



# 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 17, Issue 3

August 2022



## Jubilee 2022 Canceled

For the third year, the annual celebration for the Sister Jubilarians had to be canceled due to the COVID pandemic. The Sisters celebrating their jubilee (the anniversary of first profession of vows) pictured above are: Jeweled Crown Jubilarian - 75 years professed - Sr. Pacis Bao; Grace Jubilarians – 70 years professed - Sr. Ann Pitsenberger, Sr. Mary Evelyn Lamb, and Sr. Mary Flynn; Diamond Jubilarians – 60 years professed - Sr. Bernadine Gutowski and Sr. Janelle Athorp. Please visit [www.hospitalsister.org](http://www.hospitalsister.org) for the story of each Sister and their education and ministries. ❖

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## Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

### Has Encountering Jesus Changed You?

We heard the story of the Good Samaritan on July 10, 2022. I recently heard a meditation on this reading that asked these questions: How did encountering Jesus change the Samaritan or the victim or others in the Bible that encountered Jesus such as the woman at the well, or the man from whom he drove out demons? Did it alter the direction of their lives? We don't get to hear the rest of the story. I find it hard to believe that their lives were not permanently impacted. This led me to examine the times I have encountered Jesus. Just a few weeks ago, I encountered him in the faces of migrants at the border. I also

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## Associate Office –

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encounter him in the faces of my grandchildren and in Eucharistic Adoration. Have my encounters changed me? Have I leaned into these experiences and allowed God to reshape my life? Have I allowed them to transform me? It also made me wonder how many times Jesus has sought to have an encounter with me and I have missed it or worse, turned away. I recently returned from a mission trip to Mexico. While I was there I meditated on the blessings that have come into my life as a result of the people that I have met and served. Many of these people I now consider my family. I thought about how my life would be different if I had not taken the chance to go on the first mission trip to Mexico in 2008 and how God mysteriously led me back there just months after my initial visit to establish relationships that would endure. This unlikely town in northern Mexico has become a place of unexpected grace. Other encounters with Jesus occur when I take the Eucharist to the nursing home or when I am brave enough to speak of Jesus to strangers or to those who I believe need to hear about him. Like the Good Samaritan I like to think that my character is predisposed to action and has always been inclined toward the needs of others. What about you? Where is God leading you? When and where have you encountered Jesus in your life? Have these encounters changed you? What might happen if you surrendered to the desires God is putting on your heart and fully leaned into those desires?

A radio personality named Paul Harvey used to host a program called *The Rest of the Story*. It consisted of stories presented as little-known or forgotten facts on a variety of subjects with some key elements of the story (usually the name of some well-known person) held back until the end. The broadcasts always concluded with a variation on the tag line, "And now you know...the rest of the story." The endings were almost always a shocker. If we could know the rest of the story of the people in the Bible who

had encounters with Jesus, I believe we would be surprised. I am challenging you to ask yourself today the same question I have been asking myself - What is going to be the rest of my story? ❖

### WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Rosie Kuhlman (Decatur) who lost her mother on July 3, 2022. May she rest in peace.
- Deb Waitkus (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is dealing with multiple medical issues.
- For our Associate candidates as they continue to discern their calling to this vocation.
- All individuals suffering from the COVID-19 virus and those who are struggling emotionally, financially, and spiritually.
- For our Hospital Sisters and Associates ❖

### **Franciscan Connections Newsletter**

#### Council Liaison

Sister Rosily Menachery, OSF

#### Editor

Nancy Davis, Associate Coordinator

Phone: (217) 522-3387, Ext 664

Fax: (217) 522-2483

E-mail: [ndavis@hsosf-usa.org](mailto: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. ❖

# Staying Franciscan. . .

## Mary Wilquet

(Green Bay)

**Year of Commitment –  
2002**



I have been an Associate since 2002 and am a member of the Green Bay group. I began my career in nursing at St. Vincent Hospital, Green Bay, years ago and worked for Sister Aquina. At the time there were Sisters in most departments. I got to know many of them and recognized how unselfishly they gave to others. Their presence was felt and I believe they made us better employees and the hospital a warm and caring environment.

My 41 years at St. Vincent were influenced by the Sisters' charism. I worked with Sister Janelle discussing patient's nutritional needs and she showed concern for the patients and was supportive. Sister Jonette also was a role model for nursing and I'm sure she taught and influenced all the nurses. There were so many others and I can't mention them all here.

I was introduced to the Associates by friends who also worked at the hospital and I began attending meetings with them. Sister Janice Schneider was my sponsor and she was supportive and taught me so much about St. Francis. She was available to me as I prepared to make my first commitment.

Being an Associate is an important aspect of my life. I try to follow the Franciscan example of a simpler way of living and to respect creation. I am most at peace being outside gardening and take time to listen to the birds and watch the antics of the squirrels. This is where I feel closest to God. It is important to me to be able to help others and volunteer for several things.

The Associate meetings, Living Faith booklet and Nancy's letters accompanying the booklet provide much to reflect on. The visits to the Motherhouse and the retreats are most inspiring. ❖

## Linda Mueller

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –  
2018**



I feel very fortunate to have had Sister Janelle Athorp as my sponsor. She invited me to join the Associates 16 years ago when Mike joined, but I said "Who will look after the children" who were pretty young then. Over the years she has become like a member of our family. When I underwent radiation therapy for cancer in 2010 at St. John's, it was always very comforting to be greeted by her at the door.

Over the years, Mike shared with me the best parts of his meetings or books. I looked forward to spending time doing retreats at the Chiara Center when I retired, and I did, at least for a few years. My goal for retirement is to grow ever closer to divine union with God. Our relationship with Sr. Janelle and Fr. Dennis Koopman continue to enrich our lives.

Like my sponsor, I am not a medical person. She was a dietician, and I love to feed people.

Formed by the principles of Ignatian Spirituality and Contemplative prayer, I start my day with prayer and try to remain open to the Spirit as to whom I serve each day. In the last few years, I run errands for and assist four older ladies from our parish. Also, I pray for fellow parishioners on the St. Agnes Prayer Line, and for anyone else who needs it. I help to feed those in need, and often I sew for others too - I just finished a few charity pillowcases. I love to pay back my care by sewing seat belt port pillows or cancer caps for those undergoing radiation. Feeding the hungry is important and I made quite a spread for Easter. And the hungry includes birds, chipmunks and squirrels. I tell Mike one cannot have a statue of St. Francis and not feed the birds. ❖



## Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



### Who Am I?

This year we have been called to invest in the planet. Pope Francis calls us to take action to live the encyclical of Laudato Si' not just talk about it. Thus we have the Laudato Si' Action Plan: a simple, community oriented way to en flesh the goals to help us figure out what kind of world we want to leave to those who come after us. We also consider sustainability and ask how we can live more simply, so that others may simply live.

We seem to have an extractive mentality - one that just wants to keep taking from Mother Earth. We are at a tipping point and beginning to realize that Mother Earth cannot keep up with our consumerism and materialistic mentality. How much do we need? Although we check our closets and see what we have not worn in years, we buy more. We need an ecological conversion and a global change to reverse what we are doing to the planet knowing that it takes one step at a time.

A way to address this is to read Luke 10: 25-37 – the story of the Good Samaritan. Find a picture depicting this Gospel and ask the graces of the Holy Spirit to enter into the scene. At various times be each character, even the beast who shouldered the victim to an Inn. You will experience integral ecology or your oneness with the other. You will be graced to experience the web of life and our inter-connectivity. You will discover that you are one who either creates a culture of life or a culture of death. As Pope Francis says, “We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather

one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.”

Pope Francis calls the Church the “field hospital” for the wounded world and we are called to be compassionate healers. St. Francis of Assisi did not separate creation and us but saw our oneness, so much so that he called each creature Brother and/or Sister. St. Francis spoke to the animals as dearly as he spoke to his followers with no distinction. St. Francis was a man of peace, poverty and creation who showed us how to commune with all creatures. So, let us pause, give thanks for Mother Earth and St. Francis, patron of ecology, and live our charism as he did: simply. Yes, live simply so that others can simply live. One day at a time. ❖

### Annual Green Bay Picnic



On June 8, 2022 the Green Bay Associates gathered once again for their annual picnic at the home of Associate Dan Dallich and his wife Rene. It turned out to be a beautiful evening on Green Bay and we were blessed with good food, fellowship, and the awesome beauty of God's creation. Pictured left to right: Pam Achten, Donna Schneeberger, Sister Annice, Dan Dallich, Nancy Davis, Debbie Buckman, Mary Wilquet, and Karen Skaletski. ❖

## Trees Root Us Through Life . . .

**By Jerrilyn Zavada  
(Streator)**



On June 5, 2010 a tornado roared through Streator, destroying homes, damaging power lines and shattering lives.

At the time, I worked as a reporter in The Times Newspaper's Streator office so I had an up close and personal view of the devastation.

Perhaps one of the biggest losses to the community that fateful night were the dozens of trees at Oakland Park that were sliced and splintered and uprooted. Trees that had become part of city lore. Trees that many grew up with through childhood, into adulthood and old age. Gone in minutes.

I suspect the reason so many were heartbroken over the loss of those trees is because of what they represented. Strength. Courage. Tenacity. Persistence. Familiarity.

A while back, I bought a Tree of Life rendering that hangs on the wall in my computer room. Always within sight, it reminds me of the universal symbol trees represent for so many people.

Think of trees when they are young. They pretty much look the same as each other. Like most newborn babies.

As they grow, however, their roots spread deep in the ground, and their appearance changes as they weather the forces of nature that hit them each in a unique way. By the time they have reached maturity, they look nothing like each other, each with their own life story to tell.

You could say the same thing about people.

As we grow through life, each one of us is assailed with storms, victories and life experiences that the rest of us aren't privy to. These experiences shape our lives and color the

eternal soul with which each one of us is endowed.

Trees are enchanting and archetypal. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for example, is at the center of the creation story in the Christian Scriptures, and the myth that surrounds it has shaped millions of lives.

Deep down in the ground of being, the roots of trees and the roots of our souls are intertwined.

I have been making it a point to spend more time on our deck this summer, where a lone red Maple tree stands in a yard once filled with two cherry trees, a plum tree and a pear tree that nourished my ancestors, and later me and my brothers and sister with the fruit of their lives.

That red Maple tree has grown into great beauty, with her branches full and her leaves vibrant.

I sit quietly on the deck, letting her speak to me of her wisdom, letting her tell me her story, as I struggle through storms in my own life.

The more time I spend with her, watching her leaves blow in the summer breeze, the stronger my spirit becomes.

"You got this," she whispers. "You got this."

I allow her words to sink in as my roots spread a little deeper and my branches grow a little stronger.

"No," I respond. "We got this."

- This piece was originally published in The Times Newspaper in Ottawa. **SPIRIT MATTERS** is a weekly column by Jerrilyn Zavada that examines spirituality. ❖

## IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

**ASSOCIATE SALLY STEINER** – (HIGHLAND)

BORN: 11-30-1929

COMMITMENT: 2004

DIED: 4-25-2022

**MAY SHE SHARE WITH JESUS THE JOY  
AND PEACE OF HEAVEN . . .**

## Around the Motherhouse . . .

### Foundation Day . . .

The Sisters celebrated Foundation Day on July 2, 2022. This day commemorates July 2, 1844 when Father Christopher Bernsmeyer, OFM, welcomed the first women who would become the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis.

Because of the continued COVID pandemic, the Sisters' celebration was small, yet festive. In our tradition, the Associates provided sweets to the Sisters on this special day. Mike and Margie Sgro and Nancy Davis (pictured right) gathered the items and prepared baskets for the dining room and Loretto Home. We are grateful to the Sisters to be part of their Associate community. ❖



### The Franciscan Friars Say “Good-Bye”



From left: Fr. Charlie Hart, Sr. Maureen O'Connor, and Fr. Dennis Koopman at the reception on June 22.

On June 30, 2022, the Franciscan Friars, Fathers Charlie Hart, Dennis Koopman, and Luis Runde, completed their service at St. Francis Convent and moved to new homes and ministries. For many years, various Franciscan Friars, have served the spiritual and sacramental needs of the Hospital Sisters. They were the chaplains for daily Masses, funeral Masses, and all the liturgical activities and events of the Sisters. The Friars also served the liturgical needs of the Associates at Commitments, Re-Commitments, picnics and Retreats. Their presence will be missed, and it is our prayer that they find peace and fulfillment in their new ministries. Thank you, Fathers, for your humble service.

On July 1, 2022, the Canon Regulars of St. John Cantius began their service as the chaplains for the Sisters. The Sisters welcome them and are grateful for their willingness to serve their spiritual needs. ❖



## The St. Gianna International Center

By Nancy Davis

St. Gianna Beretta Molla's name will become more familiar in the future because her daughter has announced that The St. Gianna Beretta Molla and Pietro Molla International Center for Family and Life will be established in Springfield, IL. It will be built near the Sisters' property that now is under the ownership of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. Dr. Gianna Emanuela Molla, daughter of St. Gianna, has chosen Springfield due to its central location in the nation as well as the proximity to St. Louis and Chicago. Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, has been instrumental in the project as well. The center is expected to bring tens of thousands of pilgrims to Springfield every year from all over the world. St. Gianna is known as the saint for mothers, families, healthcare workers, and the pro-life cause.

The St. Gianna International Center will include: a replica of the spousal home of Gianna and Pietro; a pilgrim center; a shrine church of St. Gianna; and a replica of the original Chapel of Our Lady of Good Counsel with an attached rectory. This is expected to be a peaceful place of prayer, learning, study, and spirituality for the pilgrims.

St. Gianna Molla was born October 4, 1922 in Magenta, Italy. She earned degrees in medicine and surgery from the University of Pavia, specializing in pediatrics. In 1952, she opened a clinic in Mesero where she met engineer Pietro Molla and they were married in 1955. In the next four years, they had three children: Pierluigi, Mariolina, and Laura. Two pregnancies following ended in miscarriage.

Early in her final pregnancy, doctors discovered that Gianna had both a child and a tumor in her uterus. She allowed the surgeons to remove the tumor but not to perform the complete hysterectomy that they recommended, which would have killed the child. Seven months later

in April 1962, Gianna Emanuela was born at the hospital in Monza, but post-operative complications resulted in an infection for her mother. The following week St. Gianna Molla died at home and was buried in Mesero. She was beatified in 1994 and canonized 10 years later. Her liturgical feast is celebrated on April 2.

The photo below is a painting in the Church at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, WI of St. Gianna and her children. ❖





Associate Office  
Hospital Sisters of St. Francis  
P.O. Box 19431  
Springfield, IL 62794-9431

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

### Upcoming Events . . .

**August Offering** - Thursday, August 18, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. will feature Mike Armstrong and Carol Coleman from the non-profit group Citizens for Climate Change. This will be a Zoom event and they will be talking about their organization and its activities on behalf of care of the earth. Please attend and learn about this grassroots organization and how it fits into the seven-year action plan for Laudato Si' which Pope Francis has called us all to participate.

**September Offering** - Our Annual Sisters/Associates Retreat is scheduled to take place at the Evermode Institute (formerly the Chiara Center) on Friday, September 16 – Saturday, September 17, 2022. If you plan to attend, please return the reservation form which you will be receiving in the mail. There will be the option for overnight stays in the guest rooms. Our retreat presenter will be Sr. Carrie Miller, a Sister of the Living Word. The topic for the retreat is: *On Holy Ground*. NOTE: There remains the possibility that this retreat will be virtual due to COVID. There is no way to know what the statistics will be until closer to the time. The safety of the Hospital Sisters remains the top priority. More information will be provided via mail, email, and Facebook.