



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 18, Issue 2

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New Leaders Selected

After evaluating their present and future needs, the Sisters recommended and received approval for a new leadership model from their General leadership team in Muenster, Germany. This recommendation for a simpler structure of governance and management followed their previous decisions regarding HSHS and their property.

The Sisters are pleased to announce the new leaders of their religious community in the USA: (pictured from left to right) Sister Maureen O'Connor, OSF, leader; Sister Anna Phiri, OSF, assistant leader; and Sister Janice Schneider, OSF, assistant leader. The Sisters will be installed on July 15, 2023.

Please remember the new leadership team in your prayers. ❖

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Just Mercy

You might be familiar with that feeling that can't be explained and wonder if it's coming from God. I found myself with that feeling for much of 2022 as God prompted me to demonstrate mercy in a way that I knew was not within my human capability. Along with this request, God provided me with the grace to embrace this situation and do the best I could with this challenge. The word mercy comes from the Latin misericordia, which comes from the words, "miseria", meaning wretchedness, misery, or affliction, and "cor", meaning heart. In essence, mercy means a heart for

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the wretchedness or affliction of another. As we understand it in English, it means compassion or pity. However, if one looks at the more secular meaning of the word mercy there is also an element of judgment. Mercy is the compassionate treatment of those in distress, especially when it is within one's power to punish or harm them. For many, being merciful also involves the question of what someone deserves or doesn't deserve, even though it is God's job to make this determination. In my experience, it is generally easier to be merciful to strangers than to extend that same compassion to those closest to us. God asks us to be the ones showing mercy with the purpose of being a witness of this virtue to others. Father John Hardon said, "Mercy is love shown not only to those in need or love shown not only to those who are in want, but mercy is love shown to those who are not lovable."

As I grow in my faith, I see that God's plan for salvation is full of mercy from beginning to end. One only must read in Genesis to see God's mercy to Adam and Eve. Although it is not translatable into English, the Hebrew word "chesed" in the Old Testament means mercy. However, it is much more than that. Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk says, "Chesed (mercy) is also fidelity, it is also strength. It is the faithful, indefectible mercy of God. It is the power that binds us to God because he has promised us mercy and he will never fail in his promise. The chesed of God is a gratuitous mercy that considers no fitness, no worthiness, and no return. It is the way the lord looks upon the guilty and with his look makes them at once innocent." In the parable of the Good Samaritan, we see the mystery of chesed, power, and mercy. It is Christ who lies wounded, Christ who is the person of the Samaritan, and Christ who is the bond, the compassion and understanding between them. This mystery is why this parable and others like

the Prodigal Son are difficult to understand. It is that compassion beyond understanding that makes them uncomfortable for some.

There are two kinds of mercy: mercy that is shown by God to man and mercy shown by man to others. Without first experiencing God's mercy, it is not possible to be merciful to others. When God acts mercifully, he is not acting in contradiction to what is due but gives what is beyond what is due. The word "beyond" is important. In reading the Old Testament, it does not take long to see that without God's mercy to man there would never have been a New Testament. God keeps forgiving and blessing his chosen people despite their disobedience. He does not give them what they deserve but what he knows will be best for them. While there are numerous Bible verses with regard to mercy, I was reminded of Lamentations 3:22-23: "The favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning so great is his faithfulness."

As I continue to ponder God's word about my situation, I am reminded that without God's mercy toward my iniquities, sins, and mistakes, I would be lost. His favors are never exhausted. So how does one cultivate the virtue of mercy? It all begins with gratitude. We first recognize God's gift of mercy toward us and that allows us to notice the needs and wants of others.

When my selfishness gets in the way of being merciful to others, I remember that if God can show mercy and forgive me for my sins, who am I to not act in the same way toward others. It may not be easy but with God all things are possible.

Pope Francis - Homily on March 17, 2013

"I think we too are the people who, on the one hand, want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others. And Jesus has this message for us: mercy. I think - and I say it with humility - that this is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy." ❖

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



Laudato Si' in action and Synodality

We are well into eight years of reading, discussing, and taking action to implement the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, and caring for the most vulnerable living on the planet. So what connection is there to the Synodal process to enlarge the space of your tent and its themes of communion, participation, and mission?

To help with this, two realities stand out: to encounter and dialogue. Calls are being made not to create more documents but to “enlarge the space of our tents” and our “space for communion, a place of participation and a foundation for mission” (DCS 11). We have heard Pope Francis calling us to encounter, listen to the other, and to reverence the other, for this is the joy of the Gospel and being present to each other.

Our tent is to be a warm, hospitable, and sacred space where we can commune with, dialogue with, and engage with one another to enrich the fruits produced by both. We, God’s people, are Church when we listen with openness and welcome all who approach us, and in listening and encountering those we meet like Jesus would we are proclaiming and living the mission and recognizing our common baptism. We nourish each other and we are nourished at Eucharist and in doing so, we will be more attentive to the signs of the times, we will be inspired by the word of God, and will see, act, and observe all in the light of the Gospels. It seems that *Laudato Si'* and Synodality are like hand and glove, complementing the other. Lord,

give us the courage to live it and end the poison of hierarchical authoritarianism.

The privilege of ministering with the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis has afforded me the awareness to recognize that when one is in healthcare and has been gifted with a Franciscan charism and spirituality, every action taken addresses the intersectionality of the issues we face especially in *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*. The call to be Christ’s healing presence has empowered the Sisters to not only build hospitals but also to manage them by encountering each soul regardless of race, financial status, or creed. Healthcare is a holistic approach and does not deny care for the planet or all of God’s creatures.

May 24 marks the 8th year since *Laudato Si'* was published and we are reminded that it is interwoven with healthcare and *Fratelli Tutti*. The Sisters, empowered by their Franciscan spirituality, integrated the graces of respecting and caring for the physical and the spiritual. Healthcare workers hear the cries of those who suffer and provide healing. Healthcare is a good match for the intersectionality of the issues since it enfleshes what Pope Francis calls “Integral Ecology” - our interconnectedness. The Sisters recognize that we are one family and that the Church is to be a field hospital for the broken and wounded.

Over the years as the Sisters’ face-to-face encounters were limited, they made sure they prepared those men and women who worked with them to maintain the healing charism and Franciscan spirituality. They supported others who could go to the Capitol and lobby for the voiceless and were involved with other religious organizations for workshops on racism, plastics recycling, and devoted time for prayer to hear the cries of all creation.

Healthcare extends its healing mission to all of creation, as called for by Pope Francis, to

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Jerry and Lynn Harcharik

(Streator)

**Years of Commitment –
Lynn 2000 and Jerry 2005**



My wife, Lynn, and I became friends with several of the Sisters when they served at St. Mary's Hospital in Streator, IL. We are thankful for their friendship and for Sister Ruth Brueggemann who invited me to become an Associate.

Being an Associate has helped me to follow the works and ways of St. Francis and to share the values of Franciscans worldwide through good works and prayer. I have continued to be an Associate because of the Sisters' values that have become my values. I want to live emulating their dedication to the Lord and to be prayerful and do good works in my life and in various ministries in my parish.

My name is Lynn Harcharik and Sister Carol Sue Daniel was my sponsor. We worked together in the lab of St. Mary's Hospital in Streator and she introduced me to the Lay Associates. I am grateful to her for that invitation.

All of us have our struggles in life but I have no doubt that keeping the tenets of Franciscan spirituality in the forefront of my life has helped me to deal more effectively with my trials and tribulations. First and foremost, the Sisters' taught me about the love, compassion, and understanding of others which they emulate by living the Gospel life of St. Francis and St. Clare. I had the privilege of witnessing the Sisters in their service to others at St. Mary's and it had a lasting impact on me. I benefited from their actions, dedication, and prayerful presence that made me desire to live my life like that too. I will continue to live my life as an Associate in prayer

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Terri (Maze) Soller

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2009**



I first experienced the Sisters when I was 15 and served as a Candy Striper and this was followed by being employed as a Nursing Assistant when I was 16. I then spent most of my career as an RN while working at the System Office for HSHS the next eight years. In all, I worked for the Sisters for 45 years.

While working at the System Office, I became an Associate. Sister Mary Ann Minor and I worked together and so it seemed natural that she would be my sponsor. We have remained friends since that time.

Being an Associate has given me an opportunity to assess my life and work from a spiritual point of view. It reminds of who I am and how I want to live my life. It is an element of living a faith-filled life.

I moved to Florida 9 years ago and have chosen to remain an Associate because it keeps me connected to the Sisters who have been a part of my life, especially my spiritual life. I remember how the Sisters rolled up their sleeves and got to work and their work is a huge part of their spirituality. I also was able to observe how they followed Jesus' healing mission. They would spend time in prayer receiving the grace they need to take care of the sick – not just the rich sick and injured or the poor sick and injured.

While here in Florida, I continue to work with people who are HIV positive. Presently, I serve on the Board for Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Venice, Florida. I also am on the RCIA team in my parish.

I believe that you lead by example and not preaching. I hope that by the example of how I live my life, I lead others to Jesus. ❖

SPIRIT MATTERS:

Franciscan Values in our lives . . .



**By Jerrilyn Zavada
Associate (Streator)**

As a Franciscan community, we have each been led here with an affinity for Saint Francis of Assisi and his legacy as it has been expressed through the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis.

As many of us have witnessed and experienced the sisters' healing charism in our own lives, we have been drawn to recognize in ourselves a healing charism and to use it to further the qualities for which Saint Francis is known.

Most of us are familiar with Francis' motto "peace and all good."

How 'peace and all good' is expressed in our lives, however, will vary for each of us.

In the early years of my young adult faith walk, I was quite perfectionistic and scrupulous; always worried about saying or doing something that would offend God, and that would put my soul at risk should I die before going to confession.

Let me just say from my own experience that it is difficult for one's life to symbolize authentic peace when being worried about offending God. I would venture to guess all who are reading this have at some point encountered the radical mercy and compassion of Jesus in their lives, a necessary starting point to be the peace we wish to see in the world.

Fortunately for me, and for many others in Streator, IL, a chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital demonstrated Franciscan values in everything he did.

Simplicity of life. Service to the poor and marginalized. Reverence for all of creation. Recognition of the unique worth of each person. Appreciation of Beauty. Faith in a personal and provident God.

Encountering Father Jim Bretl, SDS, in the mid-90s changed the trajectory of my faith walk. Father Jim was a Salvatorian. Their website indicates their mission as one to "advocate for justice and peace, standing with the poor and marginalized. We support one another through mutual love and service. We are servant-leaders, involving others in our mission. We include as members of the Society people from every nation, and we are open to serve the people of any nation."

Sounds very similar in nature to Francis' spirit, does it not?

Father Jim embodied these values in all areas of his life.

Eventually, he moved to Tennessee and is now passed, but we kept in touch for some years after he left Streator. I still think of him from time to time and ask him for his prayers for me to make wise decisions in my life.

Although he could never know in this life just how far, wide, and deep his ministry spread, Father Jim's lasting imprint on my life, and the lives of others I know cannot be overstated.

In the same way that he simply and humbly lived his faith, you and I can and will have a similar effect on others by sharing what is ours to do.

Peace and all good.

Every day. In every way. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

SISTER HELENE SCHNEIDER, OSF

BORN: 12/01/1924

FIRST PROFESSION: 06/13/1950

DIED: 02/17/2023

SISTER RUTH BRUEGGEMANN, OSF

BORN: 02/13/1928

FIRST PROFESSION: 06/13/1953

DIED: 04/15/2023

**MAY THEY SHARE WITH JESUS THE JOY
AND PEACE OF HEAVEN . . .**

Justice and Peace

Connection –

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care for the health of our planet. And true to their calling, the Sisters continue to be informed, engaged, and involved in social justice issues, celebrate Earth Day, sign petitions to end fossil fuels and pipelines, and refuse plastics. They have an Associate Coordinator who goes to the border to minister and pray for a just and comprehensive immigration solution. They live what Pope Francis calls all of us to do: to recognize that “nothing is indifferent to us.”

In *Laudato Si'* we're reminded that “there is an inseparable bond between concern for nature and justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace.” As Franciscans, we need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single family. Do we hear the numerous cries? Francis of Assisi calls us to see all as “brothers and sisters” (*Fratelli Tutti*) regardless of race, color, or creed. We are called and must respond to help save the earth and each other for we are inseparable. If we lose this fraternal language, “our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on immediate needs” (LS11). They are engaged because they hear the cries. Do we hear the cries? It is our vocation to be healers and we are companions on the journey to all of God's creatures and must reverence them as St. Francis did.

Healthcare is caring for our common home and being a Franciscan Associate carries with it the responsibility of and reverence for the good earth, the care for the most vulnerable, and to help create a more sustainable planet now and in the future. Might your month of May blossom with the seeds of ecological care, concern, and conversation? May such dialogue lead you to take action on behalf of creation by re-using, recycling, re-purposing, and refusing. Finally, take some time and listen to *The Letter: A Message for Our Earth*, a documentary based on Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Blessings to all. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- RuthEllen Davis (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems
- Debbie Buckman (Green Bay) who lost her farther Edward Schuch
- Bob Howarth (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is being treated for medical problems
- David Kerwin (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems
- Donna Schneeberger (Green Bay) who is recovering from surgery
- Emil Litz (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems
- For our Associate Candidates who continue to discern their calling to this vocation
- For our Hospital Sisters and Associates. ❖

Jerry and Lynn Harcharik

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and action as a wife, mother, grandmother, and parish community member in every way that I can. Thank you to the Sisters and Associates for your wonderful example of Christian living. ❖

***Franciscan Connections* Newsletter**

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Centenary Celebrations

By Nancy Davis



From 2023-2026, Franciscans throughout the world will be celebrating four centenary events. These are significant events in the life of St. Francis. A centenary is a 100th anniversary celebration and for Franciscans, it will be the 800th anniversary of these happenings. The centenary has been divided into four events over four years: the Rule and Christmas in Greccio (1223-2023), the Gift of the Stigmata (1224-2024), the Canticle of the Creatures (1225-2025), and the Easter of Francis of Assisi (1226-2026). Organizations such as the Conference of the Franciscan Family offer resources about each event including a symbol, and the related theological, anthropological, ecclesiological, and sociological dimensions. While there will be celebrations on a universal scale for each of these events, there will also be events within individual congregations and Franciscan communities. In 2023 there will be a celebration of the 800th anniversary (1223—2023) of the Franciscan Rule as well as the first Nativity at Greccio, Italy by St. Francis. The symbol for the Greccio centenary is the crib which represents the incarnation and the Son coming as our brother and the symbol for the Rule will be the book of the Gospels which draws our attention to the centrality of the Gospel in our lives. Locally, the Hospital Sisters are displaying a Nativity scene outside the St. Clare of Assisi Adoration Chapel this year from Epiphany until Advent. On Foundation Day, July 2, they will have presentations by Sisters who have been or are presently missioned in other cultures to highlight the sociological dimension of the centenary in the Franciscan style of being present in the world. In 2024, the 800th centenary celebration for the Gift of the Stigmata (1224-2024) will be observed. The symbol will be the cross, highlighting the Franciscan cross or Tau which for Franciscans represents the expression and model of the free and gratuitous love of the triune God. In

2025, Franciscans will celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Canticle of the Creatures (1225-2025). The symbol will be the earth with the theological dimension on God's presence in the Book of Creation, the Bible. The final year, 2026, will be recognizing the 800th anniversary of the Passing of St. Francis of Assisi (1226-2026) to eternal life. The Eucharist will be the symbol for this remembrance and we will be invited to contemplate our life both personally and as a Franciscan Family and in doing so perceive the divine presence and action in everything in our lives, both bad and good.

The website link below is a resource for these important celebrations over the next four years. Since the theology is rich and the suggested activities are many, I hope you will review this so as to be reminded of the blessings of your vocation as an Associate of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis and how you can change our world as a member of the universal Franciscan family.

I will keep you informed if there are local events as these anniversaries are observed. ❖
<https://www.ofmconv.net/en/centenario-francescano-2023-26-sussidio/>

Our Sister Jubilarians will Celebrate on June 11, 2022

75 years professed – Jeweled Crown Jubilee

Sister Chaminade Kelley, OSF
Sister Leonardine Sconzert, OSF

70 years professed – Grace Jubilee

Sister Annice McClure, OSF
Sister Josepha Schaeffer, OSF
Sister Ruth Brueggemann, OSF (RIP)

60 years professed – Diamond Jubilee

Sister Marybeth Culnan, OSF

50 years professed – Golden Jubilee

Sister Anna Phiri, OSF



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Associate Activities . . .

May offering - The Associate/Sister Liturgy and Picnic will be held on Thursday, May 18, 2023. Mass will begin at 6 p.m. in St. Francis of Assisi church and a potluck meal will follow. Meat and beverages will be provided, and Associates need to bring a dish to pass. Please have it pre-portioned for serving. Please enter through the same doors that you have in the past (former entrance of Chiara Center now The Evermode Institute).

June - No Associate events scheduled for Springfield location.

July - A Day of Recommitment will be held on Saturday, July 22, 2023, at The Evermode Institute. You will have the opportunity to write your commitment and renew your Associate relationship with the Hospital Sisters. It will be a daylong event and you will be receiving information soon. ❖