



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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Autumn's Beauty . . .

Captured by Nancy Davis at St. Francis Convent ❖



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Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

Are You Willing to Be Bothered?

"Mercy is the willingness to enter into the chaos of another," says Fr. James Keenan. Have you ever heard the expressions, "I can't be bothered" or "I don't have time?" Isn't that essentially what it means to say that I am not willing to enter into your chaos? There are times when we genuinely cannot be present to another. Nevertheless, there is within our Christian call a responsibility to be open to the needs of the Body of Christ. Being a spouse, mother, friend, daughter, brother, leader, or volunteer mean we

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have to be ready to take on the chaos and messiness and challenges in the lives of others we encounter. With relationships comes self-sacrifice.

I recently read an article about how relationships these days are defined by the millennial culture that includes words like “boundaries,” “priorities,” “bandwidth,” and “safety.” This concept is now being used to negotiate commitments to one another. For example, “I am pressed for time and energy, so I need to protect my bandwidth rather than be at your side at your father’s funeral.” Even though the roots of this initially were developed to heal relationships, it has backfired and instead can be the source of destructiveness in relationships. In a society that is increasingly polarized, isolated, and self-protective, the more lines we draw between ourselves and others, the more we start to forget there are real people with real needs on the other side of the line. These catch-phrase concepts are essentially creating an excuse for not creating space for another or the Gospel mandate to love.

An encounter is about a willingness to be inconvenienced by each other, sometimes frequently, especially when the road gets dark. As Christians, we are called to be the Christ-light in this dark world and that means being open and available to share the burdens of those we love, to sacrifice our own agendas, schedules, and time. As Associates of the Hospital Sisters, we are called to be a healing presence, sometimes being the only person not turning away from a difficult situation with a friend or family member.

Our current dominant cultural narrative tells us to carefully guard our time, talent, treasure, and energy but that is contrary to what we know as Christians. We were made for community. What is all this self-preservation about if don’t have that willingness to encounter the other? To do that

is to deny our inherent connectedness. Is it selfishness and self-preservation or is it that we’re afraid of what caring for others might demand of us?

Jesus shows us in scripture that much can be done with little. With just a few small fish and seven loaves, thousands were fed. Instead of guarding our schedules and creating boundaries, we need more trust; trust that God will take that humble offering of time, talent, or treasure and multiply it in the hands of the hungry or for souls that are suffering. Our focus must be a greater willingness to accept discomfort to be at the service of something greater. Maybe we just need to agree to be perpetually inconvenienced by others instead of putting up boundaries? By living that way we not only find purpose but will be blessed by someone else’s meager offering when we need it most.

“At the end of the day it’s not about what you have or even what you have accomplished... It’s about who you’ve lifted up, who you’ve made better, it’s about what you have given back.”
Denzel Washington

So, let’s pay it forward. ❖

WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Jim Klees (Eau Claire) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Cynthia Danenberger (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Mary Handley (Springfield) who is being treated for medical problems.
- Vikki Warren (Springfield) for her mother and brother who are battling serious illness.
- For peace in our world especially in Ukraine, Israel and the Gaza Strip, and on our own borders.
- For our new Associates who made their commitment on Sunday, November 5, 2023
- For our Hospital Sisters and all Associates ❖

Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary
Shaw, ASC



November A Month of Remembering

November is dedicated to the Saints/Souls, Thanksgiving, and celebrating life. Let us pause to give thanks and recall the past year. Amid violence in Ukraine and in our country, floods, people migrating due to the impact of climate change, and hurricanes, we must offer prayers for humanity and the planet.

Let us not forget the call by Pope Francis for a Synodal Church as we are called to be in communion, participate and engage in the mission. As we read *Instrumentum Laboris*, we are challenged to live the issues for a synodal Church: A communion that radiates: How can we be more fully a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity? Co-responsibility in Mission: How can we better share gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel?

The people of God have been on the move since Pope Francis convened the Church in the synod and called each of us to "journey together." This became clear in the continental stage when the concerns of the Church in different regions of the world were addressed: too many wars, the threat of climate change, inequality, the throwaway culture, and a cultural colonialism that crushes minorities. No matter what is impacting each area, it became clear that all suffered and are affected by the crisis caused by various forms of abuse.

We are being called to a renewed awareness of our identity and vocation and to become increasing synodal and to encounter one another, respect the other, listen and dialogue

with the other. We are called to be open, welcoming, and embracing of all God's people. While we must speak the truth in love and accept another's way of life, it does not mean we deny our way or embrace theirs. It is simply reverencing the other as a child of God with a God-given dignity. A great Bible example of having a good conversation when perplexed, and one that ends in listening and communion and service, is the Road to Emmaus. Read and reflect on Luke 24:13-35 and place yourself in the scene. Gaze upon Jesus and let his gaze transform you, recalling that it could be the stranger you met at the grocery store.

Finally, let us be reminded that works of justice and mercy are a form of participation in Christ's mission. We are called to be an instrument of God for the liberation of those bound in chains of poverty and racism who are marginalized due to their color, language, and social status. Yet, all are our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is not us and them. It is us, one body in Christ.

This month may our celebrations, liturgies and times together empower us always to "act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God." Take time to ponder who we are and whose we are and in humble service, reverence the one next to you. May St. Francis of Assisi be our guide and help us to calm the wolves in us that roar at those who don't fit our mind/heart set. ❖

In Loving Memory . . .

Sister Jonette Devlin, OSF

Born: 6/17/1927

First Profession: 6/13/1949

Died: 10/05/2023

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

Coming Home... By Nancy

Davis

On October 16, 2023, I was in Streator, IL for the Associate Recommitment Service. We met at the OSF Center for Health, formerly HSHS St. Mary's Hospital which was founded by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis on January 26, 1887. The hospital closed on January 4, 2016 at which time OSF HealthCare (Peoria, IL) opened an outpatient center.

Our meeting room was arranged by Ellen Blasco Vogel, Community Health Engagement Program Manager, who is the sister of Brian Blasco, our Associate. The room is in the Community Education Center which is near the former St. Francis Hall – previously the hospital and convent. Outside the entrance of this building features the 1914 cornerstone of the hospital and the inside features two 1914 Emil Frei stained glass windows from the chapel sanctuary. Ellen toured us through some of the facility and noted several items of historical significance – we felt that the spirit of St. Francis was at work. First, there is a wood statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the main hallway with a plaque that denotes it was a gift from Edgar H. Berners (Green Bay, WI) who was the architect of the 1963 hospital and now a gift from the Hospital Sisters to OSF HealthCare. (The statue has been in that location since 1963.) There also is a small chapel in this area which includes wood statues of Mary and Joseph from the 1963 chapel. We felt the sense of coming home as we recommitted to the Associate relationship with the Hospital Sisters in this little chapel. One Associate said, “I really felt a gentle tug at my heart while we were doing it, a yearning to somehow find a renewed way of spiritual expression and mentoring.” Following the recommitment, everyone felt blessed to be back in this space and a renewed spirit of the Hospital Sisters in their hearts. We were very appreciative of this opportunity to have a beautiful and meaningful place to meet and for the heartfelt Franciscan welcome. ❖



Love How to live the Franciscan way in an ever-changing world

By Jerrilyn Zavada
(Streator)



Year of Commitment – 2019

As I reflect on my recommitment to the Associate program, I have been considering how to live the Sisters' healing charism for the next two years. By the time you read this, I will have articulated in writing as best I can what my hopes are and signed off on it.

When I first committed in November of 2019, I focused on my gifts in written and spoken communication as a way to bring healing to my world. I believe I have done so. I will continue to use these gifts in the future, as the Holy One allows and sees fit. Using my voice to model spiritual growth is so much a part of who I am, I can't not do it. It is like breathing to me.

Since that first commitment, much has changed in my life. I opened (and closed) a bookstore in my hometown, during the COVID nightmare. I began dating my now husband in 2021. We got engaged in April 2022, and were married in March of this year, on the Feast of the Annunciation. I have moved into my husband's home, with all the adjustments that requires on both our parts, particularly since we are both in our 50s and have lived our entire adult lives outside of a romantic relationship. It is going well so far, just over six months in as I write this.

Then, shortly after we were married, I found out I have the BRCA2 and CTNNA-1 gene mutations that predispose me to breast, ovarian and other forms of cancer. My sister, who is five years older than me, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer earlier this year. She has undergone rigorous treatment and has since had a total mastectomy and hysterectomy. She is doing well, and the future looks promising for her. I am scheduled to have

a hysterectomy at the end of this year. And throughout it all, I have been navigating what seems like my never-ending transition into menopause. There have been quite a few bad days, where even I haven't liked myself, much less the people who had to put up with me. Gratefully, the really bad part seems to be behind me. (Fingers crossed.)

So, four years of highs and lows at a whirlwind pace. During that time, I have tried to stay as centered as possible through my contemplative prayer practices. I am easily thrown off course with the stressors life throws at me, so this prayer practice is essential.

My husband is gentle and supportive...and often infinitely patient with my inner chaos, which has been a lifeline of grace.

As I go forth, my goal is simple: to be a healing presence by living a gentle existence: to speak gently, see gently, listen gently, touch gently, breathe gently. To be gentle. I think I have my work cut out for me, beginning with myself.

As that wonderful hymn so eloquently says: "Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with me." I don't need to tell you how so much of the anger and hostility in the world infiltrates our daily lives. Just leaving our house, turning on the television or signing on to the internet opens us to this darkness and vitriol. It is essential for all of us to continue seeking to model our lives after Francis and Clare, in the name of Christ, the perfect Prince of Peace. Their gentle spirits and peaceful ways have inspired millions to live lives of holiness over the last eight centuries. I don't imagine that will change any time soon.

Actions really do speak louder than words. Although these words have been misattributed to Francis, they perfectly summarize – to me, anyway – what it means to call ourselves Franciscans: "*Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.*" ❖

Associate Recombitment

By Nancy Davis

On July 22, 2023 the Springfield Associate community gathered at the Evermode Institute for a Day of Reflection culminating in renewal of their recommitment to the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis as Associates. Due to the pandemic, it had been four years since the gathering had occurred. It was a beautiful day and there was much enthusiasm and gratitude for once again being in this space together. The day featured talks by Associate Larry Burgett on Community, Mike and Linda Mueller on Prayer, and Nancy Davis on Ministry, all to assist the attendees in writing their 2023 commitment. The day was concluded with the Rite of Recombitment Ceremony in St. Francis of Assisi Church with Sr. Maureen O'Connor, Superior, receiving the signed commitments.



There have also been recommitment ceremonies conducted in outlying Associate groups. The Highland Associates renewed in a ceremony in the chapel of HSHS St. Joseph's Hospital on October 4, Green Bay Associates in the chapel of HSHS St. Vincent Hospital on October 12, and Streator Associates in the chapel of OSF Center for Health on October 16. ❖



“A Future Full of Hope”

By Nancy Davis



The annual Sister and Associate retreat was held at the Evermode Institute on Friday, September 22 and Saturday, September 23. The theme was “A Future Full of Hope” and was presented by Sr. Janice Keenan, OSF. She skillfully wove the scripture verse Jeremiah 29: 11-14, “I know the plans I have for you says the Lord plan for your welfare not for woe; plans to give you a future full of hope...” with the unexpected wisdom of Dr. Seuss using his book, “Oh , The Places You’ll Go!” throughout the five sessions of the retreat. I believe that attendees felt uplifted and challenged by her presentations and with renewed hope in the future. The day concluded with Mass in St. Francis of Assisi Church. ❖



Staying Franciscan . . .

Rosie Butler

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –
1993 - 30 Years**



I have remained an Associate for many reasons but primarily because my association with the Hospital Sisters and other Associates along with the fact that my faith and prayer life has been continually strengthened by being a Franciscan. I have grown in my spiritual life as a result.

Prior to becoming an Associate, I was a Hospital Sister for 19 years and I felt called to the spirit of the congregation. I learned not only about the life of the Hospital Sisters but also about their caring for the sick and the poor through their healing charism.

Sr. Laverne Donahue, OSF, was my sponsor and spiritual mentor as I went through the formation to become an Associate in 1993. She was a woman of deep prayer and faith and was such an inspiration to me. She truly lived the Franciscan life in simplicity and poverty.

I strongly believe as a single woman trying to live my own Franciscan calling that the Associate commitment for all these years has been crucial.

In my daily life of prayer, activity, and Eucharist, I continue to search and hope for a more intimate relationship with the Lord. I pray for guidance and healing knowing that it takes a deep faith and constant effort on my part to continue the spiritual journey and always keep my eyes fixed on Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2) and trusting in his loving presence. ❖



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Upcoming Events . . .

November offering – On Thursday, November 16, 2023, we will have a presentation about the season of Advent by one of the Norbertine Fathers of The Evermode Institute. The meeting will be in the St. Francis Convent Family Room so please enter through the convent entrance. Parking is available there also.

December offering - On Thursday, December 14, 2023, we will have the Advent/Christmas Bingo Party in Bon Hall beginning at 6:00 p.m. This year's theme is A Royal Christmas. There will be food, fun, and fellowship. Please save the date.