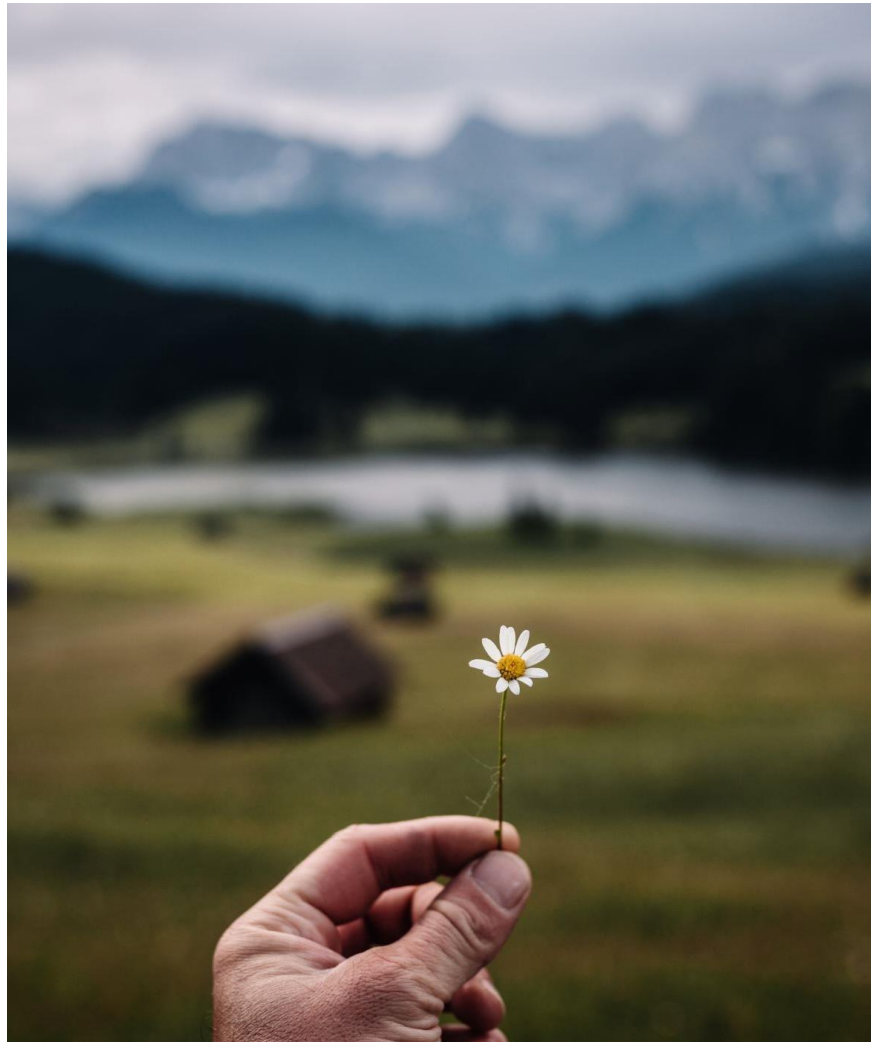


# Loretto Ever Evolving

1812 to 2023 and beyond



Created by Loretto Academy Staff  
El Paso, Texas  
2023

# Sisters of Loretto – 1812 to 2023



## The Beginning

The Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross, a Catholic religious congregation, began with three women, Mary Rhodes, Ann Havern, and Christina Stuart, under the guidance of Father Charles Nerinckx in Kentucky on April 25, 1812 to educate and provide faith development to poor children. Until after Vatican II, almost all Sisters were educators.

## New Form of Membership Begins: Co-Membership

Two Sisters of Loretto who were leaving the congregation but did not want to cut off their connection with the Sisters of Loretto, took a proposal to the 1970 Loretto Assembly for a new structure with Loretto that provided for a non-vowed community relationship. It was approved as an Assembly decision.

## Why Become a Loretto Co-Member?

- This extension of membership ... affords an opportunity for deepening bonds of friendship, mutual support, and share-in-mission.
- Co-members entered into individual contractual agreements. The agreements will be reciprocal in the areas of cooperation, communication, and contribution.
- Reasons for becoming a co-member vary as well as the level of participation in Loretto Community activities, but a commitment to the values shared as community is constant and mutual.
- Most co-members remain throughout the remainder of their lives, but some have decided to leave.
- Early co-members were former Sisters of Loretto as well as family members and friends of the Sisters of Loretto.

## Co-Member Responsibilities Evolve

- The contractual agreement has now changed to “Mutual Commitment Between the Loretto Community and Co-member.” It includes a section called “Reasons for Interest in co-membership.”
- Co-members served on committees and held staff positions.



## Co-members Not Associates

- Loretto views co-membership as different from association.
- “We wanted a closer relationship than the associate form that already existed in other [religious] communities. Basically, we wanted to retain our membership in the Loretto community but not be responsible to Rome,” from Jeannine Swift, former Sister of Loretto and one of the first co-members.
- Unlike many other religious communities where associates are seen as a distinct group, in Loretto co-members have no separate structure or constitutions.
- Co-members are invited to all Loretto events, liturgies, meetings, retreats, workshops and assemblies.



## Loretto Co-Membership Evolves

- Former Sisters of Loretto, family members of Sisters of Loretto, friends of Loretto, members of other religious groups, priests, Protestants, teachers and alums from Loretto schools, as well as peers of Loretto Community members in jobs outside of education, and now, many who know co-members through their work.
- Approximately 13% of co-members are males and 13% non-Catholics.
- In 2011 about half the Loretto Community were Sisters of Loretto and the other half co-members. Today there are more co-members than Sisters of Loretto.
- The co-membership process takes two or more years to complete.

## Co-members in Leadership

In 2000, an important change in Loretto's decision-making process occurred with the creation of the:

- Community Forum, extended leadership consisting of the President, Sisters of Loretto on the Executive Committee and elected Co-members, which meets regularly.
- Community Perspective Committee (CPC) with representatives from Loretto Community groups who can be vowed or co-members meet twice a year.
- Co-members continue to serve on Loretto Community committees and networks as well as hold staff positions.



**Loretto  
Community  
Forum**



# Loretto Outreach Mission – 2016

*The goal of the Outreach Team is to support and strengthen our Loretto relationships within the Community and with others who share our values. We will work toward this goal by creating and supporting opportunities and strategies to share our legacy, spirituality, community, and shared commitment to peace and justice with individuals and allied groups, both within and beyond the Loretto Community.*

## Loretto Outreach – Key Initiatives

Opportunities for Others Within and Beyond the Loretto Community

Retreats and Rituals  
Workshops  
Circles  
Study Groups  
Monthly Newsletters

## Loretto Circle of Friends

The Circles welcome Loretto colleagues, alums, friends, and others to join with Loretto Community members to learn, enrich and share in the bounty that is Loretto. Currently there is one Circle that meets face-to-face and one online Circle.

For eight or more years, Nerinx Hall, a Loretto High School in St. Louis, has had a Circle of Friends which meet once a month in person except for 2020 and 2021.



**Nerinx  
Hall  
Circle**



# Loretto Link

Loretto Link is a non-canonical, non-profit membership organization and spiritual community founded in 2017 to carry forward the mission and spirit of the Loretto Community (Sisters and Co-members) with equal participation and voice to all who chose to belong.

Loretto Link is now taking new members who are not Sisters of Loretto or Loretto Co-members.

Loretto Link is grounded in the principles of subsidiarity and democratic member participation. We carry out our mission through member-formed working groups. We meet annually to review the well-being and growth of our organization, and we hold less formal gatherings throughout the year. We welcome inquiries from persons who know of the Loretto Community or come to know of Loretto Link and wish to explore belonging to this next Loretto iteration.

## Loretto Link – Part of Loretto’s Future

Loretto Link is part of the exciting future of Loretto. Our members are steeped in Loretto's values of peace, justice, and hospitality. Together, we seek new ways to be of service to a hurting and damaged world.

We are comprised of 140+ vowed members, co-members, and friends of the Loretto Community who are now dues-paying members of Loretto Link. Since we started, we have formed working groups focused on a number of vital issues, including national and local elections, immigrant rights, economic justice, and much more.

Current working groups – Communications, Contemplative, Co-operative Economics, Good Trouble, Membership, Payday Loan Relief, Political Concerns, and The Wisdom Circle.

New working groups – Immigration and Temporal Affairs



## Loretto Link – Beginning Retreat

## Loretto Link – Retreat for Workers at Migrant Shelter



## I Am the Way – Constitutions

All people connected with Loretto as Sisters, Co-members, Outreach participants, and Loretto Link members are guided by Loretto values from IATW. Here are two examples:

Article 33 – As we stand with Mary at the foot of the cross, we strive to bring the healing Spirit of God into our world and we commit ourselves to improving the conditions of those who suffer from injustice, oppression, and deprivation of dignity. In this way, we participate in the church's mission of proclaiming the transforming love of God.

Article 20 – The basic desire to be united in love with God, with one another, with all people, and with all creation shapes this community of faith.



**Because the Gospel Urges Us**



Loretto Ever Evolving

**Let Loretto**

**Be Loretto**

**Forever!**

