



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 20, Issue 2

May 2025



On April 8, Sister Elreda Huser celebrated her 100th birthday. As a member of the Japan Province since 1977 (she professed First Vows with the American Province in 1944), Sister Maria Fidelis, Superior, and Sister Theodora hosted the celebration for the Huser family, Sisters, and guests. Sister Elreda is a native of Hansen, Wisconsin.



April 8 also marked the 104th birthday of Sister Pacis who celebrated on April 12 with the relatives and friends of Brian Blasco – her American family. April 8 also marked the 42nd birthday of Sister Josephine (a member of the Indian Province and a nurse in Loretto Home) who is pictured with Sister Pacis.

(Photos by Brian Blasco)

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Actions Speak Louder than Words

On March 19, we celebrated the Feast of St. Joseph, a carpenter, the husband of Mary, and the foster father of Jesus. He had no status, title, or power. He did not write a book or preach. While he lived an ordinary life, he was extraordinary. He is one of the few saints who has two feast days: March 19 as the husband of Mary and the earthly father of Jesus, and May 1 as St. Joseph the Worker.

He is recognized as the patron saint of:

- **The Universal Church:** because he was the protector of Christ, the Church.

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- **Families:** because he was the head of the Holy Family.
- **Fathers:** because he is a model of a loving and responsible father.
- **Workers:** because he was a carpenter.
- **Immigrants:** because of his journey with Mary and Jesus to Egypt as refugees.

How can it be that there is not a single word attributed to St. Joseph in the Bible, and yet he is one of the most widely known Saints of all time? St. Joseph's humility enabled him to be open to God's will and act upon it. What he did and who he was mattered in the eyes of God – his actions spoke louder than any words. When God sent him messages through an angel in a dream, he listened and acted. He did not question but obeyed. Before the angel visited, St. Joseph planned to divorce Mary quietly, not to preserve his reputation, but for Mary's sake, who was carrying a child conceived by the Holy Spirit. Recognizing that he had been chosen by God to be the foster father of Jesus, it was his humility, trust, and righteousness that would be an influence in the man that Jesus would become.

What influences me in our world? Is it people's actions or words? What will my legacy be? If I am to be remembered for my actions, what will that look like? Was I kind and faithful? Did I help those in need? Did I sacrifice for others? Did I walk the talk? Did I put my needs on the back burner in favor of someone else? If I were put on trial for being a Christian, would my actions be enough to convict me? I think Joseph could answer all these questions with an affirmative, so maybe an examination of the life of St. Joseph could benefit us.

"The Gospel had said almost nothing of him, nor does it even mention his death. Here, however, as in all things, we must read the Gospel with the heart, for it is thus that we will find in Joseph – poor, obedient, silent, and hidden – the man whom God could trust." Fr. Joseph-Marie Perrin, O.P. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Guy (Decatur) who is being treated for medical problems
- Mary Wilquet (Green Bay) who is being treated for medical problems
- Donna Chase (Springfield) who lost her brother
- Marcianne O'Brien (Decatur) who lost her nephew
- Vikki Warren (Springfield) who lost her mother
- Bernie Curry (Decatur) who is being treated for medical problems
- Rita Keys (Springfield) who is recovering from an injury
- Linda Marti (Highland) who is caring for her ill mother
- Mary Jo Wasser (Springfield) who lost her step-mother
- Mary Kay DeGroot (Springfield) who lost her sister
- Lynn Harcharik (Streator) who is recovering from surgery
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is being treated for medical problems
- Mary Reiser (Springfield) who is in hospice care
- For peace and justice in our world
- For our Associate Candidates who continue to discern their calling to this vocation. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

ASSOCIATE MICHAEL BRUMMER (EFFINGHAM)

BORN - 07/22/1947

FIRST COMMITMENT – 2017

DIED – 4/16/2025

May he share with Jesus the joy and peace of heaven.



Canonical House Jubilarians July 14, 2025

75 years professed – “Jeweled Crown” Jubilee

Sister Thomas Kundmueller, OSF

60 years professed – “Diamond Jubilee”

Sister Carol Sue Daniel, OSF
Sister Marilyn McCormick, OSF
MaryAnn Falbe, OSF

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Justice and Peace

Connection

By Sr. Mary M.
Shaw, ASC; D.Min
Coordinator of Justice
and Peace



Challenges of Peace. . .

Over the past five months, we have witnessed retaliation, tariffs, withholding intelligence, bombings, deportations, and nations and neighbors pitted against one another.

Amid the uncertainty, let us strive to be peacemakers. When we ignore the words of others when they do not resonate with ours, often formulating our defense, we contribute to the cycle of verbal violence. The litmus test is Matthew 25:40, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mind, you did for me.”

For the times I embraced tariffs before tenderness: Lord, have mercy.

For the times I listened to Wall Street and not the street people: Lord, have mercy.

For the times I dehumanized someone before I attempted to dignify them: Lord, have mercy.

For the times I hardened my heart to the cries of creation: Lord, have mercy.

For the times I continued to slash the garment of life and argue with a we-them mentality; Lord, have mercy.

All that is asked of us is this: “Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8) ❖

SPIRIT MATTERS:

Holy Mother, hear our prayer...?

By Jerrilyn Zavada
Associate
(Streator)



Recently, I listened to Holy Mother, a song by Eric Clapton and Luciano Pavarotti that I find comforting – especially amid the times we are living. Here is an excerpt from what I wrote in May 2016 about the song.

In a Facebook post after the death of Prince, Eric Clapton recalled what led him to write the song about the Virgin Mary. “In the eighties, I was out on the road in a massive downward spiral with drink and drugs, I saw Purple Rain in a cinema in Canada, I had no idea who he was, it was like a bolt of lightning. In the middle of my depression, and the dreadful state of the music culture at that time it gave me hope, he was like a light in the darkness... I went back to my hotel, and surrounded by empty beer cans I wrote Holy Mother.”

*Holy Mother where are you?
Tonight I feel broken in two.
I've seen the stars fall from the sky.
Holy mother, can't keep from crying.*

*Oh I need your help this time,
Get me through this lonely night.
Tell me please which way to turn
To find myself again.*

*Holy mother, hear my prayer,
Somehow I know you're still there.
Send me please some peace of mind;
Take away this pain.*

*I can't wait, I can't wait, I can't wait any longer.
I can't wait, I can't wait, I can't wait for you.*

*Holy mother, hear my cry,
I've cursed your name a thousand times.
I've felt the anger running through my soul
All I need is a hand to hold.*

*Oh I feel the end has come,
No longer my legs will run.
You know I would rather be
In your arms tonight.*

*When my hands no longer play,
My voice is still, I fade away.
Holy mother, then I will be
Lying in, safe within your arms.*

In his memoir, Clapton: The Autobiography, he reflects on how he began to pray in a rehab treatment center in 1987. “I was in complete despair,” Clapton wrote. “In the privacy of my room, I begged for help. I had no notion who I thought I was talking to, I just knew that I had come to the end of my tether ... and, getting down on my knees, I surrendered. Within a few days I realized that I had found a place to turn to, a place I'd always known was there but never really wanted, or needed, to believe in. From that day until this, I have never failed to pray in the morning, on my knees, asking for help, and at night, to express gratitude for my life and, most of all, for my sobriety. I choose to kneel because I feel I need to humble myself when I pray, and with my ego, this is the most I can do. If you are asking why I do all this, I will tell you ... because it works, as simple as that.” Yes, it works. As simple as that.

As we observe the Feast of the Visitation, commemorating when Mary traveled to visit her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, Mary, travels in haste to bring Jesus to us in our need, whatever it might be. All we need to do is ask. Holy Mother, hear our cry.

SPIRIT MATTERS explores engagement with spirituality in our daily lives. ❖

The 150th Anniversary

Our Association with the Sisters . . .

David Wehrwein (Sheboygan)

I got to know the Hospital Sisters when they built a new home next to mine for Sisters Renelle Brueggemann, OSF & Elvon Huser, OSF, who were stationed at St. Nicholas Hospital. Mom and I, along with my dog Pirate Joe, visited the Sisters for coffee several times a week. When the other Hospital Sisters from Springfield, Japan, or Germany would visit Sheboygan, we met them. I think all the Sisters enjoyed Pirate Joe, as sometimes he was invited over for a meet and greet before Mom and me.

Janet Doyle (Highland)

Sister Marilyn McCormick, OSF: She is an excellent listener and offers encouragement. I can testify to this as I talked with her often. No matter what was on my mind, her quiet demeanor was always comforting.

RuthEllen Davis (Springfield)

I cannot say enough about how grateful I am to the Sisters, as they are instrumental in deepening my Franciscan Spirituality. Now that I am retired and live away from the Sisters (for the most part), I think about them and pray for them every day. They are alive in my heart, bringing me joy, peace, and love.

Diane Tebrugge (Springfield)

I first met Sister Ritamary Brown, OSF, when I was a senior in high school in 1981, as I worked under her direction in Food and Nutrition services at St. John's Hospital. She kept a tight ship on us teenagers but always came through the kitchen with a smile. Her motto was "If you have time to lean, you have time to clean." As teenagers, we knew that it was our cue to start cleaning the kitchen equipment to be sparkling clean. I continued to work in that department while attending radiology school and was fortunate to further my career at St. John's. Sister Ritamary always believed in helping teenagers better

themselves. As I worked in other departments and held leadership roles, Sister Ritamary kept in touch with me. She introduced me to the Elizabeth Ann Seton program (their mission was to embrace the sanctity and dignity of life by nurturing pregnant and parenting women) and encouraged me to join their board. I served for five very fulfilling years. In 2015 when I stepped down from my role as a Director at St. John's as a full-time employee, Sister Ritamary wished me the best on my next venture. In 2016, I transferred to the HSHS System Service Center and served in a position that allowed me the opportunity to travel to all our ministries. During my frequent visits to HSHS St. Mary's Hospital/Decatur, I was fortunate to spend time with Sister Ritamary as she was working there as their patient liaison. Our paths continued to cross when I became an Associate, assisted with COVID/flu vaccines for the Sisters, and while attending the St. John's Retiree luncheon. Our next venture with her will be as I volunteer at Mission Outreach. I value the friendship we have these more than 40 years, and she holds a special place in my heart. She is a remarkable person.

Nancy Davis (Springfield)

My mother passed away almost 10 years ago at St. John's Hospital inpatient hospice unit on June 19, 2015. Even though this was a very difficult time for our family, the greatest blessing was that Sister Carol Sue Daniel, OSF, was the chaplain who was with us before and as our mother passed from this life to the next life. She offered spiritual support and prayer, and her calm and holy demeanor was comforting to us.

Mary Lewis (Decatur)

Some of my most cherished memories come from my mentor to become an associate and now dear friend, Sister MaryAnn Falbe, OSF. She has helped me to grow in my spiritual life as well as learn about Franciscan life.

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Our Association with the Sisters . . .

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Kris Bents (Eau Claire)

I will never forget my earlier nursing years, and when I met Sister Jonette Devlin, OSF. She imprinted on me what a nurse can be. Her small stature amid a mighty presence was something to see. I thought that she was an angel running around. As I learned about her, my inspiration and appreciation for her deepened. Sister Annice McClure, OSF, is another Sister who inspires me. She had a gentle presence in the hospital, especially when she participated in employee orientation and education. My best memory of her is when she was stirring the kettle of popcorn at the Farmers Market with her family.

Karen Skaletski (Green Bay)

Sister Jonette Devlin, OSF, was the smartest nurse ever. She instructed many nurses at St. Vincent Hospital for so many years, and she was my idol. She was such a giving and intelligent woman.

Brian Blasco (Springfield)

Sister Gabrielis Hu, OSF, asked me if I worry. I told her yes and listed several things on my mind. She paused and responded with this: Don't worry because worrying won't help one bit in the situation. Have faith in God instead.

Kathy Lohman (Highland)

Before I became an Associate, my husband, Don, was an Associate, and their meetings were at the home of Sisters Marilyn McCormick, OSF, and Kenneth Wildt, OSF. Annually in October, the Sisters celebrated Transitus for the Associates and I was a guest. That was a beautiful service, and then we would share a meal. Another memory is working with Sister Agnes McDougall, OSF, at St. Elizabeth's Hospital Home Health. She was compassionate and caring for her patients and, most of all, was so human. She loved attending

Cardinal games and knew everything about the team. She and Sister Rosily Menachery, OSF, invited the home health staff into their home on several occasions to celebrate a holiday or have a picnic. These occasions showed me that before they chose to follow God's call to become Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, they were first a woman like me, as human as me, and enjoyed all the same everyday happenings and friendships as me. While we were different, we are the same.

Carole Claussen (Sheboygan)

I was able to visit Sister Mary Ann Minor, OSF, while she was in Germany serving as General Superior of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. I was privileged to visit on two occasions and spent time with Sister Sherrey Murphy, OSF. Sister Vianney Claytor, OSF, was another Sister I got to know well since she served in Sheboygan.

Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire)

The Sisters have done much for all to see their dedication to Our Lord, their ministry of serving others, and their dedication to our Blessed Mother. They were always very hospitable on all the retreats and helped me understand the importance of prayer and adoration. Sister Miriam Therese Harder, OSF, and Sister Joel Jacobi, OSF, meant the world to me. They were very kind and easy to talk to and carried on the food pantry that Sister Francis Regis, OSF, began with Sister Joel. I loved visiting Loretto Home when I was in Springfield - it was so simple and beautiful, and the Sisters accepted their crosses.

Gloria Guy (Decatur)

Sister JoAn Schullian, OSF, is my inspiration. When I retired in 2014 and returned to the Catholic Church after being away for several years, Sister JoAn welcomed me with open

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Our Association with the Sisters . . .

arms. She soon had me involved with activities at Our Lady of Lourdes Church as well as the community, with the NAACP, to the Innocence Project. I also became a participant and advocate in many other social justice issues and programs because of Sr. JoAn's inspiration. She is an amazing woman of God.

Donna Chase (Springfield)

When my mom passed away in 2007, some of the Sisters that I had worked with came to the funeral and I was grateful. What touched me even more was when we got to Camp Butler Cemetery, where the Provincial Council was present. They apologized for not attending her funeral as they had a meeting. It touched my heart they came to support me and my family. The Sisters are very special to me as I have worked with them since 2001 both at the HSHS Corporate office and at the Motherhouse since 2005.

Emil Litz (Springfield)

Sister Jolinda was our receptionist at the data center, and she would stop by my office early each morning as she entered the building. In just a few minutes each day we would together solve "the problems of the world". Sister was extremely intelligent and very well rounded in her knowledge. She convinced me to become an Associate, and I have been grateful ever since. Throughout the years I got to know many of the Sisters from both work and the Associate program. Each Sister I became acquainted with has been a true blessing in my life. Sister Christa Ann continues to be my reflector, and I am grateful for her continued friendship and guidance.

Kathy Litz (Springfield)

I began knowing the Sisters by attending and participating in many of the Associate Christmas and summer picnic parties with my husband who is also an Associate. I got to know several other Sisters and Associates during a pilgrimage to Assisi. Sister Christa Ann Struewing has been my

reflector since I joined the Associate Group. We started going out to dinner each year in January to celebrate Sister Christa Ann's, Sister Jolinda, and my husband's birthday. Great memories of the Sisters have been my reward.

Donna Schneeberger (Green Bay)

I first knew Sister Judith Fiedler when the Sisters wore the long habit with a veil and were not allowed to leave the hospital property. When the habits were modified, she was embarrassed that her ankles were showing. It was probably at this time that she could leave the property and walk to my house. If I was canning, she would dive right in. She also attended my son's high school graduation.

Sister Mary Beth Culnan was the first neuro-clinical nurse specialist at St. Vincent Hospital and probably in Green Bay. She was instrumental in making Neuro ICU a success and she loved statistics.

When Sister Helen Marie Plummer was the director of nursing, she knew what was going on in the units. Amid her humor and desire to have an enjoyable time, she expected us to be good managers, give the best patient care, and manage the unit within budget guidelines. She also would come over for a visit at the house, have a beer, and always have a hot dog - even if there was dinner on the table.

Sister Jonette Devlin. She was St. Vincent Hospital's energizer bunny in the role of clinical nurse specialist, and organizer of dialysis (and worked there), and taught so many classes to countless nurses throughout her career. On occasion, she and I would leave work on Friday to drive to Springfield so she could visit with family and attend her sister's high school musicals before returning to Green Bay on Sunday. She invited me to go with her to Dallas for a Packer game on a private plane and, unfortunately, we came home without a win. She was loved by the St. Vincent Hospital family. ❖



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Associate Activities . . .

May offerings - On Thursday, May 15, 2025 there will be a May crowning activity with some historical information about this tradition both in the world and as celebrated here at the Motherhouse provided as part of the evening.

On Thursday, May 22 – in need of Associate volunteers for Adoration hours 11:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Please contact Nancy Davis at 217-522-3387 x664 or email at ndavis@hsosf-usa.org to sign-up.

June Offering – There will be no June meeting due to the Jubilee events.

July Offerings - On Sunday, July 6, 2025 – Save the Date for a picnic that will be hosted by the Hospital Sisters as part of the Anniversary activities. More information will be forthcoming as it becomes available.

Save the date for a Day of Recommitment on Saturday, July 26, 2025 from 9:00-3:00 p.m. in Bon Hall. Attendance at this event will fulfill your 2-year recommitment requirement as an Associate of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. Information will be forthcoming regarding this event. ❖