



# 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”*

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## REFUSE

During Catholic Sisters Week, March 8-14, 2023, Associates are invited to join with the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis to refuse to use any single-use plastic beverage bottles (water, soda, juice, tea, alcoholic beverages, salad dressing, etc.). In doing so, let us be mindful of respecting the earth.



### Adoration Chapel at Christmas

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## Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

### Amazing Grace

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me....” Those are probably very familiar words to most people as they are the first line of the hymn “Amazing Grace.” You may not know that this hymn was written by John Newton in 1772. He was a slave trader by profession and after one very harrowing storm at sea, and 11 hours of steering the boat in the storm, fearing for his life, and praying for God to have mercy on him, he found calm waters, and never again bought and sold slaves. He was converted and eventually became an ordained

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## Associate Office

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minister. Newton realized that it was God finding him in his wretchedness that saved him and because of God's sweet and all-encompassing amazing grace we all can be forgiven for our past, find joy in the present, and hope for our future in Christ. This hymn was the story of one man's conversion over 250 years ago but even today the meaning of this hymn remains true to people all over the world.

Every January, I try to select a word for the year as something to spiritually guide me. I don't randomly choose a word but allow the Holy Spirit to lead me to the word or verse. On December 31, 2022, as I journaled about the coming year, I had decided my word for would be mercy, but God overrode my decision when I read a meditation for that day by Mary DeTurrís Poust entitled "Grace and Truth." That sealed the deal – grace would be the word. Her writing was guided by the scripture from John 1:16-17: "From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." She described how elusive the word grace is; like catching a cloud or holding on to a breeze. However, the scripture tells us that those who follow Jesus will receive grace, not just once but several times. It is our gift for turning our heart toward God. Someone told me that if you ever have experienced a moment of grace you know it, but there are not words to describe it to someone who had not. While these words from the Irish group U2's song, Grace, make it seem simple, it could not be further from the truth: "Grace makes beauty out of ugly things. Grace finds beauty in everything." The Catechism defines grace as "the free and undeserved help that God gives us" and to me, that is also vague. As I was writing my meditation on grace, I reviewed notes about actual grace by Sister Janice Keenan, OSF. I was enlightened by reading my comments

from that talk and it gave me food for thought as I embrace this word in 2023.

Grace –

- Actual grace is real help that God gives in our day-to-day lives.
- Grace is a free but passing spiritual helping hand of God when we need it most.
- With eyes of faith, we can perceive and find the unique fingerprints of God everywhere in our lives.
- God is creative. He can use anything as grace. i.e. music, nature, circumstances (bad and good), social media
- One has to be open to receive grace or it can be missed. We must be awake so we can see with the eyes of faith.
- God offers grace because he can, he is there, and we need it.
- God does not always lead from out front. His grace can be very subtle and easy to miss.
- Grace is never based on worthiness.

We all need God's grace to get through this life. We have to be expectant in our walk with Christ in order to receive the grace that God wants to offer. We have to want it, seek it, and watch for it because otherwise we will miss it when it is right in our midst. I plan to walk through this new year with my grace-finder glasses in place 24-hours a day. The fact that God whispered to me that grace should be my word for 2023 was my first graced moment of the new year. I hope that you will find grace in your new faith walk in 2023 as well.

"I do not understand the mystery of grace- only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us."

Anne Lamott ❖

# Staying Franciscan . . .

## **Bjarne & Jeanne Jensen**

**(Springfield) Year of Commitment – 2012**



We became Franciscan Associates in 2012 and are pleased to be able to continue our Associate relationship remotely since we retired to Florida five years ago. Leo Lenn suggested I become an Associate and when Bjarne expressed an interest, we attended the meetings and were moved to commit to becoming Associates. I was sponsored by Sister Mary Ann Minor, OSF, and remember her deeply spiritual reflections. Leo sponsored Bjarne and when he was having difficulty writing his first commitment, Leo said “you are trying to write it from your head so write it from your heart.”

The Associate meetings are rich with both Associates and Sisters sharing their perspective. Neither of us had previously been as comfortable sharing our spiritual thoughts and through the meetings we became comfortable speaking about our spirituality and found the Sisters and Associates respectful.

In the pre-commitment meetings, RuthEllen’s presentations on St. Francis and St. Clare enabled us to deepen our understating of their lives and visiting Assisi was a life-changing experience which caused us to want to learn more about the Franciscan movement.

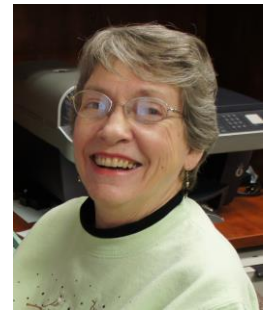
Retreats are faith enhancing. Those weekends were special times to learn from incredible speakers such as Father Chiola, etc. We miss the calm reflection alone and

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## **Joyce McCumber**

**(Springfield)**

**Year of Commitment – 2006**



I am a part of the Associate group in Springfield, Illinois and I had the pleasure of working at the Motherhouse as a secretary years ago. I have been retired for 21 years.

While I had been invited to be an Associate while I was employed by the Sisters, I waited to do so five years after retirement – mostly because I realized how much I missed the Sisters. Sister Mary Evelyn Lamb, OSF was my sponsor.

Over the years, I have assisted the Sisters in many ways at the Motherhouse through the Associates and look forward to doing so again when we are longer in the COVID pandemic. What I miss most is not visiting the Sisters in Loretto Home – that was always special for me. I also enjoyed volunteering with the Franciscan Nativity Festival at the Chiara Center several times.

My faith life is enriched by many activities including in my involvement at my church. I became a member at Asbury United Methodist Church in 1948 and it is named for Francis Asbury who was the first Methodist bishop in the United States – thus the name Francis is close to my heart in more than one way. I serve as the secretary on the Administrative Council and I also serve on the board for the Asbury’s Children’s Supper Hour as the vice-president.

Other things that I do to serve the Lord, and I am sure that St. Francis would approve, include taking friends to a doctor or dentist appointment and sometimes then for lunch because they are lonely and don’t get out much. I tell all of my friends to call me whenever they need a ride or help with something. This is probably my favorite thing to do, and as St. Francis would say, sometimes I even use words. ❖

# Lourdes a Place for Spiritual Healing

By Jerrilyn Zavada  
(Streator)



If I ever get over my fear of flying across the ocean — and come to think of it, if I ever get over my fear of driving through the mountains — I would like to someday visit there.

"There" is Lourdes, France, in the Great Pyrenees and the site where the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858.

Six million pilgrims visit each year (an estimated 200 million since 1860) and 70 miraculous cures have been documented by the Roman Catholic Church since Mary directed Bernadette to dig through the dirt and reveal a healing spring of water that continues to flow until this day. Many more physical cures have likely taken place, but the 70 documented cures are those that underwent rigorous examination by Church and medical officials and determined to be inexplicable.

On Saturday, Feb. 11, the Church celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, along with the World Day of the Sick. It is fitting the two are celebrated together.

Having grown up Catholic with the idea of the Virgin Mary appearing to people second nature, I have had a particularly special place in my heart for her appearance at Lourdes, more so than her other Church-approved apparitions.

The thing that intrigues me most about those who visit Lourdes is that everyone who goes there — everyone — whether they are

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## WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER ...

- RuthEllen Davis (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Bob Howarth (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Larry Burgett (Decatur) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Barry Waitkus (Springfield) who lost his wife and our fellow Associate, Debbie Waitkus on 11/19/2022.
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is being treated for medical problems.
- For our Associate Candidates who continue to discern their calling to this vocation.
- For the upcoming Provincial Chapter March 16-21, for God's guidance as the Sisters plan for their future.
- Our Hospital Sisters and Associates ❖

## IN LOVING MEMORY ...

### SISTER JOAN M. HAMANN, OSF

BORN – 07/31/1932  
FIRST PROFESSION – 10/04/1950  
DIED – 10/31/2022

### ASSOCIATE DEBORAH WAITKUS (SPRINGFIELD)

BORN – 06/09/1949  
COMMITMENT – 2008  
DIED – 11/19/2022

### SISTER JOCELYN SERWATKA, OSF

BORN – 08/19/1925  
FIRST PROFESSION – 10/04/1943  
DIED – 11/21/2022

### SISTER MARY FLYNN, OSF

BORN – 10/05/1930  
FIRST PROFESSION – 06/13/1952  
DIED – 01/15/2023

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

# **Justice and Peace Connection**

**By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC**

## **Human Trafficking (a justice issue)**



Pause and as you read the title of this article and reflect upon it, what comes to mind? Perhaps many things such as youngsters who are touring an island and wander from their group and are abducted. But do you also think about the reality of slavery? Or do you only consider slavery in the light of African slaves being forced across the ocean to work in America against their free will? Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and we are called to end this plague. Why? Because all people have a God-given human dignity that must be respected and human beings are not commodities to be bought or sold. The latest statistics suggest that there are more than 40 million people trafficked around the world with traffickers making billions of dollars off the sale. This atrocity could be happening in your zip code, in big cities or rural areas, and online as many are lured on social media to come to any country and promised good money to care for their families. Once they arrive, they discover the falsehood and are trapped, sometimes for life.

Human trafficking is a crime that happens throughout the world and in many different sectors of life. Did you know that United States Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) have been involved with ending trafficking for years? Yes, Sisters not only pray but act. USCSAHT seeks to keep its members updated with the latest information about the reality of human trafficking by sharing reports and statistics from government, private, and non-profit sources in the anti-trafficking field. There are more than 100 congregations and coalitions working to end slavery. Their vision is to have a world without slavery and Pope Francis tells us “nothing can be indifferent to us”

... we must get involved to end “the cries of the vulnerable and Mother Earth.”

So why get involved? The Church’s encyclicals are a reflection on current issues and Catholic Social Teachings (CST) identify these issues: Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities; Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; and Care for God’s Creation. There is not one issue that we can opt out of if we claim our God-given dignity/humanity and as we read in *Laudato Si* about integral ecology, all is connected. It is the web of life that we are part of and responsible to keep healthy and healed. The threefold cornerstone of CST contains the principles of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity - the foundation on which to form our conscience. Therefore, we see that human trafficking is driven by an interconnected web of social injustice and human indifference.

We must get involved and realize that at the intersection is climate change. People are forced to flee due to storms, rising seas, draughts, and thus are vulnerable to traffickers. Furthermore, forced migration, wars and conflicts, gender inequality, systemic racism, and capitalism/consumerism are spiraling out of control and leave many, especially the poor, at risk of trafficking.

February is Awareness Against Human Trafficking month so join with others involved in educating and advocating, and offering survivor services or financial support to end modern-day slavery: human trafficking.

National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888 or text BeFree to 233733. Donations can be sent to U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking 2039 N. Geyer Ave., St. Louis, MO 63131. ❖

# Associates at Christmas . . .



Associates in Decatur



Associates in Highland



Associates gather in Streator



Associates in Green Bay



Santa visits with Sisters Mary and Rosily

## **Bjarne & Jeanne Jensen**

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with other Associates and Sisters on the beautiful grounds of the Motherhouse. Absent being there, we appreciate the Zoom options that Nancy offers. and we continue our spiritual growth by attending the meetings remotely. The presentations are always thoughtful and insightful, providing food for contemplation and reflection.

Our continued connection with the Sisters is special to us. We respect and love them and find the connection with them a big part of why we remain Associates. ❖

## **Lourdes**

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conscious of it or not, has something from which they need to be healed. And although not everyone who is physically in need comes away healed, most everyone who visits the holy shrine reports a deep spiritual healing or faith renewal after immersing themselves in the cold water from that spring that had been hidden by the dirt.

That deep spiritual healing and faith renewal is something I think all of us who believe in God would like to experience. It seems to me we all need it now more than it ever has been needed in my lifetime.

I don't know if I will ever make it to Lourdes and dip in the waters from that famous spring myself, but even if I don't, I will, like millions of people before me and millions of people after me, continue to keep the faith and trust in a God that can heal you or me anywhere and in any manner he wishes.

**(Originally published by The Times Newspaper in Ottawa in February 2016) ❖**

## **Birthday Party**

Sister Anna Phiri, OSF, was with Associate Marcianne O'Brien as they celebrated Sister's 70th birthday on January 4, 2023. This milestone birthday was recognized with a reception held at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Decatur on January 7. It was a time of thanking Sr. Anna for her contributions to the Decatur community in her work and parish life. Among the other guests were some of the Decatur Associates and Hospital Sisters of St. Francis.



## **ATTENTION – EMAIL COMMUNICATION**

By Brian Blasco

For Associates with an email, we have begun a new communication format. When an email is sent, you will see a message in your inbox from Hospital Sisters of St. Francis or Nancy Davis and [rsvp@hsosf-usa.org](mailto:rsvp@hsosf-usa.org). If you do not see these emails in your inbox, please check your spam or junk mail folder and then mark it as not spam. The format is through [sendinblue.com](http://sendinblue.com), a website that hosts our account.

In addition, please confirm your email address with Nancy at your convenience.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

### Upcoming Associate Events . . .

**February offering** – Thursday , February 16, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. will feature Father Joseph Malloy who will speak about the season of Lent. As of now this is scheduled as a Zoom event, but if that would change a notification will be sent.

**March offering** – Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. we will have Father Richard Chiola speaking to us about the Fire of the Holy Spirit. (Note that this is the 4th Thursday). It will be planned as a Zoom event, but if that would change a notification will be sent.

**April offering** - Thursday, April 20, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. will feature author and speaker Julianne Stanz who will be talking to us about her book, “Braving the Thin Places – Celtic Wisdom to Create a Space for Grace”. Ms. Stanz was born and raised in Ireland but now makes her home in Green Bay, WI and currently works for the Diocese of Green Bay as the Director of Parish Life and Evangelization. She has spoken at the international level and is also a consultant to the Committee on Evangelization and Catechists of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. This will be a Zoom presentation.

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