



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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Hospital Sisters of St. Francis Celebrate Jubilee

The Hospital Sisters of St. Francis celebrated the Jubilee, the anniversary of a Sister’s profession of first vows, of five Sisters on July 13, 2024, in St. Francis of Assisi Church. Pictured (left to right) are Sisters Mary Kelly, Christa Ann Struewing, Ines Schlathölter, Rosily Menachery, and Elreda Huser. The Eucharistic Liturgy was celebrated by the Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, Bishop, Diocese of Springfield in Illinois. ❖

Gratitude at Jubilee

The Sisters are grateful for the cards, prayers, and notes. May our Lord bless each of you. ❖

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Hospitality and the Cross: A Thin Space Part II

In the last edition, I wrote about hospitality being a gospel command to welcome the stranger. The cornerstone of all hospitality lies in the most essential of Catholic social teaching: every person is created in the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity. If one cannot embrace this teaching, then being hospitable is impossible and disingenuous.

Without compassion, we can welcome no one. If our hearts have become hardened by the world then we become unable to see ourselves in the situation of another. We also must be aware of being

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Associate Office –

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other-focused rather than self-focused. Many years ago, I read *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and the first sentence has remained with me: “It’s not about you.” If we are focused on ourselves, we miss the present moment and the blessings that might be revealed. Once we are aware, we must be willing to sacrifice time, talent, or treasure to offer hospitality to another. Underpinning that willingness is the need to be courageous, generous, and creative. That might require asking ourselves “How would it feel to be that person?”, “Who needs my welcome?”, or “Who has God placed in my path so that I may reflect his compassion?”

There can be obstacles to being hospitable and it does require sacrifice just as Jesus sacrificed from the cross. Pride, judgmentalism, and fear are the biggest obstacles but once we let go of our egos and embrace the uncomfortable, we will be changed.

There are some practical things we can do to be more hospitable in our lives that are not expensive or planned. All it requires is to be aware of those people or situations that God will place in your path.

1. Invite someone for a meal or dessert. (Don’t worry about having an overly clean house or a gourmet meal.)
2. Offer a hug to someone who may need it and least expects it.
3. When cooking or grocery shopping, make or buy extra and share with a lonely neighbor.
4. Buy inexpensive fresh flowers at the supermarket and gift them to someone.
5. Make eye contact and smile at those around you.
6. Send a handwritten note, text message, or email to someone who might need a word of encouragement.
7. Call that friend who is grieving, even if you don’t know what to say. Words are not important. The gesture is what matters.
8. Befriend a single person in your church or neighborhood and share homemade goodies or a meal with them.
9. Pay for the order of the person behind you in line.
10. Verbally thank the people who serve you frequently such as the cashier, server, or receptionist at the doctor’s office.
11. Give a homeless person a gift card or cash and make sure to ask his/her name.
12. Compliment others (even if it feels weird) – you never know how much someone may need affirmation of any kind.
13. Follow up if you notice someone missing from church or a regular meeting. You may be the only one to notice.
14. Take hospitality cues from kids - they do it the very best – who offer kisses and hugs or their food to others. They see with the eyes of innocence, not judgment.
15. Be spontaneous and listen to God’s lead.

As Associates of the Hospital Sisters who commit to be a healing presence in the world, we should be motivated to notice, stop, ask, listen, and act. With these steps, we can become not only hospitable people but ministers of healing too. We will be tending to the uprooted and nourishing loving connections wherever God places us.

“When we sacrifice comfort and convenience in order to show compassion to the hurting or vulnerable, we get to experience God’s grace sustaining us in new ways.” Carolyn Lacey ❖

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



A War Fought Piecemeal: what is our Role?

While speaking about Ukraine, Pope Francis noted that “We are in a Third World War fought piecemeal...! Daily we hear of so much violence in Sudan, Israel/Palestine, Syria, and at our borders that we become almost indifferent.” He then recalled “an image of a lady, in a fur coat and gloves, ignoring the cries for help from a lady on the street as she exited a restaurant.” Pope Francis tells us that being indifferent is an awful thing that can happen to us because it is the cultivation of a culture of death and not life. As we listen to the news, the war fought piecemeal is turning into a global conflict.

Let us remember the anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Let us not fail to turn our attention to the violence of handguns and assault weapons that are taking the lives of children and innocent adults in our country. John Dear, in his book *The Gospel of Peace*, says “Jesus is about peace, nonviolence, and is a disarming, healing presence.” This message confronts us with what it means to be a follower of Jesus and to cultivate life and not indifference.

In Dear’s book, non-violence is the absence of physical violence, the refusal to use violence. Nonviolence (without a hyphen) refers to something bigger, the force, the power and spirit of God’s love and truth at work in us and among us, communally and

globally, to disarm our hearts and world and welcome the fullness of God’s peaceful presence with justice and mercy on earth.

Do we believe that all life is sacred? That we have a common Father, Abba, and that all creation is to be revered? In pondering *Fratelli Tutti* or *Laudato Si’*, we will glimpse our oneness and interconnectivity with a creation that is revealing God’s presence. As we celebrate Saint Clare of Assisi this month, let us seek her to assist us in recognizing the other as a eucharistic presence.

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me. Most of all, may our hearts be disarmed. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- For our Associate Candidates who continue to discern their calling to this vocation.
- Gloria Guy (Decatur) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Denny Kirchengesner (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Tami Kirchengesner (Springfield) who is recovering from surgery.
- Bob Horwarth (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- For peace and justice in our country and for the election of leaders who will lead with integrity and with attention to the needs of all.
- For our world and especially for the people of Ukraine, Gaza, and those at our borders.
- For the Hospital Sisters and Associates ❖

SPIRIT MATTERS:

Give the Gift of Healing Space

**By Jerrilyn Zavada
Novak
Associate (Streator)**



You might be unfamiliar with the term “holding space,” but it is something from which we all can benefit.

The Centre for Holding Space website defines “holding space” as “being present, compassionate, and supportive of someone without trying to fix or change them or their circumstances.”

I can think of a couple of times in my life where others held space for me.

Many years ago, when I was hospitalized at BroMenn in Normal, IL, for severe depression and anxiety, a chaplain visited me. At the time, I was in a state of shock and confusion and wanted someone to make sense of this upheaval in my life.

She didn’t say much. In fact, I don’t remember what she said, at all. I think I was even a little disappointed that she didn’t say more.

But I do remember she was a comforting presence, and that she listened to me with attentiveness and compassion.

Another time, I had recently been permanently laid off from my job. A longtime family friend invited me to her home, where she has a massage therapy business. She gifted me with a massage, which helped ease the emotional tension stuck in my body.

But perhaps more importantly, she was simply present – fully present and attentive – throughout our entire visit. She listened and gave me space to naturally express my complicated feelings. I

drove home that day feeling energized and rejuvenated.

If you have ever been in the presence of someone who naturally emits healing energy, then you will understand a bit of my experience that day. Often, those who are the best at offering the healing gift of holding space are those who have endured the fire of transformation in their own lives.

Heather Plett, the co-founder of The Centre for Holding Space, describes what it means to hold space: “Holding Space is what we do when we walk alongside a person or group on a journey through liminal space. We do this without making them feel inadequate, trying to fix them, or trying to impact the outcome. We open our hearts, offer unconditional support, and let go of judgment and control.”

Neither of these women could change my circumstances, but they both gave me a gift more durable and long-lasting than the shifting changes of my life. They gave me the experience of being listened to, seen, and held in a safe, healing space. And that experience taught me more about how to offer the gift of holding space for others.

Now, I am a pretty good listener, but I am nowhere near perfect in the practice – and it is a practice – of holding space.

Though I have the best of intentions, my default is to offer some kind of helpful advice or life experience to ease someone else’s mess. I often don’t realize I’ve done this until after the words have come tumbling out of my mouth, and I chide myself for ‘making it all about me.’

I recently completed an eight-month online program through the Shalem Institute in Washington, D.C., called Heart Longings. As part of the program, we engaged in spiritual direction in small groups and on an individual basis. We also were assigned to break-out groups during our monthly Saturday morning meetings on Zoom.

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Coming Home:

By Associate Rosie Kuhlman (Decatur)



It had been 45 years since my husband, John, and I left the Philippines – my home country and the place where I spent the first 32 years of my life.

In February, we returned to visit my birthplace: San Felipe, Zambales, Philippines (40 miles north, of what used to be U.S. Naval Base, Subic Bay). Our 45-year-old son, Bobby, who has special needs made the trip with us. Bobby has been involved in the Special Olympics for many years and is a global messenger and athletic leader for Special Olympic Illinois.

About two weeks before our visit, Bobby shared that he would like to visit the Special Education Program of San Felipe Elementary School West, a school that I attended. I contacted the school and was pleased to learn that the principal was my second cousin. She organized the visit of 35 students along with their families with us and Bobby was delighted. He had backpacks and other gifts, courtesy of Special Olympics Illinois, to share with the students and the mayor was present to offer appreciation for what Bobby had done as this was the first time that anything had been done extra special for this group of students. Bobby's work with Special Olympics was instrumental in his desire to do outreach to other special needs boys and girls.

At this time, and with God's grace, we are planning another visit in December so Bobby can continue this type of service. ❖



Why I want to be an Associate of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis . . . (Formal Commitment – November 1-3, 2024)



Rick Haberkorn
Springfield, IL

“I have been employed by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis for over 30 years and in 2022 I participated in the HSHS Franciscan Pilgrimage. Being a long-term employee and seeing the Sisters aging, combined with the impact of the pilgrimage, I am inspired to try to better connect with the Sisters’ Franciscan history. By understanding their history, I hope to become a better servant leader employee and becoming an Associate will help me continue this development process.”

“I am very happy to be on my way of becoming a Franciscan Associate. I worked directly with the Sisters in Loretto Home for eight years where I was blessed and touched by the sisterhood of Saint Francis. I was given the wonderful opportunity to witness firsthand the Franciscan ways and values. When living these ways and values, I feel close to God and serene in my soul. This is the way that God has chosen for me.”



Kathleen Walden
Springfield, IL

Associate Committee By Nancy Davis

Since the development of the Lay Associate Program in 1988, there has been a committee of Sisters and Associates that serves in an advisory role to the Associate Coordinator. The committee’s purpose is to provide input in the planning and implementation of the Associate relationship with the Hospital Sisters. The committee meets four to six times per year, or as needed, and each member can serve up to three, three-year consecutive terms. When a member’s term is completed, the Associate coordinator and leadership liaison discuss potential members who then receive an invitation. The purpose of the committee is to: plan functions for the Associates, revise the handbook as needed, assist the coordinator in implementing programs; and assist with any other duties. The current members are Sisters Anna Phiri (leadership liaison), Jamesine Lamb, Marilyn McCormick, and Ann Pitsenberger; Nancy Davis (Coordinator and chairperson), Mike Sgro, Mike Mueller, and Chris Schmit. ❖

Your assistance is needed: Associate Candidates

Do you know anyone looking to deepen their faith? Is there someone who could use a spiritual boost or has the desire to be part of something bigger than themselves? We will start a new class of candidates to become Associates of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis in the fall. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please have them contact Nancy Davis at 217-522-3387, ext. 664. Is God calling you to reach out to someone with this invitation? Do you feel a nudge from the Holy Spirit to be an evangelizer? Please pray about it and then share the gift of being Franciscan. ❖

A Prayer for Leaders to Be Elected

Leadership is challenging.

God, let them be the ones to live it with justice.

Leadership is not about watching and correcting.

Jesus, let them remember to actively listen and connect to all people.

Leadership is not about telling people what to do.

Spirit, let them find out what marginalized people need.

Leadership is less about the love of power,

And more about the power of love.

As we continue to pray for those who will undertake the role of leader,

Let all be affirmed by the servant leadership we witness in your Son, Jesus.

Let all walk in the path God has set and let those who will lead, do so in the Spirit's will.

Let our greatest passion be compassion.

Our greatest strength, love.

Our greatest victory, the reward of peace.

Amen.

Adapted prayer by leaders of Midwest Kindred Spirits July 2024 ❖

Spirit Matters: – Continued from page 4

One of the parameters of these sessions was that we were to listen without interrupting. We were also not to offer our advice, but rather to spend time together in silence and prayer and offer any insights that might have arisen during that time.

I became keenly aware early on how much I tried to interject my own life experience into these situations.

Still, I think I did improve on this throughout the eight months and found myself recognizing when I was about to say something unnecessary, and then not saying it.

When people are in a state of turmoil, the best gift we can offer them is our quiet, listening presence and a safe space. Not platitudes, not advice, not a quick fix.

Because there are no quick fixes when someone you love has terminal cancer, or one of your parents or children has died, or you are suffering from a serious illness or loss, there is hope: one broken human sitting with another, holding space, and maybe even holding their hand or giving them a meaningful hug, can facilitate the long, arduous healing journey to transformation that grief of any kind requires.

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 JOSEPHA SCHAEFFER, OSF

BORN 6-29-1932

FIRST PROFESSION 6-13-1953

DIED 6-23-2024

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

FOR FOUNDATION DAY . . .



candy was shared with the Sisters as they celebrated Foundation Day on July 2, 2024. Their community was founded on July 2, 1844.



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

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Associate Events. . .

August offering: On **Thursday, August 15, 2024**, at 6:30 p.m., Erica Smith, Executive Director of HSHS Mission Outreach, will speak about Mission Outreach and its assistance to Ukraine. We will meet in the Convent Family Room.

September offering: The annual Sister/Associate retreat will be held on **Saturday, September 21, 2024**, in Bonaventure Hall at the Evermode Institute. It is a **one-day** retreat that begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends with Mass at 4:00 p.m. The presenter will be Angela Senander, Ph.D., whose topic is Living the Franciscan Charism in our daily lives, in a Fractured World. She is a scholar of ethics and the Catholic Church in public life. She also is an author of several books and has taught at Washington Theological Union and Boston College and previously served at HSHS as the System Director of Formation.