

Some examples include:

• Housing alternatives
• Respite care
• Care for the developmentally challenged
• A learning institute for older adults
Sisters’ Treatment Home
For severely disabled children
Two Rivers, WI

Harvest House
Learning Institute for Adults
South Bend, IN

Chiara House- Respite Home
For Developmental Adults
South Bend, IN

East Bay Services to the Developmentally Disabled- Concord, CA

Heart to Heart Ministry to the Elderly And Disabled- Appleton, WI
1984 A seven year process called *Congregational Unity* is undertaken with a view to grounding the Congregation more deeply in our Franciscan tradition and re-creating our structures to better reflect both this tradition and our inherent unity.

*TOUCHING OUR ROOTS* enables sisters to re-embrace the Franciscan spirit.
Building upon the initial draft of *Go to My Brethren* that was published, *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis* was formally approved and promulgated in 1983.
Gathering ’87 - The Congregation celebrated and solemnized the growing sense of our identity as one Congregation united in the Franciscan spirit.

The windchimes created by Sister Marylou Wojtusik as a symbol of the music that celebrated our diversity were enshrined at the Motherhouse in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.
1990 Following more than twenty years of shared reflection and decision making the member-authored Constitution and General Directives were approved by the Ecclesiastic Office for Religious in Rome.
Jubilate Deo! 1901-2001
Celebrating our Fitting Response in the past, the present, and into the future!
The people of God continue to call us to the sacred mission to which we have pledged ourselves.

“In gentle compassion, we open our hearts, our lives, and our homes to all, but especially to those who are poor.”

Sister Dorothy- Facilitator
Chicago, Illinois

Sister Ernestine and quilting group
Puerto Rico
Sister Rose - Nursing Home Chaplain
Arcadia, Wisconsin

Sister Betty - Hospital Chaplain
Marymount Hospital
Garfield Heights, Ohio
Sister Paulette - Prayer Leader
Pleasanton, Nebraska

Sister Margaret - Hospital Chaplain
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
Sister Peter Mary- Volunteer
Womankind
Cleveland, Ohio

Sister Helen- Hospice Volunteer
Detroit, Michigan
Sister Debra- Education
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Sister Claudine- Principal
Rice Lake, Wisconsin
Sister Alice- Principal  Chicago, Illinois

Sister Rosemary- Education  DeLaSalle-Lourdes H.S.  Chicago, Illinois
Sister Shirley - Choir Director from Detroit, MI
Giving a concert in Rome, Italy

Sister Mary Ann - Pastoral Minister
Plover, Wisconsin
Sister Francis Therese- Spiritual Director
Cleveland, Ohio

Sister Debra Ann- Vocation Minister
Marshfield, Wisconsin

Sister Patrice
Parish Ministry
Custer, Wisconsin
Sister Dorothy - Peace and Justice Ministry
Chicago, Illinois

Sister Barbara - Prison Health Care
Johnson City, Tennessee
Sisters Music Group - Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Senior sisters help with the pre-school program
Garfield Heights, OH

Sister Henrietta and some of the Wisconsin SSJ-TOSF Associates: Lois Lawler, Elizabeth & Jim Mascal, Katy Riley, and Isabelle Stelmahoske.
Employee Party 2009
St. Joseph Motherhouse, Stevens Point, WI

Missionary Sisters Josephine and Regina come Home and visit sisters at Bartlett, Illinois

Sister Madelyn serves as sacristan at St. Joseph Motherhouse in Stevens Point, WI
Sister Linda  
St. Ben’s Health Care for the Poor  
Milwaukee, WI

Sister Sandy  
Health Care to the Poor  
Cleveland, Ohio
Coat of Arms
adopted February 21, 1944
designed by Sister Mary Theobald

Current Congregational Symbol
Before you O Lord,
our lives
What good a life,
if not
found in your life,
O Lord!