



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 16, Issue 1

February 2021



A Wintery Road – Peaceful but slippery (Photo by Jeff Kutz) ❖

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

I Choose Hope

A week or so ago I came across a post on Facebook that simply said, "I Choose Hope." I shared it because I do choose hope. But what does that mean, as we come to the end of a year that will probably go down in most people's minds as one we would not like to repeat? Having read an essay of reflections of 2020 by Sr. Rita M. Yeasted, my focus on hope for 2021 intensified. She had this to say which made me think more about this hope that I choose for 2021. She said, "We are optimistic when we see a solution on the horizon. But hope, Abrahamic hope, is reaching for light in utter darkness. We hope when our optimism runs dry."

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Associate Office

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This is a season for hope. Christ, our light, has come. We have nothing to fear. Come Lord Jesus." These words were so encouraging to me as they brought out the difference in the hope: I have as a Christian, then those of the secular world. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says this about hope. "The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity. Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the chosen people which has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, who was blessed abundantly by the promises of God fulfilled in Isaac, and who was purified by the test of the sacrifice. Hope is the confident expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision of God." (1818-1819, 2090) I have always considered myself an optimist, but optimism wistfully says, "maybe." Christian faith and hope are grounded, calm, and solid. Hope says, "Okay, God, I will build an ark." "Okay, God, I will lead people out of slavery." "Okay, God, but even if I die, I will still serve you." Hope "survives the teeth of lions, the fury of flames, the edge of the sword, the weakness of humanity, the downfall of empires, the scourge of beating, the lows of failure, the highs of success, the flux of schedules, the duress of persecution, and the finality of death." Source Indyink.wordpress. The word for hope in Hebrew means expectation and it also means cord or rope, which comes from a root word that means to bind or to wait for or upon. So as I ponder my decision to choose hope in 2021, that means that I will reach assuredly and fearlessly for that Christ-light regardless of anything that is happening

around me. I will not get discouraged nor ever feel abandoned because of the virtue of Christian hope that God has placed within my heart and soul that will sustain me. I will choose hope, the kind of hope that comes from knowing that I cannot save myself or be everything that others expect. It is a hope grounded in the truth that things come to pass according to God's will and not mine. I will hope in the mystery of my faith and the Christ-light that continues to guide my heart. Will you choose hope? ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER ...

- Debbie Waitkus (Springfield) who is undergoing medical treatment
- Pat Pettinger (Springfield) who recently lost her husband
- Sally Steiner (Highland) who lost her brother and his wife in the past month.
- All individuals suffering from the COVID-19 virus and those who are struggling emotionally, financially, and spiritually from this pandemic.
- Our Hospital Sisters ❖

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Staying Franciscan . . .

Jim Klees

(Eau Claire)



**Year of Commitment –
1991**

My name is Jim Klees and I have been an Associate with the Hospital Sisters since 1991. My sponsor was Sister Augusta Sperl who passed away in 2020 as did my own mother, both at the age of 97. When I mentioned this to Brian Blasco, he said now I have two more angels praying for me.

Why do I continue to be an Associate with the Hospital Sisters after almost 30 years? The quick answer is that I still believe in their mission: to serve the sick and the poor, to be that healing presence in our world. Our numbers are fewer at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire, but I can remember when our group was vibrant and even had several Sisters with us. Many of our members have passed but others have just found other endeavors. I was asked this same question not that long ago and I said that I have had several opportunities to do other things, but I have always made the Sisters a priority. Maybe it was from working there or the example of Fr. Klimek. Up to this year I have tried to volunteer at St. Francis Food Pantry weekly. They still have a picture on the wall of the Sisters who started the Food Pantry. I am sure they would be impressed at how it has grown.

I was just reading about prayer and the Scriptures and how it should be a priority in our lives. Well after saying that the Sisters should be a priority in my life, who better to discuss this with than other Associates. This year has been especially difficult but thanks to Nancy Davis and technology we have been able to do this. The monthly readings have kept prayer a priority in my life as in the past and I am sure it will continue to do so. ❖

Leo Lenn

(Springfield)



**Year of Commitment –
1989**

I was in the second Springfield class of the Associates in 1989 and have been an Associate for 32 years. My sponsor was Sister M. Paulette Collings. In 1970, Sister Paulette was the CEO at St. Mary's Hospital in Streator, IL, and she hired me to be the CFO. I remained close to her until her death in 2016. When she was elected to the General Council in Germany in 1988, Sister Maureen O'Connor became my sponsor. Associates seem to always maintain a special bond with their sponsors.

Being an Associate has encouraged me to continue to study my Catholic faith, and to learn more about it. It gives me joy to be with other Associates who love and practice their faith and care about the Sisters. I believe strongly in what the Hospital Sisters stand for and in their life commitment to the Church and to God. During my career as Treasurer for HSHS, I felt a strong responsibility to care for and protect them and to assure that their finances were adequate to provide for them as they age. I have learned to start each day with a prayer and to thank God for all he has given me in my life and in my relationships with the Sisters and Priests, and with my wife and family.

Thinking about how I live Franciscan values, I'd have to say that I love nature and enjoy quiet reflection and prayer while admiring the beauty of God's creation. I grew up not having a lot, so I appreciate living simply and being a good steward of resources. Francis was a peace maker and appreciated the unique dignity of each person. I'd like to think that God gave me the gift of bringing people together to work in harmony. ❖

Musings from Chiara

By Dan Frachey



Moderation as *"Love's discernment"*

Since Nancy is writing about the cardinal (meaning "hinging," like a strong metal hinge that holds the door) virtue of hope, I thought I'd write a complementary piece on the virtue of moderation -- but not so much as a noun but as the verb form. A beloved professor Sister Carla Mae Streeter, OP, referred to moderating as "love's discernment" because of how we must always be figuring out how best to moderate ourselves in any given situation. Perhaps it would help to imagine a thermostat in a house that is best used in conjunction with factors like outdoor air temperatures, drafty windows, cold feet during winter, etc. It exists to help us arrive at the most suitable temperature at any given time and condition.

I bring this virtue for your consideration because of what happened January 6, 2021 in our nation's Capitol. In the immediate and then lengthening aftermath of the mob's breaking into the hallowed Capitol, many people exhibited a wide array of emotions: rage, anger, sadness, fear, disgust as well as determination and being courageous or even - - dare I say it, hopeful. When with friends in person or via social media, I began to observe how different people could be so far from one another in terms of their response to a singular event. The key learning for me was not to expect others to be where I was or to necessarily feel what I was feeling.

I began to relate all these understandable emotions as flowing from the Christ on the San Damiano Cross. In this image, we see the Christ who is crucified and risen, alive and ascended. Some of my friends were struggling in the anguish and death of their expectations for our leaders and perhaps our entire nation. Others

were already seeing the seeds of rebirth because of how our pain was revealed in such a transparent way so as to call forth a new way of being. Still others were able to speak from that place of transformed-being as if it were actually happening right in our midst.

It is my hope that no matter where we were, and still may be in relation to these recent events, Love calls us to moderate toward the common good. This will mean that some need to move away from the place of excessive criticism on up to speaking about the positive words and actions that are being held aloft by the better leaders among us. Others will need to take some steps back from their real sense of the shining city-being-birthing-anew to meet those coming from the depths of pain and sorrow. If we can do this, we'll be together to figure out where we ALL go from here.

Peace and all good to you. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

ASSOCIATE SHIRLEY BRINDLE (EAU CLAIRE)

BORN: 05/25/1930
COMMITMENT: 1991
DIED: 01/17/2021

ASSOCIATE MARTHA METTERNICH (SPRINGFIELD)

BORN: 12/27/1952
COMMITMENT: 2007
DIED: 12/17/2020

ASSOCIATE MARY JO SEIZ (SPRINGFIELD)

BORN: 03/14/1947
COMMITMENT: 2006
DIED: 11/15/2020

ASSOCIATE MARY THOMAS (GREEN BAY)

BORN: 03/19/1939
COMMITMENT: 1997
DIED: 12/01/2020

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

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



A Call To Re-Birth: Care for the Common Good

2020 has been wrought with numerous challenges, disappointments, struggles and confrontations. Our democracy has been confronted and our reality of being American tested to the brink. Some applaud election results, while others cry foul. Divisiveness seems to reign.

Franciscan spirituality calls us to recognize all people as sisters and brothers. St. Francis visited the Sultan of Egypt and told his brothers not to get into arguments but just be subject to every human creature for "God's sake." Francis of Assisi had one mission, to spread the word of God. A peace maker.

As we continue in this New Year, it may be a good time to pause and take stock of our God given charism. There will always be differences and that is okay; diversity is God's gift to us. But how do I reconcile my differences with another?

Pope Francis, reminding us of the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "Globalized society makes us neighbors, but it does not make us brothers and sisters." Polarization obstructs dialogue and living together. We are challenged and as Pope Francis says, "Anyone who thinks the only lesson to be learned from this time is to improve or reform current systems is 'denying reality.' We need a rebirth of 'universal aspiration to fraternity.'"

Perhaps, go to the Scripture story of The Good Samaritan and ask yourself, who is my neighbor? Whom do I pass by, and why? Do I hear the cries of the poor, the Black, the Jew, the Muslim? Or do I only have selective hearing? Following St. Francis of Assisi, we are called to embrace all lepers, for as long as you did it to one of these the

least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me, says the Lord. An encounter calls me from out of my comfort zone, to become a neighbor to the one who cries out for assistance, no matter where in the world they live. There is only one Planet: one common home. I am called by my baptism to go out into the world, build relationships, build bridges and meet the other. Let's face it, Jesus had a great affinity for the poor, the outcast, the sinner, and the one on the fringes of society. May God give us a new heart... transform our hard hearts into hearts of flesh, to hear, to respond and to be tender to the stranger. Pope Francis reminds us that "a culture of care as a path to peace, will enable humanity to advance on the path of fraternity, justice and peace between individuals, communities, peoples and nations" (World Day of Peace, January 1, 2021).

This month, take some time and pick one current issue: systemic racism; immigration, non-violence, ecology, women, death penalty, life and ask yourself just one question: To whom am I being a brother or sister, if not, why not? If so, how so? All God asks of us is to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God...by walking with one another. Pick up and try a read of Fratelli Tutti.

A blessed and safe 2021. ❖

Upcoming Associate Activities . . .

****Thursday, February, 18, 2021 is the Associate presentation with Fr. Michael Berndt talking to us about the season of Lent. He is currently the assistant pastor of Christ the King parish in Springfield.**

****Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Nancy Davis will do a presentation entitled, "Living a Wholehearted Life," based on the writings of Brene Brown.**

****Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. John Hanlon from the "Innocence Project" will be presenting on his organization.**

All presentations will be on Zoom unless otherwise informed. ❖

St. Clare, Patron Saint of Television, Pray for Us

**By Amy Penne
Associate**



As many readers know, St. Clare is the Patron Saint of Television. That sounds odd since St. Clare lived and prayed nearly 800 years ago, long before television and computers ever came into our lives. Pope Pius XII declared her the patroness of television in 1958. St. Clare's work and prayers as our patroness of television has never been more vital to our faith.

Legend has it that one Christmas Eve, St. Clare was too ill to attend Mass. Praying fervently, as she always did, the Holy Spirit is said to have projected the images and sounds from Mass on her convent wall, thus allowing her to be present for Mass on that most hallowed of evenings.

In the midst of this year in which many of us cannot attend Mass in person, could there be a more appropriate patroness of television? How many of us have been watching Bishop Robert Barron's daily Mass on YouTube or keeping up with our local parishes through Facebook Live? EWTN, and their resident Poor Clares, have kept many of the faithful plugged into the faith, both literally and figuratively.

Who knew, at the beginning of 2020 and well into 2021, that we'd need the model and strength of St. Clare now, maybe more than ever? In an informal

letter to Ermentrude of Bruges, circa 1257, St. Clare wrote:

Pray and watch at all times! Carry out steadfastly the work you have begun and fulfill the ministry you have undertaken in true humility and holy poverty. Fear not, daughter! God, who is faithful in all His words and holy in all His deeds, will pour His blessings upon you and your daughters. He will be your help and best comforter for He is our Redeemer and our eternal reward. Let us pray to God together for each other for, by sharing each other's burden of charity in this way, we shall easily fulfill the law of Christ.

St. Clare's words could have been written in 1257, 1857, 1957, or yesterday. We still need each other's prayers and to "share each other's burden of charity" today as much as ever. Despite a global pandemic and social justice travesties, we must continue to carry out, steadfastly, the work we have begun, whether that work is the Daily Office of Prayer, or the offices we have all had to create at home during this time of sheltering in place.

Our beloved St. Clare's words, her model of prayer and humility during times of strength and times of illness, are vital for us as we begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Though we may have to continue to experience Mass through our televisions and computer screens a bit longer, we know that, with the prayers of St. Clare under our wings, we are supported by our loving God who can come to us on convent walls, through computers and televisions, through our families and our work, and especially in our silence and solitude. Thanks be to God.

St. Clare, Patroness of Television, Pray for Us ❖

Associates at Christmas . . .



Ugly Sweater Contest



Best Hat Contest ?

Associates at Christmas . . .





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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Events at Chiara Center . . .

Chiara Tuesday Nights is the new name of a weekly Zoom gathering that features presenters and discussion that flow from Franciscan spirituality. To take part in any of these gatherings through the end of April, contact Dan Frachey at info@chiaracenter.org for a Zoom link.



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