



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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Spring Flowers at the Lourdes Grotto

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Beginners Mind – Part 2

As you will recall, my article in the February edition of the Franciscan Connection was about the concept of the “beginners 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. The article explored what this concept is and also the advantages of seeing the world this way. I commented that to develop a beginner’s mind was my wish for 2022.

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Associate Office –

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In this second article, I will articulate some concrete ways to develop our beginner's minds, some hands-on practices to encourage this way of seeing the world.

These are some of the practices that can help in developing our beginner's minds and truly experience the present moment, every moment.

1. Take one step at a time.
2. Don't pre-judge. Observe and engage users without the influence of value judgments on their actions, circumstances, decisions, or "issues."
3. Live without shoulds.
4. Put your ego on the backburner.
5. Make use of experience. Don't negate experience but keep an open mind on how to apply it to each new circumstance.
6. Let go of being an expert.
7. Be inspired by children.
8. Slow down.
9. Experience the moment fully.
10. Disregard common sense.
11. Discard fear of failure.
12. Use the spirit of inquiry.
13. Focus on questions, not answers.
14. Get rid of been there, done that.
15. Don't rely on assumptions.
16. Don't anticipate, just participate.
17. Question everything. Even (and especially) the things you think you already understand.
18. Be truly curious.
19. Find patterns.
20. Listen...listen...and listen some more.

Developing a beginner's mind has been on my radar screen since February. I have tried to approach situations, even the most common, everyday ones, with the eyes of a child; something new, something unknown, something different, something that could change my view of the world or of others. Attempting to live this practice has helped me be more merciful, more willing to sacrifice, more forgiving, more tolerant, more appreciative, and more attentive to the

movements of the Holy Spirit in the present moment. It is very challenging, however, to practice this and I have to constantly remind myself to look at things and situations with no pre-conceived notions.



One very simple example of living with a beginner's mind has to do with the presence of the still beautiful red poinsettia in my office. Yes, I know it is April and that these flowers are supposed to be for Christmas, but the one in my office might just be my Easter lily. I am so accustomed to looking at it in the windowsill that I don't always appreciate its beauty. I am often taken aback when someone enters my office and is amazed that it is still blooming now four months after Christmas. These visitors are looking at my poinsettia with a beginner's mind. When I truly look at it with the eyes of a child, I am reminded of Africa where there are amazing poinsettia trees covered with huge red flowers. This invokes fond memories of a special time in my life. When I fail to acknowledge this beautiful flower, I miss out on the comfort that God is trying to provide me in the memory of a pleasant time of my life.

So again, I ask you to take up the challenge of looking at the world with a beginner's mind and see what God might have in store for you. It is often said we can't miss what we have never had, but is that really true? I long for a deeper connection to the Divine and I believe living with a beginner's mind will cultivate that connection. Poet Rilke said: "For there are moments when something new has entered into us, something unknown; our feelings grow mute in shy perplexity, everything in us withdraws, a stillness comes, and the new, which no one knows, stands in the midst of it and is silent." ❖

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



Laudato Si and Laudato Si Action Plan

Since 2015, we have heard about Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* and this year, we began a seven-year journey called LSAP a call to make real choices that will "seek a sustainable and integral development" ...that will begin to undo the damage done to Mother Earth by our human abuse of God's creation" (LS:13,14.). A call to action and not mere talk.

If you have not read the Encyclical, please stop reading this article and go and read the Encyclical. At least look over the topics and if one touches you, read about it. If you have read *Laudato Si*, now is the time to ask, what am doing about it? It is time to take responsibility for what we have done or failed to do for our planet.

A simple reason for me to do something came from the colloquy in an Ignatian retreat: what have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ? For Christ? I thought we were talking about the Earth and inhabitants.

St. Francis of Assisi communed with all creation and called each brother and sister. This demonstrates the intimate connection we have with creation and reminds us that we may differ with opinions with siblings but can never be indifferent to them because s/he is made in the image of the Creator. Also, Pierre Teilhard De Chardin wrote, "By virtue of the Creation and, still more, of the Incarnation,

nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see. On the contrary, everything is sacred... try, with God's help, to perceive the connection –even physical and natural which binds your labor with the building of the kingdom of heaven; try to realize that heaven itself smiles upon you and, through your works, draws you to itself" (DeChardin, *The Divine Milieu*, p. 66). Christ is in creation or, as St. Paul says, "From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free" (Romans 8: 22-23). Yes, Teilhard is saying that in the concrete and for God, as well as for us, creation is creation in Christ. God is found in creation and thus, all is sacred. Once we get a glimpse of that reality, we would never denigrate creation, our common home.

With God's graces, working collaboratively with all and in Christ, we will enter the process and take responsibility to respond to the cries of the Earth and the poor...the cries that are one. Our one small step will have a ripple effect and will touch the wounds and begin to bind them. So get excited and get into groups and read, discuss, pray about and act and in your action steps you will encounter Christ and Christ in one another. You will see the web of life in action and experience integral ecology and our need for one another.

What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What ought I do for Christ? My very small but intricate step is helping to reveal God in our midst, God in my sisters and brothers (all creatures) and healing of the planet for those who come after us. So let us en flesh what Manley Hopkins said years ago, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God" and our care for our common home makes this a living, breathing reality of our oneness. So, get into step by adopting one *Laudato Si* goal and giving it life...your living legacy to all. ❖

Staying Franciscan . . .

Carol Gapsis

(Effingham)

**Year of Commitment –
2010**



My name is Carol Gapsis and I have been an Associate of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis since 2010. I live in Effingham, IL and am part of the Effingham Associates group. Sr. Doris Poettker, OSF was my mentor and sponsor. At the time, I was the manager of Pastoral Care at St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital and she was a Pastoral Associate for St. Anthony Parish, visiting the homebound and hospitalized congregants of the parish, so we worked together often. My husband was on the medical staff and he introduced us. We had an immediate spiritual connection and she took me under her wing. She was such an inspiration because she was living the charism of the Hospital Sisters. I was able to participate in her ministry of visiting the homebound and she taught me to open myself to conversion, and let God work in my life so that I could embrace others as He does. It was through her that I learned of the presence of the Associates in our community, and I decided to pursue becoming an Associate, with her urging.

Being an Associate has enriched my life in many ways. This journey of life with endless changes and challenges has been an opportunity of growth in a deeper relationship with God. I pray where I am, not where I think I should be. I have learned to slow down, be quiet and discern – through deep thought, prayer and consideration – how to align myself with God's will in what He wants me to do and that He is at the center of all the decisions I make. Much of this newfound spirituality springing from my attempting to live the charism of the Hospital Sisters and modeling the Sisters.

Being a Franciscan Associate is a work in progress. I have an overwhelming hunger to become more Francis and Clare-like. I try to imitate the Franciscan way of life – and their

Barbara Butler

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2000**



My name is Barbara Butler and I became an associate in 2000. I am a member of the Springfield Associates. My husband, Ken, was already an Associate and encouraged me to become one too. Sister Ann Pitsenberger was my original sponsor and Sister Mary Ann Minor is my present sponsor. I feel very fortunate that God led Ken and me into our association and friendship with the Franciscan Sisters and I treasure this friendship as it has led me closer to my faith and Franciscan values. I find it very hard to write about how important this association is in my life. I know my journey in this life would not be the same without the Sisters and St. Francis and St. Clare. I have been very fortunate to go to Assisi several times and found that experience to be very moving, I just wanted to touch the walls that St. Francis touched hoping I could feel his Spirit. I continue with this association because it is a part of my life in every way. I try to live out this call by being a positive grandmother in faith to my grandchildren, and a person of faith to my family members and friends. I volunteer as much as I can hoping I can be a positive person in faith to others as they continue with their journey here on earth. ❖

healing spirit – through prayer, family, work, and community efforts, so that I can nourish my personal and spiritual life by being formally connected to the Sisters. This journey I travel is a process, not a destination.

I believe that I live out the call to Franciscan life by being in contact with and available for numerous people who share their life journeys – obstacles, joy, and tragedy with me. I try to bring them some understanding and peace to their challenges through the healing presence of Jesus and the Hospital Sisters. ❖

SPIRIT MATTERS:

**A suggestion for
handling all those
'thoughts and prayers'**



**By Jerrilyn Zavada
Associate (Streator)**

What do you do when you tell someone you will pray for them?

What do you do when you tell dozens of people you will pray for them around the same time?

Do you send out a prayer right then and there and then forget about it?

Or do you keep a list of people you know of who need prayer and add to it as needed, praying over the names each day until the issue is resolved?

As a contemplative, who regularly practices silent prayer time, I try to live mostly from my heart when I am with or among people. So, when someone is hurting or suffering or needs "thoughts and prayers," their need immediately enters my heart, where it stays and grows in a mysterious way.

For me, and I imagine for most people, it is impossible to keep track of everyone you promise to pray for; but by receiving their need into your heart, it is invariably assured, that when you do pray, their needs rise up along with every other need you pray for.

This is how I have come to ensure all those I promise to pray for, get prayed for and continue to be prayed for: I pray the rosary.

With all the beads strung on the rope, or wire, or chain, or whatever, it is a great way to pray as you offer your heartfelt prayers to God through the intercession of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

As I have prayed the rosary over the years, I have used the beads in different ways. Sometimes I

offer a decade for each of my nieces and nephews. Other times, I offer a different intention on each of the 50 beads of Hail Marys that make up the five decades of the rosary. Sometimes, as I begin praying the rosary, I will say a simple prayer like "Mama, you know all my needs, you know all the needs of those whom have asked me for my prayers or to whom I have promised my prayers. Please receive those heartfelt prayers now and give them to your Son."

As I pray this way, regularly, I experience a deep trust and reassurance that all of these prayer intentions, held deeply in my heart and passed on to Jesus through his Blessed Mother (who better to pray for those in need, than Jesus' own mother, right?) are received in the innermost realms of Jesus' Sacred Heart to be answered and resolved in his way, in his time.

Whether you regularly pray the rosary or not, I encourage you to reflect on it, and remember it as a profound way to keep those near to and far from your heart in constant prayer. And you can trust that those prayers will be heard and lovingly answered in time and in unimaginable ways.

*This Spirit Matters column, slightly modified, was originally published in The Times Newspaper in Ottawa, Illinois. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY. . .

SISTER LEOLA BROWN, OSF

BORN: 04/28/1921

FIRST PROFESSION: 06/13/1940

DIED: 02/15/2022

ASSOCIATE JOAN EGGERS – (EFFINGHAM)

BORN: 07/18/1952

COMMITMENT: 2017

DIED: 01/16/2022

ASSOCIATE MARY STAUDT – (SPRINGFIELD)

BORN: 12/20/1948

COMMITMENT: 2008

DIED: 02/3/2022

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

Sr. Pacis' 101st Birthday. . .



Sr. Pacis Bao, OSF, celebrated her 101st birthday on April 8, 2022. With her usual contagious smile, she greeted all well-wishers and enjoyed the cake and flowers with her fellow Hospital Sisters. ❖

Our Sister Jubilarians will Celebrate in June

75 Years Professed – Jeweled Crown Jubilee

Sister Pacis Bao

70 Years Professed – Grace Jubilee

Sister Ann Pitsenberger
Sister Mary Evelyn Lamb
Sister Mary Flynn

60 Years Professed – Diamond Jubilee

Sister Bernadine Gutowski
Sister Janelle Athorp

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Jane Locascio (Springfield) who lost her mother on 1/23/2022
- Deb Waitkus (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems
- John Staudt (Springfield) who lost his wife, Mary, also an Associate, on 2/3/2022
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is dealing with multiple medical problems
- Darlene Bedei (Streator) who is being treated for significant health issues
- Sally Steiner (Highland) who has been hospitalized and is being treated for medical problems
- For Associate Candidates beginning their discernment in 2022
- All individuals suffering from COVID-19 virus and those who are struggling emotionally, financially, and spiritually
- For our Hospital Sisters and Associates. ❖

Sr. Annice's Birthday Surprise . . .



On April 2, 2022, Sr. Annice McClure, OSF, (Green Bay) celebrated a milestone birthday. She continues to volunteer at the HSHS Hospitals in Green Bay and the staff at St. Vincent had a surprise party to mark this day. Sr. Annice continues to be the co-coordinator of the Green Bay Associate group and is very vital to the health and vitality of that group. Thank you, Sr. Annice, for all you do and Happy Birthday. ❖

A Prayer for our Earth . . .

By Pope Francis

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace. ❖

The Evermode Institute By Nancy Davis

On 3/1/2022 the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois announced that the Norbertine Fathers of St. Michael's Abbey of Orange County, California, will be establishing The Evermode Institute, a new center for Catholic spiritual and intellectual formation in the former Chiara Center. There is no date for the opening of the Institute which will focus on formation for Catholics, offering programs for both ordained and lay teachers of the faith, parish school of religion teachers, Catholic school teachers, and other groups who teach the faith. Several priests from the Norbertine Fathers will move to the property and serving at The Evermode Institute will be their primary apostolate.

Bishop Thomas John Paprocki said, "The Norbertine Fathers of St. Michael's Abbey are a vibrant and growing community of holy men, and their presence and apostolic work will be a great blessing to the people of our diocese and to this region." Sister Maureen O'Connor, OSF, Provincial Superior of the Hospital Sisters commented, "This new chapter in the history of the Hospital Sisters and the diocese marks the beginning of what we pray will be a mutually beneficial relationship. Throughout our nearly 150 years in America, the Hospital Sisters have collaborated with others in the work of the Church, and so we view this agreement between the diocese and the Norbertine Fathers as a continuation of that tradition."

I am happy to report that at this time the spaces formerly used for Associate activities will be available in The Evermode Institute for use by the Associates. Our first planned in-person gathering will be the Liturgy and picnic which is scheduled for Thursday, May 19, 2022. I will keep you updated on the plans as they emerge. Of course, since COVID-19 is still with us, there is the possibility that this activity will not be held as planned, but I am hopeful that we will be able to gather as an Associate community once again very soon. ❖



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Associate Activities . . .

May offering - Thursday, May 19, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. will be the Liturgy and picnic for all Associates. The plans for this event are still evolving due to the pandemic and the arrangements with The Evermode Institute (formerly Chiara Center). Please watch your email and mail for updates as they become available. If it appears that this will not be able to be held in-person, another option for gathering on Zoom will commence.

June offering – Thursday, June 16, 2022, at 6:30 p.m. will feature Jeanne Connolley, from the former NACAR organization (North American Conference of Associates and Religious). She has been an Associate coordinator for the Wheaton Franciscans as well as held office with the NACAR organization for many years. She will be talking about the future of Associates. If possible, this event will be in-person at The Evermode Institute as well as on Zoom. All Associates will be invited. ❖