

A stained glass artwork featuring a flower with a large, circular, orange and yellow center, a long, slender stem, and several green leaves with white variegation. The background is a solid teal color. The artwork is framed by dark, thick lines.

Indoor/Outdoor Tour

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods

Welcome to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods!

The Sisters of Providence warmly invite you to learn the story of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin and the community she founded. This self-guided tour includes both indoor and outdoor spaces.

The mission that began in France more than 175 years ago continues today in the hearts of the sisters, Providence Associates, and all who visit this sacred space.

We hope you will enjoy the beauty of these surroundings in all seasons of the year. Allow this guide to deepen your knowledge and understanding of our history.



May you find here a hospitable and peaceful place.

What a sweet providence it is to find friends thus willing to assist us. Accept the profound gratitude of my poor little Community, and be pleased also to aid us with your prayers.
— Saint Mother Theodore Guerin

Indoor tour

Your indoor tour begins right here in Providence Spirituality & Conference Center. Please feel free to travel at your own pace and ask any sister or staff member questions. Restrooms are located near the welcome desk and down the hall next to the shrine. If you are not able to walk steps, please let them know at the welcome desk so they may have someone assist you with the elevator when you are ready to see the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Please use the enclosed map to help guide your way.

About Providence Spirituality & Conference Center (PSCC, 1990)

The official welcome center for the Sisters of Providence and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, PSCC offers first-class event and meeting facilities, tours and pilgrimages, spiritual programs, delicious food, unique treasures from Linden Leaf Gifts, and is home to the Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin.

Built on the foundation of Foley Hall (1863-1989), PSCC includes three artifacts of that grand building: the jewel window on the western wall entitled “Arts in the Service of Christ the King;” the red granite pillars outside the entrance doors; and the Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College crest above the doors.

To begin your adventure, take a peek into O’Shaughnessy Dining Room located at the west end of PSCC.

O’Shaughnessy Dining Room (1921) #2 on map

This grand room featuring classical revival style, arched windows and Corinthian columns, serves as the main dining hall for students at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

With seating for 550, it is a popular location for banquets, weddings and receptions and is home to our famous Sunday Brunch at the Woods.



At this time walk back toward the welcome desk to the “Journey with a Saint” circle. You will see the statue of our foundress.

Journey with a Saint #1 on map

Saint Mother Theodore Guerin was a woman who traveled from France to the wilderness of Indiana in 1840. Through her richly detailed journals and letters, we learn how she overcame personal struggles to establish the Sisters of Providence at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Canonized in 2006, she is Indiana’s first saint and the 8th American saint. Her journey is one of Providence, and so we begin at her statue beckoning us to trust in “the Providence that so far has never failed us.”

Continue east down the hallway past Linden Leaf Gifts (on your right), to the Ministry Circle. At the conclusion of your tour we encourage you to visit Linden Leaf Gifts where you will find a lovely memento to remind you of your time here today.

Ministry Today *Between #3 & #4 on map*



For more than 175 years, Mother Theodore’s story has inspired over 5,200 women to join the Sisters of Providence, a Congregation of women religious dedicated to acts of love, mercy, and justice for people of all faith traditions.

Today, there are close to 300 Sisters of Providence and more than 200 Providence Associates, women and men from many walks of life and varying faiths who effect positive change in the world.

Proceed east to the Diorama and Timeline Hallway located just beyond the Ministry Today circle.



Dioramas (1940) and Timeline Hallway (2014) *Between #3 & #4 on map*

The 12 dioramas on the south wall tell the story of the Sisters of Providence from France in the early 1800s to laying the foundation of the church at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in 1886.

Commissioned for the 100th anniversary of the Congregation, the dioramas were designed after nine years of research by Sister Ignatia Braheny. The first scene was created by Monsieur Henri Marchand of Paris, France, and the remaining scenes were made by Gregory Kamka of Chicago.

The timeline on the north wall charts the life of the Congregation from Mother Theodore’s birth in 1798 to her canonization in 2006. It also includes events in U.S. history.

Continue east through the double doors to the Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin.

“Without distinction of persons, do good to all for the love of God.”
— Saint Mother Theodore Guerin

Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin (2014) *#4 on map*

As you enter the shrine each room represents a stop on Mother Theodore’s journey. There are five aspects represented in each space: The main title, a brief historical summary, a quotation from Saint Mother Theodore, a quotation from Scripture, and a “Consider How” statement inviting you to link your story to hers. Take your time and journey with this Saint of God.

The French Foundation

This room represents the world Mother Theodore left behind when she came to America.

Mission to a New World

The Sisters spent nearly six weeks crossing the ocean living in cramped quarters. Beset by storms and dangers, they never stopped trusting in God who was their constant companion.

The two artifacts in this space that actually belonged to Mother Theodore are the small square black luggage piece on the lower bunk and the book of psalms you see on the shelf to the left.

Immersion into the Forest

Please notice Mother Theodore’s garden shoes, otherwise known as *sabots*. They are made from leather and wood. The branches you see overhead are from our forests here at the Woods.

Immersion into Suffering

The sisters faced many hardships in the early years. At first the sisters spoke no English, women were not seen as equals, and anti-Catholic sentiments were strong. The sisters were spat on in public, arson destroyed their barn full of crops stored for the winter, and Mother Theodore faced unjust accusations and humiliations. Amid these trials, Mother Theodore’s unshakable belief in Providence never wavered.

Notice the artifacts in this space. The table and chairs were used by Mother Theodore. The cross hanging from the habit is the very same cross worn by Mother Theodore. Please take your time reading about all the treasures contained in the display area.

Immersion into The Holy

This chapel is the final resting place of Saint Mother Theodore. You are welcome to pray here and we ask that you maintain reverent silence in this sacred space.

Immersion into a New American Life

Mother Theodore’s open mind and loving heart enabled her to see many possibilities for mission as she began her new life in America.

Over the years, the Sisters of Providence opened more than 20 schools and in 1920 became the first American religious women’s Congregation to establish a mission in China. By the 1960s, the Congregation was 1,500 strong with sisters teaching in over 200 schools across the United States, District of Columbia, South America, and Asia.

The academy, once a small girls’ school in the wilderness, is known today as Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, a co-ed, liberal arts institution.

Immersion into Mission and Legacy

The story of Saint Mother Theodore and the ministry of the Sisters of Providence continue to grow every day. What began in the Indiana wilderness more than 175 years ago with six valiant women lives on in thousands of women and men who continue to engage in acts of love, mercy and justice.

As you exit the shrine, look for signs directing you to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

“If you lean with all your weight on Providence you will find yourselves well supported.”
— Saint Mother Theodore Guerin

Blessed Sacrament Chapel (1924) #5 on map

Upon the arrival of the French sisters at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in 1840, their first act was a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in a poor little woodland chapel.

Mother Theodore’s wish for a special chapel to honor Christ present in the Eucharist moved toward fruition when Mother Mary Cleophas Foley met with Pope Pius X in 1913 and received permission to build the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Designed in Italian Renaissance style, the altar is carved from one solid piece of pure white Carrara marble that weighs 8,000 pounds.

The stained glass windows were created in the Royal Bavarian Art Studios in Munich, Germany, with few images so that worshippers are not distracted from prayer.

The Sisters of Providence have spent thousands of hours praying for the needs of the world in this chapel and they continue this special devotion today.

Continue east down the hall to the Church of the Immaculate Conception.



Be
with us now
God, as we follow
in the footsteps of your
beloved servant, Saint Mother
Theodore Guerin. Open our
minds and hearts to hear
her story and to trust as she
did in your unfailing
Providence.

Prayer

Church of the Immaculate Conception (1907) #6 on map

More than 21 years in the making, this Italian Renaissance church was patterned after the Church of the Holy Trinity in Paris to honor Mother Theodore’s wish for a chapel similar to the one she left behind in Ruillé, France.

Nearly destroyed in the Providence Convent fire of 1889, the church was saved when a near miracle shifted the wind and drove the flames away.

Marble from four regions of the world are found throughout the church: Africa, Greece, Italy, and the U.S.

The paintings on either side of the sanctuary, on the ceiling, and the fresco of the semi-dome, were created by Thaddeus de Zukotynski, a Polish immigrant artist.

The gallery is home to a Casavant organ from Canada with 1,700 pipes.

Designs for the stained-glass windows were created by the sisters and based on stories from sacred scriptures. The windows were fashioned in the Royal Bavarian Art Studios in Munich, Germany.

The interior of the church was renovated in 1986 in accordance with liturgical norms of Vatican II. Marble from the high altar was used for the altars, lectern, presider’s chair, and holy water font.

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence is located in the rear of the church.

National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence (1925) #7 on map

Devotion to Mary under the title Our Lady of Providence began in Italy in the 1700s. When the sisters received this painting from their chaplain, they titled it “Our Lady of Providence, Queen of the Home,” and dedicated this shrine to strengthening the family through prayer.

Replicas of the original masterpiece “Mater Divinae Providentiae” by the 16th century Italian painter, Gaetano, are available from Linden Leaf Gifts at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.

Today, the sisters receive thousands of requests to pray for families all over the world.

This concludes the indoor portion of the tour. As you walk back toward PSCC, the bronze statue of Saint Mother Theodore (which is the first location on the outdoor tour) is located through the double doors across from her shrine. You can also access the PSCC parking lot through this exit. Don’t forget to visit Linden Leaf Gifts before you depart.



Outdoor tour

We hope you enjoyed the indoor tour. As you begin your outdoor tour please note you do not need to travel in any particular order. Please refer to the enclosed map and use the red and brown directional signs located throughout the property. If you need assistance at any time please call the welcome desk at 812-535-2951. There is parking available near many of the outdoor locations, if you do not want to walk the entire tour.

Before you depart be certain to visit Linden Leaf Gifts, a ministry of the Sisters of Providence. They carry handmade products from the sisters, items from local artisans, products made from the fiber of our White Violet Center alpacas, and fair trade merchandise that supports marginalized people in developing countries.

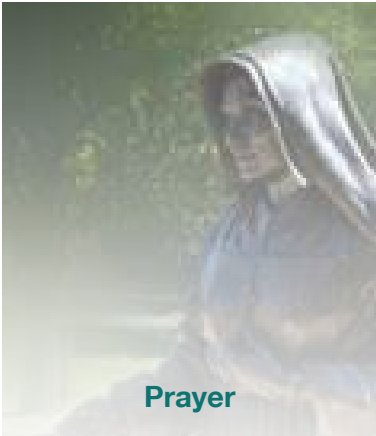
May you find here a hospitable and peaceful place.



“We continued to advance into the thick woods until suddenly Father Buteux stopped the carriage and said. “Come down, Sisters, we have arrived. What was our astonishment to find ourselves still in the midst of the forest, no village, not even a house in sight.”
— Saint Mother Theodore Guerin

Bronze Statue of Saint Mother Theodore (2008)

Located in the circle near church
Created by Teresa Clark of Fort Wayne, Indiana, this 6-foot tall bronze statue was designed to demonstrate a woman of action extending a welcoming hand and inviting all to follow her.



Prayer
Grant to us, O Lord Jesus Christ, an increase of love and gratitude for your special presence here throughout the years.

Church of the Immaculate Conception exterior (1907) #6 on map

Patterned after Holy Trinity Church in Paris, France, this architectural wonder was built to honor Mother Theodore’s dream to one day have a church similar to ones she left behind in France. The exterior is constructed with Indiana limestone.

Mass is open to the public and celebrated daily Sun: 11 a.m., Mon-Sat: 11:30 a.m., Communion service on Wednesday.

The Arrival Rock (1840) #21 on map



This site marks the location where Mother Theodore and her five companions first stepped upon the soil of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods on October 22, 1840.

After more than three months of travel by ship, riverboat, and stagecoach, the sisters were stunned to find themselves in a primitive wilderness.

Log Cabin Chapel (2012) #17 on map

Having just survived a six-hour journey from Terre Haute in a rain storm, the sisters made their way in silence down a deep ravine to a crude log dwelling that served as church and home to their chaplain, Father Buteux. Once inside, they wept in joyous thanksgiving for their safe journey.

This new exact replica, made with logs from a 19th century cabin, stands on the same location as the original woodland chapel. and was built with assistance from the Vigo County Parks and Recreation Department, Terre Haute Convention and Visitors Bureau, and inmates of the Terre Haute Correctional Facility.

Guests are welcome to step inside this chapel, open daily from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto (1928)

#20 on map

During WWI, Mother Mary Cleophas Foley prayed for peace and pledged to build a grotto similar to the famous Our Lady of Lourdes in France should the war end before Dec 8, 1918, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

When peace was declared on Nov 11, 1918, construction on the grotto began. The stone upon which the statue rests is from Lourdes, France.



Saint Anne Shell Chapel (1876, Original 1844) #24 on map

Mother Theodore returned to France to secure funds in 1843 when arson destroyed the sisters’ barns, farm implements, and harvest. On her return voyage, her ship was caught in a storm. Fearing that death was imminent, Mother Theodore prayed to Saint Anne, the patron saint of Breton sailors. Immediately the ship righted, and the sea calmed. Upon her safe return to The Woods, Mother Theodore built this chapel.

When the original logs began to erode, the chapel was reconstructed with stones. Completed in 1876, this chapel is the oldest structure on campus. Its walls are lined with shells from the Wabash River.

Guests are welcome to step inside this chapel, open daily from 7-5 p.m.

Cemetery (1864) #23 on map

Simple gravestones mark the final resting place of more than 2,100 great women who dedicated their lives to serving others as Sisters of Providence. The Celtic cross, chosen to honor Mother Theodore’s Breton roots, mark where some of Mother Theodore’s remains rest.

The stones closest to Mother Theodore are her five companions, the taller stones are general superiors, and the tallest stones are chaplains. Sisters from the same family of origin rest next to each other.

The graves to the southwest mark the remains of sisters who have been cremated. The monument on the north end of the cemetery lists the names of sisters buried elsewhere.



Outdoor Stations of the Cross (1938)

Near gates of cemetery

Designed in Italy, these 14 bronze stations represent the journey Jesus made toward his death. The stations begin and end near the gates of the cemetery.

Providence Hall (1890) #16 on map

This four-story red brick building is home to both retired and active sisters ministering at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. It also serves as the motherhouse for all Sisters of Providence wherever they live.

Using many of the original bricks, it was reconstructed as a larger version of Mother Theodore’s convent when it burned to the ground in 1889.

Renovated in 2011, this building was the first in Vigo County to have electricity (“Illumination Day” in 1890).

White Violet Center for Eco Justice (1996) #14 on map

White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, a ministry of the Sisters of Providence, is a working organic farm centered around teaching, caring and inspiring for all creation. The center provides opportunities for persons to participate in creating systems that support justice and sustainability, locally and globally. Through organic agriculture, eco-justice education and social advocacy, White Violet Center strives to promote an awareness and way of living which support all life.

At White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, you’ll find a herd of alpacas, chickens, 300 acres of state certified organic farmland, bees, a berry patch, a bluebird trail, and classified forest.

There is a separate walking tour available if you are interested in a more detailed view of White Violet Center. Stop in the center and pick up a brochure.

White Violet Center Alpacas (1998) #28 on map

In support of sustainable living and to generate revenue, the sisters sought a no-kill animal that was easy to manage and kind to Earth. Alpacas were chosen because they are gentle creatures and their fiber is valuable. Alpaca by-product is used to fertilize the gardens.

Baby alpacas are called crias; they live to be 15-25 years old and weigh 100-175 pounds.

Alpaca fleece is softer than cashmere and comes in a variety of colors. Adults produce 4-8 pounds of fleece a year that sells for \$3-\$6 per ounce. Alpacas have three stomachs (cows have two); they chew cud like cattle and eat 2-3 bales of grass or hay a month.

Very curious and social, alpacas are herd animals that communicate by humming or changing body posture. They spit at each other when competing for food or establishing rank in their herd, and they make a shrill alarm call when threatened by predators.



Teaching, caring, and inspiring.

“Help us God to extend your love, mercy, and justice to all of creation.”

We hope you enjoyed your visit to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.

To arrange a guided tour, group tour or a pilgrimage contact our tour manager at **812-535-2945** or **tours@spsmw.org**.



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