



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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November 2021



Autumn Is Here . . .

The season of autumn at the Mother house is one of great color and beauty. It is composed of stately trees getting ready to shed their leaves and shrubbery turning very colorful. A time to reflect. (Photo from a fall of the past) ❖

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

The Common Good

Among the things that the seemingly never-ending pandemic has brought to the forefront is a reminder of the concept of common good. What is the common good? Pope John XXIII defined it in his encyclical Mater et Magistra (On Christianity and Social Progress) as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to a member of a team, both the individual and the team’s success depend on one another. For the common good to be achieved no one on the team may reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.” For me, to make it simpler, it is the concept of personal sacrifice for the good of the

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Associate Office –

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whole. Much like being sacrificed or disregarded. The principle of the common good reminds us that we are responsible for each other. Our Christian faith, and more specifically the key principles in Catholic Social teaching, include human dignity and the common good. They go hand in hand and cannot be considered without the other. In an ideal world, every group in society must take into account the rights and aspirations of other groups and the well-being of the human family. Well, obviously we are pretty far away from this ideal. So, what are some of the obstacles that make this principle so hard to bring about? First, the very idea of a common good is inconsistent with a pluralistic society such as ours. There are about as many ideas about what is right and what constitutes the good life as there are people. Second, there is the problem of those who take the benefits that the common good provides while refusing to do their part to support it. Third, is the problem of individualism which seems to have taken the front row seat in the past couple years. Historically, our country places a high value on individual freedom, personal rights, and allowing each person to do their own thing. It is extremely difficult in many cases to convince someone to sacrifice some of their freedom, their personal goals, or self-interest for the sake of the common good. Last, there is the problem of unequal sharing of burdens. Many times maintaining a common good requires individuals or particular groups to bear costs that are much greater than others. Despite these obstacles, as Christians it is our moral duty to continually strive for this common good. “The promotion of the common good is a duty of justice that falls on each citizen. And for Christians, it is also a mission.” Pope Francis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us to put the common good ahead of individual rights, whether we like it or not. We have had to sacrifice our freedom to travel freely, to attend sporting events, to gather with family and friends, life-as-usual, school-as-usual, and more. This has been significantly more difficult for some than others. Maybe this pandemic is a stark reminder that no one is an island. We were all made for community that is mutually interdependent. The pandemic

seems to have brought back, in the face of so much divisiveness, the importance of caring for friend, family, and the stranger. Maybe God is using this to bring his name back into our public places and encouraging people to recognize just how totally dependent we are on him, as well as each other. While in Africa I witnessed a deep sense of the common good in the villages we visited. They care for each other and if one family is particularly destitute, the others sacrifice for their sake, even if they have little. This is just what they do, for the good of the community. I sure would like to see more of that in our country, as I know that these are the principles that made it great.

How willing are you to take one for the team? When was the last time you sacrificed something important for the good of someone else? This should not be a hard question to answer. Let's all strive diligently once again for the common good.

“A nation is formed by the willingness of each of us to share in the responsibility for upholding the common good.” Barbara Jordan ❖

In Loving Memory . . .

Sister Celestine Rivera

Born: 02/14/1929

First Profession: 10/04/1953

Died: 07/26/2021

Associate Karen Rehkemper (Highland)

Born: 07/20/1948

Commitment: 2018

Died: 09/13/2021

Associate Joanne Sea (Decatur)

DOB: 1/26/1933

Commitment: 2000

Date of Death: 10/18/2021

Associate Sheila Weber (Highland)

Born: 06/14/1952

Commitment: 2018

Died: 08/18/2021

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

Annual Associate/Sisters Retreat

Everything Is Beautiful

By Nancy Davis

The 2021 Annual Associate/Sister retreat was held on Saturday, September 18, 2021 as a virtual event due to the pandemic. The guest presenter was Sr. Maureen Irvin, OSF. Sr. Maureen is one of our Associates and is a Sister of St. Francis of Oldenburg, IN. We were excited to welcome Sr. Maureen, who served as the Justice and Peace Coordinator for the Hospital Sisters from 2004 to 2012. The topic for the day was: Everything Is Beautiful. The day was inclusive of three presentations by Sr. Maureen but also had small group sharing, time for prayer and reflection, and even poetry writing. Who knew we were all poets in one sense or another? We had a group of about 40 Associates and Sisters who participated, and it was a wonderful day together, despite not actually being together in person. Here are some of the comments from the day.....

Some thoughts I will carry with me from this virtual retreat.....

- “The first book of God is actually the Sacred Book of Nature.”
- “Franciscan thought and life are not dampened by the pandemic.”
- “I can find beauty everywhere in places and things I didn’t think of before”
- “I am beautiful.”
- “Never pass up the opportunity to enjoy nature’s beauty – it is the handwriting of God.”
- “I cannot afford to wallow in sadness or be overwhelmed. Find a little spot and create a little space to listen.”
- “Amazing how technology helped bring us together, in spite of COVID, to be made aware of so many of God’s beautiful creations.”
- “I need to try to see others with new eyes.”

- “Beauty does not require words or language.....”
- “It is easier to see beauty in others than yourself.

Sister Trudy O’Conner, OSF wrote a poem during the retreat and is included below:

God Loves All His Creatures

God loves all His creatures.

God loves all His creatures. Every creature is a reflection of one of His characteristics.

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God loves all His creatures. Every creature is a reflection of one of His characteristics. All creatures were created by God’s love. If we truly love God, we love every one of His creatures. All creatures are our brothers and sisters. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Mary Lewis (Springfield) who lost her daughter-in-law
- Debbie Waitkus (Springfield) being treated for medical problems
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is dealing with multiple medical problems
- For the new candidates making their first commitment on November 5-7, 2021
- For all our deceased Hospital Sisters and Associates during the month of November
- All individuals suffering from the COVID-19 virus and those who are struggling emotionally, financially, or spiritually from this pandemic
- For all our Hospital Sisters and Associates

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



November Rememberings

November is dedicated to saints and souls, Thanksgiving and Advent. We also begin gearing up for Christmas and celebrating LIFE. Yet, we are still under the shadow of a pandemic... the invisible teacher that reminded us of our interdependence and need for one another. A cruel teacher at times, one that seemed to lack mercy... choose life or death. So much for each of us to recall, remember and to celebrate! Yes, celebrate! But whatever comes to our mind as we remember, it will be of naught if we do not have a home! Our common home is in danger and is crying out. Some say, it is code red.

Let us pause and remember our oneness with creation. Let us see creation as our planet and all that live on it. Let us remember our beginnings: God said, "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters (stewards/caretakers) of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle and all the wild beasts and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth ... indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1: 26 ff.). Somehow, we have placed LIFE into compartments and seasons and have come to the conclusion that each one has an end. We fail to see the seamless garment of life, the oneness and the continual evolution of life. Transitions are simply movements forward from the beginnings of life. We are always moving on to and with our God. Yes, St. Paul reminds us that Christ is the head of creation. "He is the image of the unseen God and the first-born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven, and on earth... because God wanted all perfection to be found in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him, ...when he

made peace by the blood of the cross" (Colossians 1: 15, 19-20).

Oliver Wendell Holmes captured these evolving movements in a wonderful poem. The message is stated in the final stanza of the poem, "Build thee more stately mansions" (Holmes: The Chambered Nautilus). The lesson is that our growth ought to parallel that of the nautilus. The individual should continue to grow spiritually throughout his lifetime. It is a symbol of nature's grace in growth, expansion, and renewal. It is also a symbol of order amidst chaos as reflected in its spiral precision. How often we are reminded and remember from our Bible stories, that God's presence is in the chaos, hovering over the chaos and through the Spirit, drawing forth Life. Yes, we remember! We celebrate each moment.

We must see with God's graces, our common home and us as one, not as us and it. "The ecological crisis we face is due largely to the way we see, or rather, the way we don't see the world around us" (Seeing Differently: Franciscans and Creation P.131). God entered into the world as one of us, fully human and like us in all things but sin. Creation is sacred; creation is a sacrament, alive, revealing God to us, and to ourselves, participating in IT. Yes, as Manly Hopkins, S.J., stated, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God." Lord, open my eyes, that I may see!

The English romantic poet, Elizabeth B. Browning, in her epic poem wrote: "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; But only he who sees, takes off his shoes, the rest sit around it and pluck blackberries, and daub their natural faces unaware, more and more from the first similitude."

(#86 Aurora Leigh, Elizabeth B. Browning)

May we be thankful and remember this November that we are a strand in the web of life... a thread if you will, but a vital one. One so important that Jesus invites us to weave it into the tapestry of life. A thread that Jesus was

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Staying Franciscan . . .

Bob & Betty Horwath

(Springfield)

Year of Commitment – 1991



When we moved back to Illinois from California after we retired from our jobs, we met with our pastor at St Al's church in Springfield indicating that we would be open to getting involved in volunteer work. We walked away from that meeting as the couple coordinating the Over 50 Club at St. Al's and checking out an invitation from an organization called (Caregivers Interfaith Volunteers). We met with Mary Caroline Mitchell, the leader of Caregivers, and ended up enrolling St. Al's in the program helping older adults maintain their independence. (e.g., driving to doctor appointments, food shopping, general home or apartment repair, etc.).

The sponsorship of Caregivers was St. John's Hospital via a grant of \$10,000 from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Faith In Action program. We are telling this because Sr. Ann Pitsenberger was a very active member of Caregivers. We were so fortunate to meet her as she encouraged us to come out to the Motherhouse for Mass and lunch. We agreed, and were welcomed by a wonderful group of Sisters, each smiling and welcoming us to their home. After a few months of working with Sr. Ann at Caregivers, she invited us to attend a Franciscan Associate Meeting. That did it! We became Associates after a year of preparation, and Sr. Ann's sponsorship in 2000.

Becoming Franciscan Associates and working in the Caregiver movement was such a natural pairing of the love and example of St. Francis, that we thrived for many years. The Caregiver organization has since ended, as many of those involved were unable to continue because of advanced age, but we still continue to be

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RuthEllen Davis

(Springfield)

Year of Commitment – 1991



My journey as an Associate of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis began by reading an article in the *Catholic Times* inviting laity to join the Hospital Sisters through an Associate relationship by bonding with the Sisters and Associates in community and embodying the Sisters' healing charism through our own individual lives. I was drawn to this invitation of gospel living, and after a period of instruction, I made my formal commitment to the Community of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis in Springfield, IL in 1991.

My sponsor was Sister Mary Kelly whom I met and worked with in Pastoral Care at St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur. Our friendship continues to this day, and her spirit of joy that I so much admire, inspires me to live joyfully based on the life and teachings of St. Francis of Assisi.

In 2005, I was chosen to become the Associate Coordinator and retired in 2018. It was the best profession I ever had, because by working with the Sisters and Associates as closely as I did, I grew in my spirituality and my Catholic faith. I jokingly say to others regarding this profession, "You won't survive working with the Sisters and Associates if you don't grow up." I am forever grateful for the Sisters who entrusted me with this ministry.

My journey as a Franciscan Associate continues to enrich my spirituality. I recognize more and more the Spirit's call to holiness or wholeness by striving to live out Franciscan values of prayer/contemplation, conversion, poverty (depending on God for everything), and humility. This journey of wholeness is reflected by daily practice of contemplative prayer, monthly visits

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Maintaining Faith Through Spiritual Love . . .

By Jerrilyn Zavada
(Streator)



Year of Commitment –
2019

Come, Spirit of peace, simplicity, wisdom and love. Guide my words and my actions today and every day. ***

I was born in the early 70s and raised Catholic in an elementary school and parish whose religious role models and authorities used methods that seemed to reflect an understanding of God, less as love, guide and protector and more as ruler, judge and punisher.

All of us reflect the Divine to others based on many factors, including our own religious upbringing or lack thereof; our understanding of that education; as well as our personal life experiences. Over the years, I have come to understand those religious role models were not intentionally seeking to hurt or harm; they were teaching in good faith their understanding of God and religion, one that might have even provided them comfort in its structure and definitive practices.

I am one of the few of my peers now who still practices her Catholic faith, albeit a reformed and maturing and questioning faith. Due to my unique personality, I grow less by specific and definitive answers and more by being open to mystery and possibilities. Most of my classmates, siblings and cousins, no longer practice the faith, at least in public. As someone who is blessed to be able to look at situations from different angles, I can understand why they might have chosen to walk away. But, in the early stages of my adult journey, I judged them for that, and felt it was my duty to get them back to Church so they would not spend eternity in hell.

I no longer do that. Instead, I try to meet them where they are, as eternal souls and human beings with unique life stories and experiences, I know nothing about. To relate to them not as someone whose faith in God is borne out of fear (for that is not true faith), but someone whose faith in a benevolent Being is based on a lifetime of being loved and nurtured tenderly in all my weakness and loss. As someone who has experienced much personal suffering and found a deep love and tenderness in the Suffering Servant himself. Just like our friend and spiritual role model Francis of Assisi did.

The God of Love pervades every part of the New Testament, and read as a whole, pervades the entire Christian Scriptures.

The God of Love, the origin of all that is, is not and cannot be limited to any human creation or concept. That God of Love cannot fit into any box, and in my mind, probably shudders at the thought of being put into a box.

Creativity Itself, the One which playfully, yet purposefully, flings galaxies and planets and stars and souls of all species into the universe confined to a box? I don't think so.

Look at it this way. If our individual souls are eternal and fathomless mysteries, how much more of a Fathomless Mystery is the One who created each one of us as a unique beat of its heart? We cannot know the Ineffable in its entirety. It is just not possible for us now.

But, when we remove all the restrictions that have been placed around this Omniscient Being by perhaps well-meaning, but misguided human constructs, we come to know not only that Being as Love, but ourselves as reflections of that Love. And when we know that kind of Love, we can live and model that Love to others. ***

Come, Spirit of peace, simplicity, wisdom and love. Guide my words and my actions today and every day. ❖

2021 Jubilarians . . .



Five Sisters celebrated their Jubilee on October 10 in St. Clare of Assisi Adoration Chapel. Pictured: Sisters Therese and Marianna (75 years), Sister Arlene (70 years), and Sisters JoAn and Mary Immaculate (65 years). ❖

The Sisters would like to extend their "Thank you" to everyone for the Jubilee cards, prayers, notes, and greetings. May the Lord bless each of you.

Woman of Distinction Awards

By Nancy Davis

Two of the Associates have recently been named as recipients of the 2021 Women of Distinction award by the Diocese of Springfield. Kathy Litz, of Decatur, was recognized by her parish, Holy Family, in Decatur and Barb Butler by her parish, Christ the King, in Springfield. On June 5, 2021, a Mass and Celebration was held at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield to honor this year's recipients. The event was hosted by the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Bishop Paprocki was the principal celebrant of the Mass and presenter of the awards. The Hospital Sisters and the Associates extend our congratulations to both of these women and thank them for all that they do in their parishes and in the Associate community. ❖

RuthEllen Davis Continued from page 5

to my Spiritual Director, Sister MaryAnn Falbe, practicing awareness, self-love, and acceptance, volunteering at the Good Samaritan Inn in Decatur and Weekend Food Bags for children in Sullivan. Also, I co-facilitate Spirit, a women's spiritual group, and belong to Soul, where we read and discuss spiritual literature.

In the meantime, my husband Jeri and I, care for and respect the beauty of God's creation by tending to our yard. In addition, we play golf, enjoy an afternoon libation and express hospitality to our friends and family who visit our home. Our goal is to live a simple lifestyle and not get too bogged down with life's demands. ❖

Bob & Betty Horwath Continued from page 5

involved in the Associates, albeit from a distance because of Covid restrictions.

We are pleased to continue our close relationship with Sr. Ann, our Sisters and many of the Associates under the able leadership of Nancy Davis. The Franciscan Associates have so enriched our lives and faith. Thank you, St. Francis, Sr. Ann and all the Sisters for your example of love and commitment! ❖



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Justice and Peace Connection

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willing to die for so that we could choose to participate in our journey with Him. We may need an ecological conversion to see and to live with the heart of Jesus and that of St. Francis of Assisi to reverence all of creation. Like St. Francis of Assisi, may we have such an intimate relationship with creation that all become brothers and sisters, both human and non-human. May this remembering, this conversion, tame the wolf of indifference within us and impel us to make some small lifestyle change that will help sustain the planet for years to come. So stop, pause and thank God for the beauty of creation, for the light to see beyond our wild consumption and consumerism and the graces to change. Perhaps one small step at the Thanksgiving table is to invite each family member to name one thing in creation that excites them and let us give praise to God, for Sister air, Sister water, Brother fire and Sister mother earth. And, like the nautilus, may our reverence of all that is, empower us to build “a more stately mansion”, for those who come after us. Laudato Si' ❖

Upcoming Events . . .

November we be the Wisconsin small groups November 9, 10, 11, 2021. Topic: Living Lovingly in the Franciscan Spirit.

Thursday, November 18, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. Fr. Richard Chiola will be presenting on Advent. Fr. Chiola is always a crowd favorite and never fails to present something very thought provoking in his presentations.

December Advent/Christmas plans are still pending. Updates will be provided via email or snail mail.