



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 2022



Autumn Returns to the Midwest announcing Winter is on its way . . .

Autumn once again returns to the stations of the cross located on the grounds of the Motherhouse. This area just outside of the buildings is very beautiful and relaxing as the leaves fall from the trees and nature prepares for the winter around the corner. This area, near Regina Coeli, while always beautiful, takes on an even more contemplative and prayerful essence as the leaves fall and nature prepares for its winter transition. (Photo submitted by Nancy Davis). ❖

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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Are You an Achiever or a Receiver?

During a great trial in your life have you ever found yourself thinking, "Jesus, didn't you see how long I have been praying for this?" or "I have been merciful, Lord, haven't you noticed?" or "I did 10 more rosaries this week, doesn't that count for something?" We hear Peter ask Jesus a similar question in Matthew 19:27 after he tells the disciples that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter heaven. He asks, "We have given up everything and followed you. What will there be for us?" He in essence

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Associate Office –

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wants to know what their reward will be for their faithfulness. Having this attitude, whether consciously or not, of achieving what we want through our prayer and action is not what a life in God is about. To borrow a line from Fr. Mark Strobel: “Life in God is received, not achieved.” To achieve means to accomplish or attain something as a result of exertion. The word achieve is a verb, and generally it is based on personal effort. The need to achieve is embedded in our capitalistic culture as we teach our young people that if you work hard enough you will succeed, thus placing success or failure clearly on the individual’s efforts. If one loses, they didn’t try hard enough. We can sometimes get caught up in this trap as we journey in our spiritual lives, not remembering that God is the one in control, not us. This attitude decreases our dependence on God and puts the onus on ourselves. However, just as a glass that is filled to the brim, when we are too full of ourselves and our desires to achieve we have no room for God. Our days are too overwhelmed with the doing and not with the being. We miss what God is trying to give us because we never stop long enough to receive him.

If we live our lives of faith trying to receive instead of achieve, it too requires action on our part, but it means something totally different. Meanings of the word receive include: to act as a receptacle or container; to assimilate through the mind or senses; to permit to enter; to welcome or greet. These all contain elements of uncertainty and vulnerability. It might mean waiting for something that we don’t know is coming or to have a change of heart we know was from a divine encounter or revelation. To receive rather than achieve is on God’s terms, not ours. A receiver stops to smell the roses and is completely dependent on God. To become that receiver, rather than the achiever, takes a change of heart and God’s grace. If one is a fixer or a person that thrives on control, to reverse that natural tendency is even more

difficult. It takes awareness of the need to change and lots of prayer.

The final verse of chapter 19 of Matthew says, “But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.” This is a stark reminder that those who have achieved much in their lives and have been rewarded may find themselves on the side lines – while God is filling the hungry, lifting up the lowly, and casting down the mighty.

So, whose boat would you rather be in, Peter and the disciples, looking for credit for the good they have done, or Jesus’ boat with the one “who is able to accomplish far more than we can ask or imagine? (Eph 3:20)” ❖

In Loving Memory . . .

Sister Rachel Jost, OSF

Born: 4/25/1927

First Profession: 6/13/1949

Died: 10/04/2022

Sister Jolinda Snyder, OSF

Born: 1/9/1928

First Profession: 6/13/1949

Died: 10/22/2022

Associate Eileen Sleeth (Decatur)

Born: 6/2/1926

Commitment: 2003

Died: 9/5/2022

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

Wood Carving Restored

By Brian Blasco

The observance of Transitus and the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 3 and 4, is a special time throughout the world for Franciscans. Here at St. Francis Convent, the observance comes with a unique piece of sacred art from the Sisters' history.

On September 10, 1939, a new St. John's Hospital, Springfield, was dedicated and it included a large chapel for the Sisters, patients and visitors. Among the stained glass, paintings, and statues was the wood altar that included a rendering of the death of St. Francis in the base. At an unknown time, the wood carving was painted with various colors to enhance the figures and setting.



In 1970, amid a major hospital construction project in which the chapel would be rebuilt, the carving was removed and put in a storage room under St. Francis of Assisi Church at the Motherhouse. 23 years passed and it was then that Sister Sherrey Murphy, Motherhouse Administrator, found the carving and had it restored by a company in Bloomington, Illinois. In the restoration, the colored paint was removed and the wood was cleaned and stained.



Originally, the center of the carving included a plaque with this phrase: Das meine vielgeliebten brüder ist die erbschaft welche ich hinterlasse: habet die liebe bewahret die demuth euer reichthum ist die freiwillige armuth (This, my beloved brothers, is the inheritance which I leave you – have love, cherish humility, your treasure is free-willed poverty). Unfortunately, age has faded the plaque and the words are no longer visible. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Karen Benjamin (Springfield) who lost her mother, Florence Benjamin, on 9/26/2022. May she rest in peace.
- Jerry Harcharik (Streator) who lost his brother, Eugene Harcharik, on 9/25/2022. May he rest in peace.
- Lynn Harcharik (Streator) who lost her uncle, Earl McCarthy. May he rest in peace.
- Peggy Oravic (Highland) who lost her sister, Evelyn Rommerskirchen, on 10/11/2022. May she rest in peace.
- Pat Wright (Streator) who lost her niece. May she rest in peace.
- Larry Burgett (Decatur) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Debbie Waitkus (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- For our Associate candidates who continue to discern their calling to this vocation.
- For our Hospital Sisters and Associates.

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



November Remembering's

November is dedicated to saints, souls, Thanksgiving, and Advent. Couple this with mid-term elections and the fate of democracy. We also begin gearing up for Christmas and celebrating life. This is 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. Laudato Si action plan reminds us to act, not just pray, but do something to save our planet.

Let us pause and remember our oneness with creation. Let us see creation as our planet and our interconnectivity with 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.). Our oneness tells us not to compartmentalize seasons and life... life is evolving and transitioning constantly. 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. 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).

This November we have mid-term elections, and we are called by our faith to take responsibility for the common good not just the welfare of the rich. Who are the most vulnerable in our society and which potential legislator has their good in mind and heart? Vote for those who respect life across the spectrum. Take time to listen to, read about, and vote for the one who represents the needs of the most vulnerable, including the poor, the migrant/refugee, creation, and our beloved democracy. Let us not take it for granted. And, there is no perfect candidate.

At times it feels like the country, or the entire planet, is in chaos and upheaval. 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.

So we must with God's graces see our common home and us as one, not an 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. Open my ears that I may hear the voices of creation. 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 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

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Staying Franciscan . . .

Carol Coleman

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2012**



I have been associated with the Hospital Sisters for most of my adult life, including nursing school and a long career at St. John's Hospital, and the last nine years at the Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS) office.

One of my first major assignments at HSHS was to help plan the annual Spirituality in Healthcare Conference co-sponsored by HSHS and Chiara Center. On this committee, I was witness to Sister MaryAnn Falbe's energy and enthusiasm for this annual event. When I asked her to be my sponsor, I witnessed the same energy and enthusiasm, this time focused on helping me grow. Since I have retired, and due to the restrictions related to the pandemic, I have not had many opportunities to interact with Sister MaryAnn. We did enjoy volunteering at Catholic Charities Christmas Toy Drive. Also, Sister attended and participated in a recent Associates Zoom call when I was presenting information about climate issues and solutions.

One way that I bring Christ to others is by being present for friends who have had significant losses or other troubles in their lives. This might be short phone calls, visits with coffee, or cards in the mail. Unfortunately, these events seem to be occurring more frequently, the older I and my friends get.

Associates' activities and communications provide me with a boost by helping me reflect on how I am embodying the charism that I have in common with the Hospital Sisters. I enjoy reading the newsletters which provide additional perspectives regarding living a Franciscan way of life. It just seems natural to want to continue to recommit to the Associate relationship when I get so much in return. ❖

Vicki Warren

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
2013**



My name is Vikki Warren and I am an Associate in the Springfield group. My life and heart changed in absolutely amazing and blessed ways the day I became a Franciscan Associate in 2013. I can't believe it has already been nine years of God's love and guidance on my spiritual journey through the hearts and lives of the Franciscan Sisters & Associates.

I became an Associate because God's love commands us all to evangelize his words, his actions and his love. What better way to do that than walking this journey with the Sisters and Associates who are a community of believers? I know that God has big plans for each of us.

My very sweet, kind, loving, beautiful and very faith-filled friend and Associate Ruth King was my sponsor. Her love for the Sisters and Associates was very heart-felt and she showed it by being the beautiful child that God created her to be. Ruth invited me to the Sister/Associate Picnic in 2012 where God planted the seed. It was through Ruth and the Associate community that I witnessed God's love in action. When I was at Associate formation and events, I felt that I was on holy ground. My heart felt like it had skipped a beat and I smiled from ear to ear. I felt like a little girl. I was so excited and my eyes filled with tears each time I drove onto the grounds seeing God's beautiful creation before my eyes.

From the time I was a little girl I knew there was something extra special about the Sisters and I gravitated toward them and their kindness and love. They always brought joy to my heart because I knew that the Sisters were a gift and an extension of God's heart to ours. In 7th grade I wanted to become a Sister, but God had other

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Maintaining Faith Through Spiritual Love . . .

By **Jerrilyn Zavada**
(Streator)



Year of Commitment – 2019

This morning, I came across two posts on belonging on my social media profile.

On finding those people who welcome you and treat you with the love and respect that is your birthright, those people who honor you.

How, when you are at a table where you aren't met with love and respect, but their complete opposites – like shame, criticism, disregard and so on – you need to respect yourself enough to walk away.

And, finally, when you come to the end of your life, who you would want sitting with you, holding your hand. Who are those few who have been with you through thick and thin, laughing and crying with you, encouraging you along the way, being your own personal cheerleader?

Some of us have numerous people we can think of who could fill this role. Others might only have one or two. Some, sadly, have none. What matters is not quantity, but quality.

Finding those people in my own life who consistently offer these things to me has been a challenge. Due to negative childhood and other experiences, I have mostly been inclined to only let people get so close. It is often more of a self-protective mechanism than it is feeling I cannot trust any particular person. I am sure I am not alone in this behavior.

In my family of origin, with its six kids and various pets, there was more chaos than there was order. And with all those kids vying for attention and fulfillment of needs that no one or two people could possibly provide in their

entirety, none of us listened to or respected one another.

Fortunately, as I have journeyed through life, God has blessed me with many beautiful souls along the way who have offered the little piece of the puzzle to wholeness they were able to offer.

Whether it was through co-workers, acquaintances, church friends, retreats... I have encountered people who have welcomed me with open hearts. I have no doubt these folks were bringing Jesus himself to me. In Saint Teresa of Avila's famous words:

**Christ has no body now but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which he looks
compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks to
do good.
Yours are the hands through which he
blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.**

This is who we are called to be. This is what we are called to do.

As we enter November, a month where the veil between the saints in heaven and the saints on Earth seems to be particularly thin, it seems appropriate to reflect on our own lives, on all those we have met along the way who have provided us some bit of welcome, love or guidance as we travel our paths.

And, to also consider how we have provided similar gifts for others.

There is no better feeling in life than to feel as though your life matters, as though you matter. There is no better feeling than to experience being needed, wanted, appreciated and validated.

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Justice and Peace Connection

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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 my 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. Laudato Si'. ❖

Maintaining Faith Through Spiritual Love . . .

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Although some of us might not have been given that gift as children, God continually offers us new opportunities to receive it, and to learn how to give it to others in return. It is up to us to walk through life with openhearted awareness, so we can recognize those angels in disguise.

Think about it: who would you want holding your hand as you take your final breaths? Whose hand would you hold as they take theirs?

In this walk we take here on Earth, these are ultimately the only questions that matter. ❖

Vicki Warren Continued from page 5

plans and he already knew that being a Franciscan Associate was where he needed me to thrive. I feel a very special kind of love in my heart for each one of the Sisters and Associates. From the beginning, I was bitten by the most awesome Franciscan love bug, and I knew that together we would grow in our faith and relationship with God as we walked with St. Francis and St. Clare. The seeds that we planted and cultivated would flourish as each of us continued to spread God's love, his words and his blessings.

I believe that the best way to live my Franciscan life is to live in Christ's image. To love as he loves, to forgive as he forgives, to share a smile or a hug, to provide a kind word or a giving heart, and to truly open up my heart and mind to listen and to evangelize God's word. I do this by living in Christ's image to the best of my ability and becoming his eyes, his heart, his hands and his feet.

I work with the public and it can be very rewarding and very challenging. To treat people with respect, patience, understanding, compassion, prayer, and a kind word are all examples of how I live out the Franciscan way of life. I am a eucharistic minister at St. Aloysius Church and I belong to the Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary. We support our charities, and I am in charge of the prayer chain at St. Aloysius which helps to bring comfort, love and healing to those in need. For me, prayer is a surge of the heart. It is a simple look toward heaven. May you see life through the eyes of a child with pure innocence, love, trust & pure joy. God's continued blessings upon each of you. ❖





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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Events . . .

November offering – Thursday, November 17, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. will feature Fr. Richard Chiola, who will be speaking to us about Advent. As of now this is scheduled as a Zoom event. If that changes, a notification will be sent via email.

December offering - The date for our Christmas gathering is scheduled for Thursday, December 15, 2022. Additional information will be forthcoming as to whether we will be able to gather in person or this will be done as a virtual event.