

Mother Agnes Mary Donovan, SV
Founding Superior General, Sisters of Life

Mother Agnes Mary, SV, was among the first to respond to John Cardinal O'Connor's inspiration to found the Sisters of Life, a religious community dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the sacredness of human life.

Serving as the first Superior General from 1993 to 2023, Mother Agnes was richly prepared by God for her consecrated mission. She received a PhD in Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1985 and was a professor of psychology at Columbia University in New York City and The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. As a psychologist, she focused on family intervention, mother/child relationships, and children with special needs. Responsible for anchoring the community of the Sisters of Life in its charism and guiding it to holiness, Mother Agnes shares the message of reverence for human life around the world.

On Aug. 20th, 2025, she now serves as the Administrator of the Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe, a House of Studies of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR) for American Religious Sisters here in Rome. In April of 1999, inspired by Saint John Paul II's desire for seminarians and young priests to "know" the Church by studying in Rome, CMSWR opened a house of studies in Rome: Domus Sanctae Mariae Guadalupe. The Domus reflects the spiritual vision of CMSWR and allows religious sisters to "experience the Church in a far more profound and dynamic way." The sisters' close proximity to the Vicar of Christ helps form them as strong ecclesial women at the service of the Church. In addition, the cross-community ties formed at the Domus help to promote a mutual understanding, respect, and love for one another's gifts to the Church with the ultimate goal of enriching and fortifying religious life and the Church.