



FRANCISCAN CONNECTIONS

The Newsletter of the Associates of the
Hospital Sisters of St. Francis

"Sharing in a Franciscan way of life and a healing Spirit"

Volume 15, Issue 1

February 2020



New Associates: Pictured above in the back row: Jane Locascio and Rosie Butler. Middle row: Sister Trudy O'Connor, Mary Bonner, Linda Mueller, Bernie Curry, and Gloria Guy. Front row: Sister Jomary Trstensky, Jerrilyn Zavada, Nancy Davis, Sister Maureen O'Connor, Alicia Shapinsky, Sister Mary Ann Minor and Sister Janelle Athorp. Not pictured is Peggy Pendergast❖

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Patient Waiting

Let's face it. I don't like to wait, and I am not a patient person while waiting. This got my attention on December 30 while meditating on the Gospel for that day about Anna the Prophetess. She had spent most of the 84 years of her life in the temple waiting to greet the Messiah. She was patient and did not lose hope in the promise that God had made to her. Further research revealed that the opening pages of Luke's Gospel are filled with people waiting, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, and Anna. It is also worth to note that they all heard similar words in their waiting, "Do not be afraid, I have something good to say to you."

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Associate Office

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This prompted me to look deeper at the process of waiting and I hence discovered an intimate connection between the words "waiting" and "patience." Waiting is an action which most people consider passive. It is defined as: to remain inactive or in a state of repose, as until something expected happens. Scripture does not reflect this definition. Those in Luke who are waiting are waiting actively with intentionality. Consider again Anna, the prophetess. Scripture says in Luke 2:37, "She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer." That hardly sounds passive. Active waiting means being fully present to the moment, in the conviction that something is happening. Waiting is about time and can sometimes seem like an awful desert between where we are and where we want to be. So what does patient waiting look like? Patience has nothing to do with time because one doesn't stop everything to wait, but rather keeps living in the present moment until the right thing shows up. The word patience comes from the Latin verb *patior* which means "to suffer." Waiting patiently is suffering through the present moment, tasting it to the full, and letting the seeds that are sown in the ground on which we stand grow into strong plants. Patient people dare to stay where they are and to live actively in the present and wait. Inpatient waiting can be a way of trying to control the future. Don't we live in a culture that is primarily driven by those who mistakenly think they can control themselves and others? We are accustomed to getting things at warp speed. We don't like to wait. We want the future to go in a very specific direction and if it doesn't then we are disappointed. In a world preoccupied by the need for control, to wait open-endedly is a radical attitude toward life. If we actively live our spiritual journey, in the waiting, we will find ourselves present in the moment and with a trust that new things will happen far beyond our imaginations. So how do we actively and patiently wait? First, we can wait together - we are all a part of Christian community as Associates and it is a community

of support, celebration, and affirmation in which we can wait. Second, we can wait in prayer. In our waiting we can cultivate the seed that God has planted and be thankful. Lastly, we can dare to stay where we are in spiritual alertness. We can live fully in the present moment expecting that God is about to unveil his plan, which may look radically different than ours. Simone Weil, a Jewish writer, said, "Waiting patiently in expectation is the foundation of the spiritual life." If waiting is the foundation of the spiritual life, then hope is the foundation of waiting. Waiting rests upon patience and hope. Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, and Anna are all examples of how we must hope and not merely wish. Maybe this year is the time to stop wishing in our waiting and instead, hope with patience. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER ...

- Mary Jo Seiz (Springfield) who is undergoing medical treatment
- Paula Minwegen (Springfield) who is undergoing medical treatment
- Pat Wright (Streator) who is undergoing medical treatment
- Our Hospital Sisters ❖

Franciscan Connections Newsletter

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Being Franciscan . . .

Jan Steinhour

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2010**



My name is Jan Steinhour and I became an Associate of the Hospital Sisters in 2010. For me, being an Associate is to journey with the Hospital Sisters in the spirit of St. Francis and Clare. I have received many blessings from this committed relationship through retreats, guest speakers, community volunteering (such as Catholic Charities, Samaritan at St. John's Hospital, pastoral care) and attending the monthly gatherings of Associates in community.

My original sponsor was Sister Doris Poettker. She was not able to continue with me until my formal commitment, but she sent weekly cards with Sister's words of encouragement. Sister Janelle Athorp journeyed with me the remainder of the way and helped me with my spiritual growth by encouraging me to find a place for daily prayer and meditation in my life and suggesting more involvement in my parish ministries. Sister Janelle taught me that - it is not what we do, but how we do it.

I live and express the Franciscan spirit by teaching religion in my parish and assisting with the RCIA program. I also bring the healing charism of St. Francis to others in Eucharistic ministry to the homebound, volunteering at Catholic Charities, preparing and serving food to those in need, and making crosses for the Catholic Youth Convention. I also pray for others and attend Mass on a regular basis.

I live with my husband Dick, who is in his 20th year of retirement. He likes to play golf and volunteers at St. Martin de Porres. In my spare

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Gerardo Valdes

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2017**



My name is Gerardo Valdes and I became a Franciscan Associate in 2017. In 2016, my friend Nancy Davis asked if I would be interested in learning more about the Franciscan way of life. I attended classes once a month, and after a year was ready to commit. Sister Jonette was my sponsor during the candidate sessions. During this period, she was very supportive, and was an excellent example of leading a Franciscan Life. In my everyday life some of the ways I live the Franciscan spirit are by attending daily Mass, bible study, Adoration, and Divine Mercy Chaplet. Taking communion to the homebound brings joy to my life. It makes me feel good being able to bring them Jesus. Growing up in Mexico, I was not able to be an altar server, I now am taking advantage of the opportunity at daily Mass. Sacristan, Reader, and Eucharistic Minister are also some of the roles I am blessed to fill. After my retirement from the field of education, I am able to spend more time outside enjoying nature. I also now have the time to volunteer. The food pantry knows it can count on me to be there when it needs me. There are several non-English speaking Hispanics that I help and a girl calls me abuelito, or grandfather. Spending time with the Franciscan Sisters and Franciscan Associates gives me an opportunity to bond and to learn from like-minded persons.

My wife, Vivian, and I married in 1982. We have two grown children. Our son, Alejandro, is married and lives in Waukegan, IL. Our daughter Elise, lives in sunny Florida, so we have a warm place to visit in the winter. She is preparing for her wedding in May. So far, we don't have any grandchildren. ❖

Musings from Chiara

By Dan Frachey



A Spirituality of Song

This was the theme given to our recent speaker Susan Hamilton, a church choir director at the *Companions on the Journey* gathering in January. How fitting then that I was able to dive more deeply into the resplendent waters of this spirituality of song when the Millikin University Choir began their tour at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield a few days later. I'll get right to the point: by God's wondrous love and creativity, a collective charism of the Holy Spirit is infused into such a group as this to achieve a sacred end. Moved by their performance that I heard, allow me to offer my own parable: The *Kin-dom* of God is like a choir:

- that by its very nature summons forth a blessed balance between male and female voices.
- though it is comprised by many individuals, its goal is to forge a singular voice.
- even as a collection of the many, it can revel in the elevation of just one singer.
- It becomes most powerful and effective when breathing together.
- it preaches with great effect when words are given clear articulation.
- creating an honoring spirit of complementarity given so many distinct vocal timbres.
- it takes up different styles of music from all over the world and celebrates each.
- it can sustain a chord of dissonant notes; holding them in loving tension to achieve beauty.
- conveying hope, joy and the sweetness of faith as an attractive proposition for the world.

My own hope in rendering such a complimentary account of a choir is to point out how the church or a particular community like the Associates might view one another as God's *Kin-dom* coming. While music is my love, I encourage you to consider what other parables are yet to be written according to your own account of God's working in the world. Peace. ❖

News Bits . . .

As we begin a new year and a new decade, let each of us think about who in our lives could benefit from the healing charism of the Hospital Sisters. Who do you know might be ready to join us in the Associate relationship with the Sisters? So, as we begin the year of our Lord 2020, let's get with it, and as they say, "make a friend, be a friend, and bring a friend to Christ." For this unique opportunity to partner with the Hospital Sisters in their ministry to continue, we need new candidates. Please ask... it is up to you. ❖

Jan Steinhour –

Continued from page 3

time I like to do crossword puzzles, bake, read, and watch PBS shows on history and nature. We have a daughter, Julie, and a son, Kevin, and we are blessed with five grandchildren: Stephanie, Kylie, Brooke, Jake, and Brett. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

SISTER MARETTA KURK, OSF

BORN: 06/15/1932

FIRST PROFESSION: 06/13/1954

DIED: 12/19/2019

SISTER ELVON HUSER, OSF

BORN: 03/20/1919

FIRST PROFESSION: 06/13/1939

DIED: 01/06/2020

**May they share with Jesus the joy
and peace of heaven . . .**

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



February, The Month Of Love:

Valentine's day and Ash Wednesday. Not a fleeting love but one of commitment and self-emptying...to the point of death! February is also an awareness against Human Trafficking; remembering Rosa Parks and learning to advocate lovingly for other races and their God-given dignity. So many opportunities that we can engage in and at the same time be transformed into a servant at the service of all, especially the most vulnerable. If we are not sure, ponder the life of St. Francis of Assisi. With whom did he hang with after his conversion? The lepers, the poor, all of God's creatures became his brothers and sisters.

A popular song, *When a Child is Born*, spoke of the hope that flickers, the star that lights up all across the land and that a new morn dawns when a child is born. Yes, when a child is born! The birth could be in Bethlehem, El Paso, Guatemala, or El Salvador and each child deserves a safe shelter, loving parents and a place to call home. Each has a right to have its needs met and to live in peace, not fear. Let us remember the children in cages or found in the Rio Grande River and not forget. Let us remember the children washed up on the shores of Aleppo... they too have the Imago Dei. It cannot be us and them...there is only one common home. Let us be that ray of hope for the vulnerable and suffering who come to our borders. May we stop and ponder our responsibility in the refugee crisis and the Planet Crisis.

Yes, we stand in solidarity with those at the Border and we recall the words of Mary, "He has looked with favor on his lowly servant; He has scattered the proud in their conceit and has

lifted up the lowly." It is the same story of no room in the Inn, just a different stable and country. May this month of love be different because we care; we see people in need not numbers; we stop dehumanizing and give our fear over ... so that the child (ren) born amidst violence can be safe and warmly accepted as our sisters and brothers and HOPE pervades for all.

We, the people of God are the Church, and we need the other of another culture to enrich us and us them. That is God's diversity! The Indigenous of the Amazon taught us much in the recent Amazon Synod, at the request of Pope Francis. We are called to love beyond paper valentines and care for our home by being proactive on down to earth issues: lower our carbon footprint, divest from fossil fuels, adopt a more sustainable lifestyle by dialing back the thermostat, reducing automobile transport, avoiding plastic and eating more plant-based meals, and eliminating food waste. Make planet sustainability your love for February and care for those beyond our borders. Take time to read *Laudato Si'*, or United States Conference of Bishops on Immigration, reflect on life of St. Josephine Bakhita, and engage in our civil and moral responsibility to care for the least among us.... this just might be your best Valentine month ever! ❖

News Bits . . .

The Associates in Springfield collected \$500.00 for their Annual Christmas donation. This year's benefactor was Helping Hands of Springfield. According to Erica Smith, the director, the money was used for things such as medications that are not covered, emergency transportation, and general special needs. They were most grateful for this generous donation.

The Associate group in Green Bay donated over a hundred dollars for the gift for residents at a local shelter. Sr. Annice bought many socks and underclothes with the donation for both men and women that were delivered to the shelter mid-December. ❖

Lenten Letter

By Father Dennis
Koopman, OFM



Some years ago, I visited a retreat house in Victorville, CA in the southwestern corner of the Mojave Desert. In that desert there is a unique cactus, the Joshua Tree cactus. They are very stunning and remarkable.

Preparing for Lent can be a time of entering the desert of our spiritual life's journey and looking forward to the spring rain and sun of the Resurrection of the Lord. The desert is a quiet place, a place of contemplation and meditation. The desert is composed of little life, of dry sand. Only when I place myself in a place of little spiritual life, of dryness, of emptiness, can I then seek ways to fill my life anew. I seek to refill that which seems a bit empty.

I want to start with Lent being a time and a place of emptying, of maybe sacrifice and discipline. Then I can open more honestly to allowing, asking God to fill me with new spiritual energy, new spiritual life, new grace from the one who spent time in the desert as well. There is always a focus, a goal, something to look forward to during Lent. When I notice once again

that the end result of Lent is Easter, then I give myself a spirit of inspiration and fervor.

I suspect that I and many people prefer to do something different or special for Lent rather than to give something up. It seems that to give something up, like candy or snacks, is like pulling back from things, rather than moving forward into new life. If the time of Lent is to prepare in a special way for the coming of Easter, then, maybe we ought to add something to this precious and important time. Some of these positive activities can be spending more time with spiritual reading, deciding to go to a time of adoration before the Holy Eucharist, choosing a time to visit nursing homes, helping at a charity, and such like. To take on a new task, a new project, may require a strong decision, fervent discipline, or a unique sacrifice.

Is Lent a time to be building? Is it a time to bring water to the desert? Is it a time to look forward to new freshness of life? I want Lent to be a time to prepare for the celebration of New Life, the Risen Life in the Lord Jesus. Lent can be an important time for my spiritual growth. The Joshua Tree cactus has roots that reach deep into the soil to bring up water that is needed for life. I want to reach deep into the graces that God provides for me to not only sustain my spiritual life, but also to allow my life to enter a new wholeness, to blossom and to be refreshed. The time of Lent is as precious to me as water is to the Joshua Tree cactus in the Mojave Desert. Maybe even more precious! Peace. ❖

New Associate Commitment Retreat . . .

November 15-17, 2019



Associates at Christmas . . .



GreenBay



Springfield



Decatur



Ugly Sweater Contest



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Events at Chiara Center . . .

Companions on the Journey – (Lunch) – March 2, April 6

Spirituality of Recovery Weekend Retreat – February 21-23

Death café – 10:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. March 3

Ah Days of Quiet – March 10

Food & Faith No. 4 - *Climate Science & Climate Spirituality: A*

Rapprochement with Sister Earth – 6 p.m., March 26

Conscious Aging Group – Eight week sessions & two groups: 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., March 12 through April 30

Weekend Retreat – *Building a Monastery of the Heart* - March 20-22

Tai Chi Classes – 10:30 a.m. - April 2, 9, 16, 23

Spirituality in Healthcare Conference – Trauma-informed care, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. April 30

Japanese Tea Ceremony – April 28, 7 p.m.

To register for any of the Chiara-sponsored events, visit the Events section of our website or call us at 217-523-0901. There is a 10% discount for Associates.

Please view us on Facebook and click Like