



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 19, Issue 1

February 2024



New Associate Commitments

It was a joyful occasion on Sunday, November 5, when the candidates signed their commitments during the Mass in the St. Clare of Assisi Adoration Chapel celebrated by Fr. Augustine Puchner, O.Praem, and in the company of the Hospital Sisters. Pictured are Nancy Davis, Kris Bents (Eau Claire), Rick and Tami Kirchgessner (Springfield), Sr. Trudy O'Connor, Fr. Augustine, Sr. Jomary Trstensky, Dan Krug (Springfield), Sr. Janelle Athorp, Marcia May (Springfield), Sr. MaryAnn Falbe, Brandi Rawlins (Springfield) and Sr. Anna Phiri. ❖ **More Photos Page 7**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 **Associate Office –**
By Nancy Davis
- 3 **Staying Franciscan . . .**
- 4 **Healing: Making it through the dark night -** By Jerrilyn Zavada
- 5 **Justice and Peace Connection –**
By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC
- 6 **Associates at Christmas . . .**
- 7 **New Associates Retreat . . .**
- 8 **Upcoming Events . . .**

Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Anam Cara

Have you ever met someone with whom you immediately feel connected? This person might be the one who ends up being able to finish your sentences, never jumps ship when things get rough, is always there when you need them, and even after long periods of time apart can pick up naturally just as if there was no time in-between. If so, you have experienced the anam cara relationship, which is predominant in Celtic spirituality. Anam is the Gaelic word for soul and cara is the word for friend, so in the Celtic world this phrase means soul friend. This concept of love and friendship goes beyond social

Continued Page 2

Associate Office

Continued from page 1

acquaintances to the heart of being loved and understood without mask or pretension. It is deep, spiritual, and can even transcend time. Anam cara relationships can cross cultural, gender, age, class, and racial barriers in order to aid in exploring and resolving life's deepest fears and sufferings as well as triumphs in a meaningful way. The soul friend is not interested in immediate results but commits to be unconditionally present for the needs of their companion. The anam cara relationship is beautiful, intimate, and complex and it has been written about for centuries including in John O'Donahue's book, *Anam Cara*, published in 1997, which I recommend.

The history of the anam cara dates to the pre-Christian time in the lands of the Celts. The ancient pagan Druids referred to the soul friend as life counselor and spiritual guide. By the 6th century AD, after the arrival of mainland European missionaries, women and men continued to develop the anam cara tradition that was inherited from their Druid ancestors. For centuries, these anam cara became mentors and companions to people from all walks of life who yearned for a deeper relationship with the Divine. As St. Brigit of Ireland wrote, "Anyone without an anam cara is like a body without a head."

I find it interesting that this notion of friendship is also prominent in Franciscan spirituality. In his book *In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare*, Roch Niemier, OFM writes about Francis' desire for the bonding of spirit and life that goes on in genuine relationships and the importance of intimacy in friendships that serves to release all sorts of energy for good, creativity, enthusiasm, fidelity, artistic expression, giving of oneself to commitments, the gospel, and coming to know God.

I have been fortunate to have had several anam cara relationships in my life, including some currently. They have all come to me unexpectedly and stayed for the time and fashion predestined by God. In each of these

relationships there was an awakening between the two of us, a sense of knowing and being that was beyond understanding. The agape love with my anam cara has opened the door of coming home to each other at last as in some ancient knowing. In these moments of friendship, it seems two souls recognize each other and as Euripides said, "Two friends, one soul." What a treasure if you have experienced this.

In my trip to Ireland last year, I came home with a new anam cara. I was gifted with a leather bracelet from a person I met with the words anam cara written on it in the ancient Celtic language of Ogham. It is a reminder of the deep and abiding treasure to be found in intimate friendship and the divine role that God plays in orchestrating these blessings. I leave you with the words of an ancient prayer of friendship.

The Celtic Vow of Friendship:

I honor your path
I drink from your well
I bring an unprotected heart
To our meeting place.
I hold no cherished outcomes.
I will not negotiate by withholding.
I am not subject to disappointment.

~Author unknown ❖

Franciscan Connections Newsletter

Council Liaison

Sister Anna Phiri, OSF

Editor

Nancy Davis, Associate Coordinator

Phone: (217) 522-3387, Ext 664

Fax: (217) 522-2483

E-mail: ndavis@hsosf-usa.org

Design and Layout

Emil Litz, Associate

Franciscan Connections is published quarterly. The deadlines for submission to the Associate Office are January 2, April 2, July 2 and October 2. Contributions will be used as space permits. ❖

Sister Jonette Devlin

**By Mary Salm (HSHS colleague in Green Bay) and
shared on October 18, 2023 at a Mass in the
HSHS St. Vincent Hospital Chapel**

*In memory of Sr Jonette Devlin, we gather here today,
To honor a life well-lived in a heartfelt way,
A clinical nurse specialist, with a heart so vast,
Her legacy of love and care at HSHS will forever last.*

*A teacher, a mentor, a friend to all,
Inspirational in her grace, standing tall,
In the corridors of healing, she'd brightly shine,
A beacon of compassion, divine.*

*Respected by physicians, staff, and more,
Patients found comfort at her door,
In commitment, tireless, she'd always stand,
Extending a helping and healing hand.*

*With hands-on care, her touch was so sweet,
In every patient's heart, her love would meet,
Her energy spent, her devotion immense,
In service of Christ, a true recompense.*

*A passionate Packers fan, her spirit soared high,
Cheering her team beneath the endless sky,
Yet humble and professional, in every endeavor,
She exemplified kindness, now and forever.*

*In prayerful moments, she'd find her way,
Seeking solace in the words she'd pray,
Carrying burdens with unwavering faith,
Her presence a gift, a comforting wraith.*

*Though she's left this world, her spirit remains,
In our hearts, her memory sustains,
Sister Jonette Devlin, in our thoughts engraved,
A hero, a healer, eternally saved.*

*As we say our goodbyes, tears may fall,
But her love and legacy will conquer all,
In the tapestry of life, she's a cherished thread,
Guiding us forward, as we tread.*

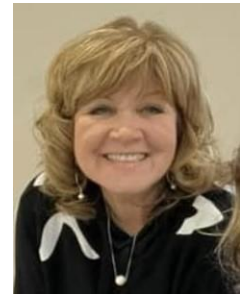
*In loving memory, we honor her at this Mass today,
A remarkable soul who's now on her way,
Sister Jonette Devlin, our hearts now say,
Rest in peace, until we meet again in heaven
someday. ❖*

Staying Franciscan . . .

Karen Frank

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2013**



I have been an Associate of the Hospital Sisters for 10 years and I attend meetings with the Springfield group. While undergoing the formation process for the Associate relationship, my sponsor and spiritual companion on the journey was Sr. Carol Sue Daniel, OSF. She was such a comforting soul who was quiet, contemplative, and a great listener. It was a joy to have her as my companion and the conversations we had about prayer and faith impacted me. I was blessed to have her.

I have been associated with the Hospital Sisters for over 44 years. I had a long career at St. John's Hospital (29 years) and the last 15 years at the HSHS Information Services Center. This long association and subsequent commitment to be a Franciscan Associate has blessed my Catholic faith and prayer life.

Learning about the Sisters and their mission to care for the sick and the poor drew me to the spirit of the Associate relationship. In my commitment as an Associate, I push myself to learn and also live a more generous faith-filled life. The Associate meeting topics and communications provide me with a gentle reminder to slow down and reflect on my path to follow Christ. I am inspired by the peaceful and gentle spirit of St. Francis, St. Clare, the Hospital Sisters, and Associates.

I try to live a Franciscan life by treating people with respect, kindness, joy, love, and hospitality. Personal prayer time and prayer with others are part of my daily life. I keep it simple and uncomplicated. I believe if I can show kindness and love to one person time, I am bringing Christ into their lives and mine. ❖

Healing: Making it through the dark night

By **Jerrilyn Zavada**
(Streator)



I had a hysterectomy at the end of December. All went well, and I am now nicely on the road to recovery, but my first foray into the effects of general anesthesia provided some detours I'd rather not take again.

During the first few weeks of recovery with cold and snowy weather, and the sunshine on sabbatical, I had to work extra hard to keep my spirits up, while also experiencing cabin fever. So, I did what I could do – what I have to do – to stay sane. I ' journaled ' it out. With notebook and assorted markers in hand, I doodled, scribbled, and spontaneously expressed in words as best I could, the myriad emotions and sensations swirling through my being during this tender time.

Sometimes relief was instantaneous. Other times not so much. So then I followed St. Benedict's advice in his monastic Rule, and "always... begin again." It is good advice. Solid advice. And if you haven't learned yet, it is advice applicable to pretty much any situation life has to offer. It can take a while to work through discomfort, whether it be physical or spiritual. The key is to allow ourselves that truth, and be as patient and compassionate with ourselves and our own limitations as we are with those whom we love. Always, we begin again.

As I was lying in bed at night the first week after surgery, all-too-aware of my own discomfort, but also mindful of how intensely chaotic are the current events on the world stage, I was overcome with a sense of helplessness. So much – okay, pretty much everything that happens outside the four walls of our home – beyond my control.

My heart aching for the humans near and far suffering in ways I can scarcely imagine, ways far beyond what I was being asked to endure in those moments. What could I possibly do then, there, to acknowledge my solidarity with suffering humanity outside my bedroom windows? And not just suffering 'humanity,' but real, flesh-blood-and-bone homo sapiens, with beating hearts and tormented souls. People who feel good things and bad, just like you and me. People who experience pain at the most profound physical and emotional levels... What could I possibly do then, there, to acknowledge my solidarity with those people, with these people?

And then, in the dark of the night, it occurred to me. As I lie in my bed, waiting to drift off to sleep while navigating post-op discomfort, I could breathe. With nothing else to distract me, I could inhale, noticing the breath of life as it moved through and animated my body. And then, when the moment at the top of the inhale came, I could exhale, allowing that breath to go out into the space around me – out into the world to the billions of faceless brothers and sisters I have around the world. Brothers and sisters I will never meet. Brothers and sisters I will never see or touch or speak with... Brothers and sisters in our shared humanity, our shared suffering, our shared prayer that somehow, someday, we will make it through this long, dark night. Together.

SPIRIT MATTERS is a weekly column by Jerrilyn Zavada Novak that examines experiences common to the human spirit. Contact her at jzblue33@yahoo.com. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

SISTER ARLENE WINKLER, OSF

BORN – 06/21/1929

FIRST PROFESSION – 10/04/1951

DIED – 11/24/2023

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

Justice and Peace Connection

**By Sister Mary Shaw,
ASC, D. Min**



Us - Them Mentality

Do you ever find yourself discussing with family or friends a topic then ends in chaos? While our differences with another can be good, today there is a polarization and divisiveness in our families, homes, communities, and churches that makes us not want to engage in dialogue about anything other than what is safe, such as weather or the day in general. To be safe, we keep it trivial to avoid conflict. And as for politics, most of us do not mention it.

So who needs to change? Pope Francis reminds us that "Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change." We seem to forget that we have one Father, we are all connected, and have a mutual belonging (Fratelli Tutti). In considering change, ponder how Jesus responded to those who antagonized Him, differed from Him, or questioned His actions.

This year we are celebrating the gift of the Stigmata of St. Francis and its impact on our humanity and responses. St. Bonaventure summarizes Francis' experience in this way: "The true love of Christ transformed the lover into His image" (Major Legend 13: 5m FF 1228). Francis was transformed. Are we not transformed every time we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, Scriptures, and in each other, especially when we encounter the poor? Do the vulnerable cries touch us? If not, why not?

Francis was in silence on retreat when he received the stigmata on Mount LaVerna. Am I willing to be silent to hear the Lover? To respond to the one before me? Or am I too busy with my agenda not to stop and listen to the other? Furthermore, who is the other? There is a call to each of us to restore silence in our daily life and routines. It results in

placing each of us before what is essential and to be transformed into being a compassionate presence. We become doers and pride ourselves on what we do each day but often never seem to cultivate presence. Just to be is a blessing and is holy. Silence, quiet, and stillness allows us to end our preoccupation with our agenda and frees us to listen to the other, our inner self, and to God. Yes, Francis of Assisi heard the voice of God, but he also heard the voice of those he met and it became his way of life. This month of valentines may afford us an opportunity to be transformed by the silence and presence of others.

The symbol of this centenary year is the cross and may we be reminded that only in the shadow of the cross are there genuine encounters and transformations. May 2024 become a year we try to foster true dialogue; respect for the other and respond in reverence by listening to them. Perhaps we will realize that there is only us...not us-them.. and then what a sacred moment and encounter it will be. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER ...

- Jan Steinhour (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Denny Kirchesner (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Linda Medlock (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Rosie Butler (Springfield) who lost her mother, Jo Ann, on 12/8/2023.
- Bob Howarth (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Dave Wehrwein (Sheboygan) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Vikki Warren (Springfield) who has several family members being treated for medical problems.
- For our world and especially the people in Gaza and Ukraine and at our borders.
- Our Hospital Sisters and Associates ❖

Associates at Christmas . . .

Advent/Christmas Bingo

After a four-year absence due to the pandemic, the Associates and Sisters gathered for their annual Advent/Christmas Bingo party on December 14. The theme was *A Gold Crown Christmas* with themed grand prizes of fit for a King, comfort on your throne, looking for a prince and a shining light for all. Associate Mike Sgro was Santa and the leader of bingo. It didn't take too long for many to get back in the swing of seeking someone's gift which added to the fun of the evening. ❖



Associates in Springfield



Associates in Green Bay



Associates in Highland

Candidate Commitment Retreat

On November 3-5, 2023, the Sisters welcomed six new Associates at the conclusion of their commitment retreat. The candidates and sponsors spent the weekend in fellowship and prayer as they discerned how they would fulfill a commitment to following the gospel in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare. ❖





Associate Office
Hospital Sisters of St. Francis
4849 LaVerna Road
Springfield, IL 62707

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Associate Events . . .

February offering - On Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 6:30 p.m., Fr. Richard Chiola will speak to us about Lent. The presentation will be in the St. Francis Convent Family Room so please enter at Convent Entrance.

March offering - On Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 6:30 p.m., Associate Brian Blasco will be presenting A Night in the Museum: The 75th anniversary of the Effingham Fire. The presentation will be in the Heritage Museum in Poverello Hall so please enter at the South Lobby entrance of The Evermode Institute.

Please view us on Facebook and click Like