



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 2

May 2024



Genesis 9:13 “I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” (Photo by Nancy Davis)

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Associate Office by Nancy Davis **Hospitality and the Cross – A Thin Space - Part 1**

“The spaces between cross and hospitality are measured very thin.” I encountered this in A Contemporary Celtic Prayer Book and I reflected on what it means. Why the cross? Hospitality is derived from the Latin word “hospes” meaning host, visitor or stranger, and it is defined as: extending a welcome to guests or offering a home away from home. For Christians, showing hospitality is an obligation. There are numerous scriptures including 1Peter 4:9: “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling” and Hebrews 13:2 “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.” The authors inform us that hospitality is a

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Associate Office – from pg. 1

gift, it is about being generous, serving others, and inviting them into the family of God. In my experience with other cultures, our Western culture has forgotten how genuine and intentional hospitality can be life-changing: I also am touched because the reference to the cross is instrumental, but I never connected it. When I was in Africa on a mission trip, we visited villages and homes. Although poor, these people offered food, drinks, and often gifts. One day we were visiting a village that was poor as evidenced by some of the children who had distended bellies. The villagers provided us with food, drinks and a tribal dance. At the end of the visit, Father Innocent, the pastor, offered a goat as a gift to the Americans. Keep in mind that some of the people were hungry and this goat was a source of food that would have benefitted their families and children for days. Because of their value of hospitality, it was given to us who obviously didn't need it nor appreciate the sacrificial component of this gift. This example of radical hospitality impacted me. This was not an isolated event because over the course of 16 years of mission work in Mexico, I have seen this hospitality. With this kind of hospitality comes joy. This is ubuntu (see page 4). Being hospitable requires sacrifice, but God asks us to forgo our own needs and put the needs of others first. When hosting a guest, offering them our best might require sacrifices of time, comfort, and rest. When God wants you to invite someone for a meal, you must make the effort to ensure they are comfortable, and their needs are met. This requires a sacrifice of time and energy - not negotiable because they are expected by God. I have been a benefactor of hospitality and that has instilled the desire to return that favor. That is why our Thanksgiving table has had up to four countries represented. A barrier to hospitality in our culture is fear. Over the past, there is less community within neighborhoods, churches, and the workplace. Often people don't know their neighbors.

Culture and the media have fostered a climate of fear of those who have another skin color, speak another language, or is of a different religion or culture. Often there is the assumption that the stranger is a potential danger. One does not know the enrichment that may be experienced by getting to know someone of a different culture. Perhaps the most important quality in hospitality is freedom. If one gives expecting something in return, it's not a free gift, and they remain a slave to their need for self-protection. When one is liberated can they be open to receive the stranger and support those who come with a need? St. Francis gives us an example of hospitality. He viewed the world through the lens of abundance, not scarcity, which allowed him to be perpetually hospitable. He knew God would always provide. He demonstrated a necessary component of being a good host which is poverty. Father Henri Nouwen says, "Poverty is the inner disposition that allows us to take away our defenses and convert our enemies into friends." What might be holding you back from being hospitable? In the next issue I will be offering suggestions for leaning into the command to welcome the stranger. ❖

Franciscan Connections Newsletter

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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. ❖

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



Many of you . . .

During Lent, **Nuns Against Gun Violence** requested we fast, pairing prayer and awareness with advocacy for gun violence prevention. It was a positive gesture but left me wondering if we recognize that violence is more than guns? Recall that Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum* (Praise God For all His creatures), a follow-up to *Laudato Si*, asks us to take up the spirit of non-violence.

Martin L. King, in his last speech, stated: "It is no longer a question of choosing between violence and non-violence, but between non-violence and non-existence." Yes, this is our reality, and our choice: we can choose life or choose death. Pope Francis echoes this and reminds us that the essence of non-violence is the refusal to do harm and the commitment to resist violence and put love and truth into action for the common good. In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis sharpens the reality of our choice. He highlights the realities of systemic violence which are worsening the destruction of the planet and the growing climate crisis. Pope Francis roots this violence in a "technocratic paradigm", denial, blame and blaming the poor for climate crisis.

I invite you to read *Laudate Deum* and see what was clearly expressed on *Integral Ecology*. "Everything is connected" and "no one is saved alone" (LD 19). Thus, due to

this interconnectivity, violence hurts everyone. We see in our own country an obsession with power. Politicians are lording it over opponents and using denigrating words to destroy those who seek to better society and not one's own self-interest.

This call is a moral imperative to restore healthy and harmonious relationships. This is accomplished when we rid ourselves of the ideology of power-over and seek to establish power-with that seeks collaboration, cooperation, and non-dominating approaches to interacting. This is a powerful antidote to the violence we are witnessing on a global scale. In another way, this power-with replicates the spirit of synodality: walking, talking, and listening together. Like Pope Francis, let us denounce violent power and its destructive way of life and cultivate a culture of non-violence listening to the other in the spirit of *Fratelli Tutti*. Yes, let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Perhaps as an Action Step, you could learn about the Vow on Non-Violence and imitate it daily. ❖

Our Sisters will celebrate on July 13, 2024 (by invitation)

80 years professed – Emerald Jubilee

Sister Elreda Huser, OSF (Japan Province)

70 years professed – Grace Jubilee

Sister Mary Kelly, OSF

60 years professed – Diamond Jubilee

Sister Christa Ann Struewing, OSF

50 years professed – Golden Jubilee

Sister Ines Schlathölter, OSF

40 years professed – Ruby Jubilee

Sister Rosily Menachery, OSF

UBUNTU

By Sister Anna
Phiri, OSF



It seems like the word ubuntu is being used more frequently in different circles. It was used at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Conference in August 2024, and even sung by the participants. But how many people know the meaning of ubuntu? Ubuntu comes from the word bantu. Bantu is a language root which unites more than 400 ethnic groups in Africa and it means human beings and the plural form is muntu. It means having a conscious knowledge of belonging to the community and being in relationships with those in the community. The term Bantu came became known in 1860, but the reality has always been there, engrained in the lives of the people of Africa.

It is not easy to translate Ubuntu into Western languages. It means a lot to Bantu people who feel it in their blood and know when there is ubuntu. They also know when there is no experience of it. The word is rarely mentioned except when one is not behaving like a human being. One may be told to behave like muntu, or a human being. Ubuntu can be observed in the life of the people.

Ubuntu signifies the quality of being human, inseparable from virtue. It cannot be faked because it comes from the heart. One of the important virtues of Ubuntu is hospitality. Hospitality is at the heart of Ubuntu. Hospitality takes different forms such as: being present to others, attentive listening, generosity, welcoming, and respect. Hospitable people often keep the best for guests. An example of

this is how people keep chickens to serve a good meal when they have guests. The other person comes first in most cases. In conversations, they often mirror back to make sure that they understand what is being communicated. They wait for their turn to talk instead of distracting the other person.

Ubuntu is what a typical human being is and what makes living together enjoyable and peaceful. A person has a central role to play in life.

Missionaries who spend time in Africa end up respecting the people and their way of relating to each other. After being among the Bantu, they develop a strong sense of belonging and feel accepted by the people. The true meaning of ubuntu is when no one feels like an outsider. Some missionaries, after spending time with the Bantu, feel that they can no longer fit into their Western cultures. They feel a connection with ubuntu. They develop their sense of being human and feel that their lives have been transformed by their experiences with ubuntu values.

There is a couple in Decatur, IL who spent 19 years in Zambia. Their way of life reflects Ubuntu. When I was sick, the wife surprised me with a Zambian meal she had prepared because that is what she experienced in Zambia. When I entered their home, I felt at home because of their simple lifestyle. There is also joy, hospitality and generosity that exudes in their way of life.

The first president of Independent Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, said, "Let the West have its technology and Asia its mysticism! Africa's gift to the world culture must be in the realm of human relation. "Why then are there conflicts in Africa? The answer is because the people are not living the principle of ubuntu. They have taken on other foreign values forgetting the values that make them humans. ❖

SPIRIT

MATTERS:

What compass guides your life?

By Jerrilyn Zavada
Associate
(Streator)



One of the best gifts you can give yourself and others is the gift of being yourself. What I mean is the gift of you, in all your unique qualities, talents and eccentricities. The best of you.

Strive to not living according to environmental expectations from your family, friends, coworkers, society. By always striving to live up to some ever-moving measuring stick of current norms – and sometimes norms passed on from previous generations – we forfeit the opportunity and the unfathomable blessing to live our one wild and precious life (Mary Oliver). And more than anything else, in my mind anyway, intentionally not living according to the design your Maker thought up when forming you is the biggest sin of all.

You were designed for a unique purpose that only you can fulfill. There is a purpose to all of it, and your soul, although it was made to exist and flourish in this particular time and place, was not intended to follow some arbitrary rules established by popularity contests that come and go. We live in an extremely noisy time. Unless we consciously choose to turn off, or at least turn down the noise, there is no way to escape being influenced by it.

Since I got married, my soul and my spirit have been given the opportunity to rest in a space where I can hear the whisperings of my heart once again. And those whisperings – those ingrained desires – have remain unchanged even though they have been muted by other circumstances for years, even decades. In our home, I am relearning how to just “be” again,

rather than doing all the time. Everyone needs to know this, but – it is okay to just be. It is in the precious space of being where our feminine gifts flourish the most.

In our home, I can rest enough so that the purpose for which I was designed has room to breathe and to evolve naturally, according to its own time. These days, I am retraining myself to sit still, and my goals are changing from being proactive and accomplished to seeking and being receptive to Beauty... to listening for the Eternal still small voice to direct me to the next step along my path. Because the One behind that still small voice is the only one whose barometer of how my life is going matters to me.

When I look back over various periods of my life, I can see how those times I intentionally practiced periods of silence and solitude – of listening for the voice of the Spirit – preceded times of my soul’s imprint flowing abundantly out into the world in new, unexpected ways. The truth is practicing ‘being’ – quietly, alone, instead of doing, is essential for me to quiet my ego and allow the Spirit to move in me. As a follower of Jesus, be like him and go off to a deserted place and rest awhile. It is there where you can sense the unique compass for your life, and in what direction it is going.

‘Be still and Know that I am God.’ (Psalm 46:10) ❖



Associate Recognition . . .



Sister Maureen Irvin, OSF, an Oldenburg, Indiana Franciscan and one of our Associates was elected Congregational Minister (General Superior) of her community on April 19. She will serve a five-year term from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2029. This will be her second term as Congregational Minister. She also served in this position from 2012 to 2018 after leaving the Hospital Sisters as our Coordinator of Justice and Peace. The Oldenburg Chapter also passed resolutions on planning for sustainability, potential new governance structures, promoting Franciscan vocations and affirming their commitment to the Associate Relationship. Sr. Maureen appreciates our prayers for her and for her Community. She has our hardest congratulations. ❖



Associate Helen Essenpreis will be inducted into Mater Dei (MD) Catholic School Hall of Honor on May 3. MD Hall of Honor recognizes alumni who have lived their lives as witnesses of her mission.

After graduating from Mater Dei, Helen earned a Diploma in Nursing from St. John's Hospital School of Nursing and began her career at HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital, Breese. She continued her education and received her BSN and MSN. Throughout her nursing career, during which she focused on providing exceptional perinatal care to women and infants, Helen served as a bedside nurse, administrator, educator, mentor, and author. She is certified as a Faith Community Nurse.

Helen took an active role in her children's Catholic education by serving at All Saints Academy and Mater Dei High School as president of Mothers and Friends, the school board, and the athletic board.

Helen is a member of St. Dominic Church in Breese where she currently serves as Eucharistic Minister, sacristan, member of Liturgy and Spiritual Formation Committees, ambassador to sister parish in Guatemala, parish representative for Catholic Relief Services and teaches Youth Faith Formation. She currently serves as President of the North Central Vicariate of the Belleville Diocese of Council of Catholic Women. Helen is a Franciscan Associate with the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis.

Helen and her late husband Dale are blessed with three children and five grandchildren. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Denny Kirchgessner (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Gloria Guy (Decatur) who is being treated for medical problems.
- RuthEllen Davis (Springfield) whose sister-in-law, Marjorie Harn, passed away.
- Bob Howarth (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Vikki Warren (Springfield) who has several family members being treated for medical problems.
- For those affected by the closure of the hospitals in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls.
- Remembering those who died in the Effingham Hospital Fire which was 75 years ago April 4, 1949.
- For our world and especially for the people of Ukraine, Gaza, and those at our borders.
- Our Hospital Sisters and Associates.
- For our Associate Candidates who continue to discern their calling to this vocation. ❖

75th anniversary of the St. Anthony Hospital Fire



Mass Celebrated and Presentation Made at St. Anthony's

On April 4, 2024, Bishop Paprocki, celebrated Mass at HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital Chapel in Effingham to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the hospital fire that occurred on April 4, 1949. In attendance were the Hospital Sisters, HSHS colleagues, and community members. The fire tragically took the lives of 77 people including two of the Hospital Sisters. Despite this being such a tragedy, as a result there were positive changes made in the fire and life safety codes for hospitals and other places where people gather, not just statewide but nationwide. ❖

Additionally, Statue Unveiled and Blessed

On April 14, leaders and colleagues from HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital were joined by Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, city officials, retired firefighters and community members to unveil and bless a statue commemorating the 75th anniversary of the St. Anthony Hospital fire. The statue of a nurse holding a baby was commissioned by the Effingham Retired Volunteer Firefighters Association to memorialize the victims of the fire, and honor those who bravely fought the fire as well as those who helped raise funds to rebuild the hospital. The statue is a beautiful respectful remembrance of that time and is now home near the hospital's healing garden by the Prairie Heart Institute entrance. ❖





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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Associate Activities . . .

May offering - On Thursday, May 16, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. a panel of Associates will be talking about how they live out the charism of the Hospital Sisters in their lives. Please plan to join us in the Family Room of the Convent for some insights into living the gospel in the spirit of St. Francis and Clare.

June Offering - On Thursday, June 20, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. we will have the Spring Liturgy and Picnic beginning with Mass and followed with a meal and fellowship. Please watch your email for further details and an invitation to this event and information regarding how to RSVP. Guests are welcome for this Associate and Sister event. ❖