



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 17, Issue 1

February 2022

Welcome to Our New Associates



Pictured above from left to right: Melissa Marchant (Green Bay), Sr. Maureen O'Connor, Sr. Annice McClure, Mary Kay DeGroot (Springfield), Rita Nortrup (Springfield) Sr. Mary Ann Minor, David Weirwein (Sheboygan) and Nancy Davis

On November 7, 2021, the Hospital Sisters welcomed four new Associates in a commitment ceremony held in the St. Clare Adoration chapel. The Candidates spent the weekend together in a final period of discernment before their official commitment. Things looked different due to the pandemic as they all stayed in LaVerna, rather than Chiara, but this added intimacy to the weekend due to the closer proximity

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

A Beginner's Mind – A Wish for 2022

I happened upon a meditation by Christina Leano a few weeks ago that introduced a concept I had never heard of – beginner's mind, an aspect of mindfulness that operates out of the premise that one approaches life with no preconceived notions, no expectations, and no prejudices. To have a beginner's mind is to look at everything one encounters with a fresh set of eyes, much like that of a child. It involves looking as if you were seeing for the first time. To constantly live as if you always know is a tremendous handicap as it keeps us out of the present and locked in the

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Associate Office

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past. It hinders new ideas, surprises, insights and discoveries and prevents us from unlocking and understanding any of the mysteries of the present moment. The original meditation I read talked about this concept in the life of Anna the prophetess who lived in the temple for decades and must have seen thousands of baby boys brought there for the Jewish birth rituals, but somehow when Jesus was presented, because of her beginner's mind, she was able to see him as the Messiah when no one else besides Simeon did. She was able to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. In our world today, how easy it is to tell ourselves things like, "This is how it always is," or "Been there, done that?" Once we have experienced something, our minds want to trick us into believing we are experts and we anticipate the ending before the story has even begun.

One might wonder why having a beginner's mind matters? An article by Leo Babuata suggests that we have better experiences when we live with a beginner's mind because there are no prejudgments, fantasies, or preconceptions about how something will be. You then can't be disappointed or frustrated by the experience because there is nothing to compare it to. Better relationships grow out of this practice because one will realize that they are seeing the person with fresh eyes and notice that they are just trying to be happy, likely have good intentions and are struggling just like ourselves. There can be less procrastination in your life with a beginner's mind because when approaching a difficult task, you can be curious instead of worrying about how hard it will be. You can focus on the details of the task not trying to get away from them. Lastly, you will have less anxiety because instead of worrying about things that might happen, you can

open yourself up to being curious instead and let go of the preconceived ideas about the outcome. You will be able to embrace the knowing, embrace the present, and find gratitude in the moment for what you are doing or who you are meeting.

How would our lives look if we approached all of life expecting the unexpected? What if we saw all of life with a beginner's mind focusing on the present moment with eyes that are fresh and not anticipatory? Anna was able to see the gift of God's presence in her life due to her beginner's mind. Perhaps we too could start seeing more clearly the gift of God's presence in our lives and imagine that God is looking at us for the first time. Maybe if we developed that beginner's mind it would be possible to allow his light to shine through us in ways we never imagined. To develop a beginner's mind is my wish for 2022. How about you? Can we articulate some ways to develop our beginner's minds? Stay tuned for part 2 in the May 2022 newsletter. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER ...

- Pat Wright (Streator) who lost her husband Tim on 11/12/2021
- Darlene Bedei (Streator) who is being treated for significant health issues
- Mary Staudt (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems
- Deb Waitkus (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems
- Denny Kirchgesner (Springfield) who lost his mother on 1/2/2022
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is dealing with multiple medical problems
- For potential Associate candidates beginning their discernment in 2022
- All individuals suffering from the COVID-19 virus and those who are struggling emotionally, financially, and spiritually from this pandemic.
- Our Hospital Sisters ❖

Staying Franciscan . . .

Janet Doyle

(Highland)

**Year of
Commitment – 2001**



My name is Janet Doyle; a member of the Highland group of Associates. I have been an associate for 21 years and it took Sister Marilyn McCormick several nudges to get me to a meeting. I always had something on my agenda for that evening. After attending my first meeting, I was so impressed that I knew I wanted to join this group of faith-filled people.

Sister Marilyn was a big influence on me. She was an excellent listener and at times that was all I needed. Her gentle manner and encouragement are treasured memories for me. Our paths don't cross much anymore, but she was placed in my life at the right time, and for this I am truly thankful.

I have always prayed, but perhaps it was not a priority while working and taking care of four children. Being an Associate provided me an avenue to people and programs that taught me to prioritize my time, which in turn aided in the improvement of my prayer time.

I can't imagine my life void of being an Associate. I have shared prayers and retreat hints with my parish faith-sharing group, and they are receptive, impressed and grateful for my input. During the time of uncertainty living through the pandemic, my strength was reinforced and supported through the Zoom meetings and bulletins from the Motherhouse. I rely on the reminder to truly surrender and trust God will take care of everything. ❖

Emil Litz

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2004**



I became an Associate at the invitation and encouragement of Sister Jolinda Snyder, my sponsor and mentor. We were working at the Corporate Computer Center in Springfield at the time and Sister Jolinda remains such a great inspiration to me and has been a wonderful mentor and reflector through the years. I respect her knowledge and am always entertained by her uncanny humor. Additionally, Sister Christa Ann Struewing was inspiring to me as my reflector as she assisted me in creating my first year's commitment. She also remains a great inspiration and reflector. I am honored to continue to pursue the opportunity to be involved in the Hospital Sisters Associate Community.

My wife Kathy is also an Associate. She is a retired teacher at St. Patrick School in Decatur, IL, however, remains active with music accompaniment for student Masses and choir. Gina is our oldest daughter and is an engineer working in the San Francisco Bay area where she lives with her husband and their three children. Our youngest daughter, Andi, also works in the San Francisco Bay area as an HR professional where she lives with her husband. My hobbies and other activities include farming, woodworking, golf, boating, and completing projects around the house and farm.

Remaining an Associate is an honor that I cannot fully express in words. I sense a special spiritual presence when I attend the Associate related activities and meetings. I continue to respect the mission of HSHS in my retirement years and strive to live up to the Sisters' expectations. This includes the Charism of the Sisters that I became aware of when I was an employee and goes beyond the mission to include so many other facets of our lives. These include caring for the earth, the environment, and all God's creatures. ❖

Faith

By Dan Krug

Motherhouse Administrator



I was born in the 60s and raised in a large Catholic family. I can remember going to church every Sunday and our family took up a whole pew with mom and dad as book ends, keeping us all in line. I went through 12 years of Catholic school and really didn't understand how important my faith was until I became engaged to a non-Catholic and went through RCIA. I grew in faith as my wife learned about the Catholic faith. My wife and I have raised two children and now have a grandson at Christ the King School. I am the new administrator for the Motherhouse. This opportunity has given me the chance to learn and grow in faith with the Sisters. In my life experiences I have learned that by exercising my faith, I became a better Catholic.

Faith is the body's muscle that lifts us closer to God. We all have muscles for mobility, stability, circulation and breathing. These muscles are necessary to allow us to use our bodies and minds to function as human beings. Our faith can be compared to a muscle. Just as our muscles become weak and do not function properly without adequate use, our faith too will wither and not develop if it is not nurtured. To develop faith, we have to engage daily in activities that strength it.

Faith, like our muscles, is a gift from God. The disciples developed their faith by believing in the miracles they witnessed Jesus perform. They saw a remarkable demonstration of the power of God through Jesus, his son. Jesus showed them that by exercising their faith and believing in the power of God, the impossible can become possible. We as Christians are all tasked with the job of building that faith muscle and believing in the power of God in our lives.

Our faith in God is not a guarantee of automatically having all our prayers answered. However, by placing ourselves freely in God's will we gain the ability to nurture our faith muscle, learning to trust in him. God has never promised a life free of challenges but by submitting to the sovereignty of God our final destination will be storm free.

Sometimes we may need a remedy or prescription for our bruised or torn faith. When we tear or bruise a muscle, we look for a remedy to help it heal. We do the same thing when it comes to our faith, however, the remedies may not be so clear cut and often our faith is challenged in the numerous storms of life. As we endure these challenges, and keep our faith in God over time, this heavenly prescription helps with the healing process. In 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 we hear St. Paul say, "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed." Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

Our muscles may be tattered as a result of life's challenges but we gain inner peace as we exercise and build our faith muscle. A strong faith muscle is able to meet any challenge. God will strengthen you if you let him lead you through these challenges. So flex your faith muscle and have faith in God. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

SISTER MARIANNA KOSIOR

BORN: 08/04/1922

FIRST PROFESSION: 06/03/1946

DIED: 12/11/2021

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

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC

A Call



On February 20, the United Nations World Day of Social Justice is observed. It is a reminder to look at how social justice affects poverty eradication.

How blessed are we as Catholics to be grounded in Catholic Social teachings and the Gospels. God gives us one commandment: love God and your neighbor as yourself - two sides of the same coin. The social teachings bridge the gulf in our politics and cultural warfare that we should recognize that Catholic social teaching is common sense. We are reminded to recognize the dignity of the human person, and be mindful of the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity. Doing this is what I call enfleshing the Gospel – showing love in a public way.

Over the past years we have heard that our planet is in danger. Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, calls us to care for our common home. He calls us to an ecological conversion as the ecological crisis is a “summons to profound interior conversion, to re-examine our relationships with the Creator, with creation, and with one another” (LS. 217). It is time to pause, hear the cries, and do something to alleviate the cries. We cannot afford to turn a deaf ear and so please consider reading *Laudato Si* and gather with others to discuss it. Perhaps you could form a creation team to enact some practical life-saving steps?

We must ponder the effects of environmental

deterioration as the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are one. We are from the earth and will return to the earth so take a handful of earth (this contains all that is to come and all that will sustain us) and respect it. From Genesis we are called to care for the earth and for each other and be responsible stewards.

St. Francis of Assisi loved and protected creation and the example of simple living is the social justice teaching of Jesus. Francis was motivated by Jesus and so he emptied himself to be like Jesus. Furthermore, Franciscan spirituality asks us to let go so as to leave more room for more soulful reflections and more opportunities and advantages for others.

When we fail to acknowledge the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, or a person of disabilities, it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself, everything is connected. (LS. 117) The principle of the common good immediately becomes logical and summons us to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. (LS. 158)

May 2022 be a time to make a few steps to stop the cries. Consider creating a garden with flowers, fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Discourage the use of plastics or disposables, or raise awareness to recycle, reuse, recover, and reduce. Consider buying food from local farmers. Choose Fair Trade. Ensure the dignity of workers by supporting good jobs with livable wages and benefits. Think more about sustainable lifestyles by not leaving on unnecessary lights. Utilize public transportation.

Lastly, when we do these things along with prayer, we educate ourselves, share, and commit to doing our part in caring for the earth, our common home. ❖

Transition Commemoration

By Brian Blasco



On November 26, 2021, the Hospital Sisters along with Sisters Christa Maria, Rita, Lima and Beata from the General Leadership team in Muenster, Germany gathered to commemorate the transition of the property ownership to the Diocese of Springfield on January 1, 2022. The Sisters shared their memories of significant places on the property and then were invited to walk the property throughout the day, including visiting the Heritage Museum in Poverello Hall, as a way to honor each place.

Mass was held at 4 p.m. in St. Francis of Assisi Church with Father Dennis Koopman, OFM, as the celebrant and Father Richard Chiola, a longtime friend of the Sisters, as the homilist. In the homily, Father Chiola shared to “let go of your desire for efficiency in your personal relationships and show each other the mercy that is yours as members of the Kingdom. Christ offers himself in this Eucharist for the salvation of his sisters and brothers. It is yours to do the same now. But remember, you are not passing away. You are passing over to the fullness of the Kingdom. It is yours now to imitate the Divine Majesty in your community relationships, kindness soaked in humility. This is the path to your transfiguration. When you have passed over and see God face to face, you will shine out with the Divine Majesty and become sharers yourself in what we call the Beatific Vision. Everywhere we look in the fullness of the Kingdom, the Divine Majesty will be transfiguring us all.”

The day concluded with a meal in the Motherhouse Dining Room. ❖

Associates at Christmas . . .



Associates gather in Streator



Nancy Davis Lit up at the zoom Christmas Party



The Jensens in their ugly sweaters

Welcome to Our New Associates . . .

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of rooms and shared meals around the table in the common area. Masks were required and that is why the official photos of the group were taken outside. These new Associates need to be commended for their tenacity and perseverance in the formation period that extended way beyond the normal time. This demonstrated their desire to fully embrace the healing charism of the Hospital Sisters in their lives and the Hospital Sisters welcomed them with open arms. ❖



David Weirwein and Melissa Marchant, with sponsor Sr. Annice McClure



Mary Kay DeGroot with sponsor Sr. Maureen O'Connor



Rita Nortrup with sponsor Sr. Mary Ann Minor





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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Associate Events . . .

February offering – Thursday, February 17, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. Our Zoom guest will be Fr. Joseph Dondanville, pastor of the Logan County Roman Catholic Community. He will be speaking to us about the season of Lent.

March offering – Thursday, March 17, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. Our Zoom guest presenter will be Dana Pfeifer, who will be speaking to us about Human Trafficking.

Upcoming Associate Events at Chiara Center . . .

By Nancy Davis

I have been advised that once the pandemic is over we will have access to the meeting spaces in the former Chiara Center for Associate events to include our monthly meetings and other activities such as day-long events and overnight retreats. I have all the 2022 events scheduled. Until the pandemic ends we will continue to gather virtually. I will be scheduling the outlying small group virtual gatherings with each location.

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