

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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August 2023



Hospital Sisters of St. Francis Celebrate Sisters’ Jubilees

The Hospital Sisters of St. Francis celebrated the Jubilee, the anniversary of a Sisters’ profession of first vows, of seven Sisters on June 10 in St. Francis of Assisi Church. The Eucharistic Liturgy was concelebrated by Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop, Diocese of Springfield in Illinois, and Most Reverend Michael George McGovern, Bishop of Belleville, Illinois. Father Joseph Molloy, pastor of St. Joseph the Worker church, Chatham, IL, was the homilist. This year’s Jubilarians are Sisters Chaminade Kelley and Leonardine Sconzert, 75 years professed; Sisters Annice McClure, Josepha Schaeffer, and Ruth Brueggemann (posthumously), 70 years professed; Sister Marybeth Culnan, 60 years professed; and Sister Anna Phiri, 50 years professed. Pictured above are Sister Marybeth Culnan, Sister Anna Phiri, and Sister Annice McClure. ❖

The Sisters would like to extend their thank you for the Jubilee cards, prayers, notes and (for some) birthday greetings. May our Lord bless each of you.

Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Do You Have Attention Blindness?

It has been a very long time since I have come across a spiritual book that really moved my heart and soul. *Hunting Magic Eels: Recovering an Enchanted Faith in a Skeptical Age* by Richard Beck is one such book. In his book, Beck talks about how we have lost the capacity for enchantment, our ability to see and experience God as a living, vital presence in our lives. Five hundred years ago, there was a world that was very much enchanted, where God existed, and the devil was real. It was a world of holy wells and magical eels. But since the Reformation,

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Associate Office –

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at least in the West, the world has become increasingly disenchanted. Beck states that God has not changed; he continues to be everywhere, but we fail to see him. As Thomas Merton wrote in 1965, “If we abandon ourselves to God and forget ourselves, we see. God manifests himself everywhere, in everything – in people and in things and in nature and in events. The only thing is that we don’t see it.”

You might remember the gorilla experiment from the psychologist Daniel Simons that was featured on the internet a few years ago. The task was for the viewer to count how many basketball passes were made by students standing in a circle. At the end of the video, the viewer was asked if they noticed the dancing gorilla that came into the circle. What? How could I have missed a dancing gorilla? As humans, when we focus our attention on one part of reality, like counting the basketball passes, we miss other very obvious aspects. Our attention helps us to see but also can blind us. As a society, we have developed attention blindness when it comes to our relationship with God. Andrew Root, in his book, *The Pastor in a Secular Age*, writes “In the modern era our attention has been drawn away from what our ancestors thought was obvious: that a personal God acts and moves in the world. New forms of attention make us unable to see what was once obvious.” Faith is not a matter of belief but rather of perception. Faith is about enchantment or rather a re-enchantment; the intentional recovery of a holy capacity to see and experience God in the world.

Why has our world become disenchanted? We live in a world dominated by science and technology. If it can’t be proven by science, then it must not be true. With modern science we came to view the cosmos as a machine, one that operated on the law of physics and no longer a world that was a miraculous gift from

God that was looked upon with reverence and awe. Beck says, “Once it got ticking, the cosmos no longer needed God. The laws of physics took over. We sidelined the Love that moves the stars, and God began to die his slow death.”

To counteract this skeptical age, Beck suggests we once again embrace the wisdom of our liturgical traditions. As a Protestant, he discovered the beauty of the Catholic faith in the many sacramentals used to draw one’s attention to God and inspire spiritual devotion. He found his office filled with icons, crucifixes, candles, and statues of saints who inspire. For him, the physical reminders of God around him helped to bring some of the enchantment of God back to his reality. In addition to the material enchantments, he also found that liturgical traditions such as praying the Stations of the Cross and embracing the holy seasons of the Church helped him push against this pervasive disenchantment, this disappearance of God from our world. The Catholic Church does still require enchantment including the Eucharist and miracles needed for Sainthood.

Interestingly, Beck suggested that if one is looking for God’s enchantment to pay attention to St. Francis of Assisi. He used the kissing of the leper as a great example from his life. After the encounter, Francis realized that it was Christ he kissed, appearing in the guise of something he dreaded and feared. God’s enchantment drew Francis toward people he feared and loathed. God’s enchantments, just like with Francis, will take you to places where you have to deal with things you might find repulsive, if you are paying attention.

Do you have attention blindness or are you willing to attentively seek God in every place, every encounter, and every challenge? “The question is not what you look at, but what you see.” Henry David Thoreau ❖

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



The Gospel: Our Seamless Garment

Pope Francis ends Fratelli Tutti with these words: “Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty, reflected in all the peoples of the earth, so that we may discover anew that all are important, and all are necessary, different faces of the one humanity that God so loves” (F.T. 2020).

Historically, August is a reminder of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Maximillian Kolbe, St. Clare, and nuclear threats. Sadly, our television screens are bombarded with wars and violence in Ukraine, Sudan, Iraq, Peru, just to name a few. Fortunately, our young remind us that “the World/our Common Home is on fire” and we will have no future.

Who is in charge? Who is in power? The wealthy? The Legislators? Not so long ago, we celebrated the Holy Thursday Revolution ... a towel and a basin. Francis of Assisi addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel. Recall the theme of joy as we celebrate the Franciscan Centenary and the symbols of the crib and the rule (The Book of the Gospels). St. Francis showed us that goodness and gratuitousness are usually enfolded by the little ones...the servants who out of love give from their nothingness and give from their heart that is molded by Jesus. We are Gospel people! When will our eyes be open to recognize that all is a seamless garment and so we should stop our us-them mentality. Pope John XXIII urged us to care of the common good in Mater et Magistra:65

... the greatest good of all persons. Respect, care, competence, joy, and conversion do not exclude the leper, the refugee, immigrant, or the most vulnerable among us. It is time for us to recognize that the seamless garment of the Gospel is a cry/call to love and serve all... especially the most vulnerable, the ones who are unable to repay us. Justice and Peace are core to the Gospel. Pause this month and reflect how we are living the Holy Thursday mandate of service in our corner of the world. May we beg the graces to change and to advocate for a system of inclusiveness and commit to one action that will push back an injustice. We must hear and respond to the Cries. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Jan Steinhour (Springfield) who lost her husband on 6/2/2023.
- Cynthia Danenberger (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is being treated for medical problems.
- RuthEllen Davis (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Bob Horwath (Springfield) who lost his wife and our fellow Associate, Betty on 7/14/2023
- For our Associate Candidates who continue to discern their calling to this vocation.
- For our Hospital Sisters and Associates. ❖

IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

SISTER THERESE FANG, OSF

BORN 11-27-1920
FIRST PROFESSION 9-17-1946
DIED 5-28-2023

ASSOCIATE BETTY HOWARTH

BORN 12-28-1933
COMMITMENT YEAR 2000
DIED 7-14-2023

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

SPIRIT MATTERS:

**True beauty is
about who you are . . .**

**By Jerrilyn Zavada
Associate (Streator)**



Recently, my husband and I have twice had our meals paid for by secret benefactors as we have dined out. In addition, I have twice been on the receiving end of generosity in fast food drive-thru service, where the person in the car ahead of me paid for my bill.

In a world where everything is built on some kind of “exchange,” – as in, ‘you do this for me, and I will do that for you,’ – it is a breath of fresh air to benefit from the completely unearned kindness of a random stranger. It is more than a breath of fresh air. It is beautiful.

In my mind, these two separate concepts – beauty and generosity – are deeply intertwined. And, at the risk of being overly simplistic, they are the exact things needed to save humanity from careening off the cliff it seems hell-bent on heading for.

As I age, my life goals are becoming more concise. I recognize time is racing by, and I am not guaranteed this afternoon or tomorrow or next week. So, rather than setting my eyes on some vague accomplishment in the future, I am focusing on living each moment immersed in beauty. For me, this means recognizing my being exists within beauty, and beauty can be found everywhere I go. By doing so, I can experience wholeness and satisfaction wherever I am in the moment. If you venture outdoors, beauty is easy to find. It is in the colorful flowers, the singing birds, the starry skies, the recent rain showers, the green grass.

Many times, though, beauty is hidden. We might have to look a little deeper or from a different angle to see it beneath its otherwise rough exterior. When a natural disaster destroys a city,

the resulting shock and chaos appears to be anything but beautiful, as houses and businesses are ripped to shreds, and people’s lives are broken apart at their foundations. But, as someone who worked as a reporter at The Times newspaper in the aftermath of several major natural disasters in LaSalle County, I saw more than misery going on in the days and weeks that followed. Much more.

I saw people – individuals and groups – helping people. I saw these people helping pick up debris, cutting down fallen tree limbs, cooking food, serving food, handing out blankets, helping others fill out forms, and simply hugging the distraught and reassuring them, at least in that moment, that things would be okay. The photo staff at the newspaper captured many of these scenes, providing evidence of the prism of light humanity is capable of when selflessly reaching out to one another.

A dear friend of mine is on a mission to promote random acts of kindness. This phrase has been around for a long time, and to some, it can sound like a cliché. I like the idea of calling it something along the lines of living beautifully. Whatever we call it when we do something for another with no expectation of anything in return – even a thank you – it has the potential to quietly revolutionize the world in which we live.

How BEAUTIFUL it would be if instead of proverbially ranting in the streets that the sky is falling, more of us would make it our goal in life to perform at least one unselfish, unearned act or gesture for another each day. And none of this even must cost a dime. Smile at someone whose path you cross. Send someone a notecard via snail mail, just because. Tell someone how pretty that blouse looks on them. Give someone walking into the store the cart you just finished with. Tell the server at the restaurant you are eating at how much you appreciate their hard work. Get creative. The possibilities truly are endless.

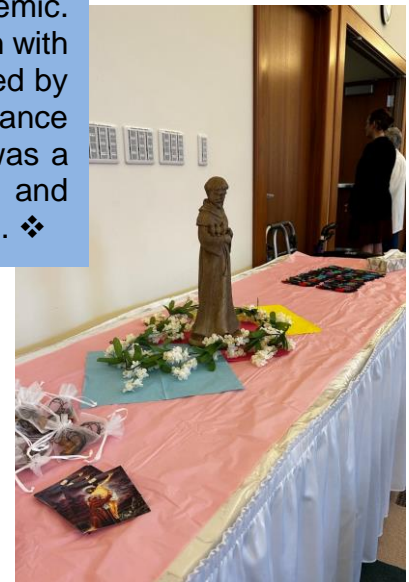
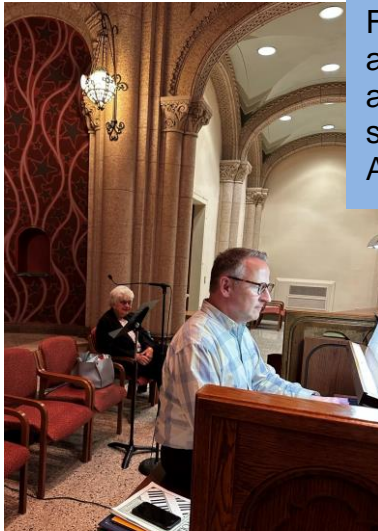
Being beautiful is my life’s ultimate aspiration... in fact, I wonder if the question I hear when I die

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2023 Sister and Associate Picnic . . .



On Thursday, May 18, 2023 the Hospital Sisters and Associates were able to gather again as a community after three years of the pandemic. We had Mass in St. Francis of Assisi Church with Fr. Richard Chiola as the celebrant, followed by a picnic potluck. There was a large attendance and joy was felt by all. In addition, there was a service to remember those Sisters and Associates who had died since March 2020. ❖



Foundation Day . . .

By Nancy Davis

The Sisters celebrated Foundation Day on July 2, 2023. This day commemorates July 2, 1844 when Father Christopher Bernsmeyer, OFM, welcomed the first women who would become members of the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis.

The Sisters were able to celebrate more fully in community this year after not being able to do that since the start of the pandemic. In our tradition, the Associates provided sweets to the Sisters on this special day. Mike and Margie Sgro and Nancy Davis (pictured) gathered the items and prepared baskets for the Sisters' dining room and Loretto Home. We are grateful to the Sisters to be part of their Associate community. ❖



Why I want to be an Associate of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis . . . (Formal Commitment – November 3-5, 2023)



**Kris Bents
Eau Claire, WI**

“I have been a part of the HSHS family for 16 years as a nurse and IT director. I have had the great opportunity to visit the Chiara Center several times throughout my time as a leader with HSHS. The first time I stepped into the church, I knew I needed to learn more about the history of the Sisters and how our organization became what it is today and caring for all people. I’ll never forget the first time I saw Sister Jonette in the ICU at St. Vincent Hospital in Green Bay. I just kept thinking that she looks like an angel in charge. Over the years I have learned about the importance of the HSHS colleagues needing to carry the torch going forward, in making sure the legacy of the Sisters and the mission continues. Learning how St. Francis and St. Clare lived has intrigued me and has guided me in this direction. Their stories have given me a different view on how deeply we can care for each other and the world we live in today. I am most grateful and honored to be considered a member of the Franciscan Associate group.”

“The three main reasons I want to be a Franciscan associate are because I want be part of a strong and active faith community; I have a desire to learn about spirituality and to grow spiritually; and I have a general feeling that I have always been Franciscan because I have always been servant oriented and seeked ways to help others. I always walk away from any contact with the Franciscan community of Sisters and Associates thinking this is just what I needed to hear and be a part of. The community’s joyful pursuit of spiritual knowledge, down-to-earth conversations, and acceptance of people of all faiths into the community makes it very appealing to want to be a part of as I continue my faith journey. Also, the history of the Sisters and the work they have done and continue to do in Springfield, Illinois and around the world is one of the most inspirational stories I have ever heard, and it makes me want to strive to be more and give more of myself to others.”



**Rick Kirchgerner
Springfield, IL**



**Tami Kirchgerner
Springfield, IL**

“I have been approached several times about learning about the Franciscan Associate Program. While I enjoyed being with people who I knew were Franciscan Associates, I really didn’t have a desire at that time to learn more about the program. Then my husband and I had the opportunity to attend a celebration at HSHS St. Mary’s Hospital in Decatur. We were surrounded by the lovely Hospital Sisters and got a chance to talk with them and learn more about the passion they had in their hearts and charisma they possessed in caring for the sick. The faith of the Sisters and other Franciscan Associates is contagious. After spending time with them, I felt a strong desire to get involved. The monthly zoom meetings, and more recently, the in-person gatherings, have been joyful and enlightening.”

Associate Candidates? . . .

Do you know anyone looking to deepen their faith? Is there someone in your life that could use a spiritual shot in the arm or that might have the desire to be part of something bigger than themselves? We will be starting a new class of candidates to become Associates of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis in the fall. If you know of anyone that might be interested, please have them contact Nancy Davis at 217-544-3386 x664. Is God calling you to reach out to someone with this invitation? Do you feel a slight nudge from the Holy Spirit to be an evangelizer? If you don’t ask, who will? Please pray about it and share our best kept secret: being Franciscan. ❖

“My grammar school teachers were the Joliet Franciscans who were very loving, kind and the best teachers...definitely good role models for me as a young girl. Of course, we had to take the obligatory trip to motherhouse in 8th grade and their spirituality stayed with me. Several years ago, one of my best friends told me about her journey in becoming an Associate. She was always excited about going to the meetings. I was intrigued by her commitment, and her peace and joy. I knew then it was something I would like to participate. I have known Nancy Davis since she was a child, so I contacted her when I found out that she was in charge of the program. The past year of formation has been different to say the least with only meeting on Zoom but I found I was still connecting with the other candidates and learning so much about the Franciscan way of life. I was overwhelmed when I finally got to go to the motherhouse and see the church. I know this will be part of my life from now on. “



**Marcia May
Springfield, IL**



**Dan Krug
Springfield, IL**

The Franciscans’ unsophisticated spirituality and the belief that God is close to creation, not just up in the sky far away, puts my beliefs in perspective and aligns me with the Franciscan way of life. I have always believed that God lifts us up through our connection with community and nature giving us spiritual excitement. This genuine connection between myself and the Sisters helps lead me to a meaningful and purposeful life.

“I’m bound to God; I’ve surrendered to His design. An infinite relationship that cannot be contained. A love that I can feel when the wind sweeps over my being and the sun covers my skin. I can see God in the sway of the trees, the gentle way the clouds dance over the sky and when the rain cleanses my soul. He makes all things new, and His love is without limits. I am forever grateful for the healing that has embraced me from brother sun and sister moon. Saint Francis felt connected to our earth and he lived his life sharing the goodness of the simple life. He left the security of his very rich life and vowed to live out God’s way for him. I live a simple life and feel that one of my vocations is to bring God to people. I have felt God’s peace on my heart over the last several years to build His kingdom in the Franciscan way: to love honestly, and humbly serving one another. I have a passion for people and one of my greatest enjoyments is to hear people’s stories. God has taught me to listen when in the presence of others - attend to them with the ear of my heart, and to sit with them in their joys and their pains. My hope and prayer are that people will see Him and not me. To radiate Christ and so then be a bridge for others to grow closer to God. God didn’t want Saint Francis to rebuild his physical church. The church that God wanted rebuilt was the inner spirit of each person. That is all I want to do. That is why I want to be Franciscan. The world and its ways have nothing to offer me but by living my life with God, I can in some small way share that goodness with everyone I meet. By doing my part, I can help live out Saint Francis’ mission, to help build up people’s souls. This life, this world, is anchored by so much darkness, doubt, worry, anxiety. My hope is to help multiply the light of God, soul by soul.”



**Brandi Rawlins
Springfield, IL**



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Spirit Matters: – Continued from page 4

won't be so much how well did you follow the rules, as it will be how much beauty did you sow while you were there?" This week, I am giving the last word to a man whose brilliant voice continues to echo through time and space, despite having died in 2008. These are words I return to often in my own life, to remind me of the principles of economics in the soul realm. "If you send out goodness from yourself, or if you share that which is happy or good within you, it will all come back to you multiplied ten thousand times. In the kingdom of love there is no competition; there is no possessiveness or control. The more love you give away, the more love you will have." – **John O'Donohue**, *Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom*. ❖

The Hospital Sisters are no longer using the former PO Box for mail. If you need to mail something, please address it to:
Hospital Sisters of St. Francis
4849 LaVerna Road
Springfield, IL 62707

Upcoming Associate Events. . .

August offering: On August 17, 2023, we will have "Night in the Museum" presented by Brian Blasco. The meeting will be held in the Sisters' Heritage Museum in Poverello Hall. He will be focusing on the relationship of the Hospital Sisters to Mary Todd Lincoln.

September offering: The Annual Sisters/Associate retreat will be held at the Evermode Institute on Friday, September 22 and Saturday, September 23. The presenter will be Sr. Janice Keenan, OSF. The retreat title is A Future Full of Hope. It is a retreat incorporating Jeremiah 29:11 and the book by Dr. Seuss - "O The Places You'll Go."