



# 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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## New Citizen

On October 1, 2025, Sister Anna Phiri, OSF, became an American citizen (she now has dual citizenship: Zambia and America). She attended the ceremony in Champaign, IL, and was accompanied by several Sisters and friends. There were other occasions to celebrate this milestone at the convent and with the Decatur Associate group. ❖



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## Associate Office By Nancy Davis

### Just Love

"Even in the Church, some currents seem to be exchanging love for combativeness. We fight for Christian values, we fight against progressivism, we fight for this or that. We even call the rosary a weapon. Why do I have a problem with this? I believe in God, who is Love, who loves us to the extreme, so much so that he laid down his life for us, and who invites us to love one another, to show our love through service and forgiveness. I believe in Love, and I cannot reconcile it with fighting. Love and fighting do not go together for me. It is like light and darkness; they cannot exist side by side, they exclude each other. I cannot fight for love, I cannot force it, I can only give it or accept it... freely, humbly,

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## Associate Office –

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not aggressively or by force. Just like Jesus on the cross. Jesus is not Napoleon, he is not a military leader, he does not need warriors. He needs people who love, those who are quiet and humble of heart.”

Bishop Peter Beno, Nitra, Slovakia, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, after discussing the combativeness of contemporary culture.

After reading this, I was reminded of everything about Franciscan Spirituality that attracted me and confirmed how I try to live my life. Love is within the teachings of St. Francis. He lived out the highest of all loves, which Christ defined as the total love of God and the love of neighbor, which is charity.

In our contentious world, we could benefit from reminders of our commitment to live the Gospel as Francis did.

- Remember to recognize and respect the sacred in every person and in all creation. Be open to receiving the treasure buried in the heart of another who might be different than you.
- Renounce dualism, the we/they mentality that divides us into good/bad people because it generates hate and division, not love and unity. Enemy-making leads to perceiving others in a way that validates hurting, ignoring, dismissing, or killing.
- Slow down and plant the seeds of love and forgiveness in our hearts and in the hearts of others. The Franciscan response to division is to forgive oneself and others. Becoming a forgiving presence allows for peace and the ability to be merciful, even with those we might find difficult to love.

- Bear the distinguishing marks that Francis bore, which were those he saw in Jesus: poverty, humility, and charity.
- Face fear and deal with it, not only with courage but with love. Francis' embrace of the leper illustrates the conversion of embracing fear that is so often the root of violence, defensiveness, and the exclusion of others. Everything, even evil, is transformed into good by the embrace of divine love, by reaching out in love to what repels us.
- See ourselves as a part of the whole creation when we foster a relationship of love, not of mastery. The destruction of our planet is not just a scientific or technological one, but a significant spiritual problem because we are all one.
- Peace is achieved by trying to bring out the best in others, not pointing out the worst. We bring out the best in others by being peaceful ourselves. Peacefulness is its own persuasion – our peaceful presence will do more than any words.
- Francis, just like Jesus, lived his life on a model of nonviolence, which was a challenge in his time. Francis did not respond passively in the face of violence, but rather, through word and deed as he resisted the violence of unjust social structures. His sacrifice was powerful enough to challenge injustice and evil just as Jesus did.
- Be open to God's grace. You will be able to say as Francis did at the end of his life: "I have done what was mine to do; may the Lord show you what is yours." Franciscans try to be examples of simplified, poor lives of service to others, rich and poor alike.

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# Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



As we transition into winter, let us seek out common humanity and be willing to be in solidarity with the most vulnerable. Remember: "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (MLK). By acting with compassion, by helping to restore justice and to encourage peace, we are acknowledging that we are all part of one another. ❖

## November Nostalgia

As we approach the end of 2025, we recall what we enjoyed and what may have been concerning. In doing so, we must remember that all shall be well, God is still in charge, and that this is a time to review some of our Justice and Peace prophets who remind us that justice delayed is justice denied.

Pope Francis reminded us that we are connected and called to hear the cries of the poor and of Mother Earth. While the past 11 months have echoed many cries, did we hear them? Did we utter them? Perhaps we did both. To assist with our processing of all that is going on, let us remember Dorothy Day, Thomas Berry, Frances Xavier Cabrini, Cardinal Joseph Bernadin, the 1989 anniversary of the murder of the six martyrs and two friends in El Salvador, and be in solidarity with the Palestinians. Stop and take time to read about how each one of them stood with the most vulnerable, spoke of a seamless garment, and allowed their commitment to justice to lead them to a martyr's death.

We, too, if we call ourselves Christians, must realize that the cost of following Jesus is not cheap. Grace is precious; our yes must be yes in all seasons. The price is great but compared to eternal life it is small. We have the assurance of our gracious God that He is with us all the way. We need to trust God. Are we, like some of the above, willing to say, here I am... send me. At this moment, I am here to serve my sisters and brothers.

## Love It . . .

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We need to remember that love is a choice, not an emotion. It is willing the good of the other as the other. On the Feast day of St. Francis, Pope Leo XIV signed his first papal apostolic exhortation entitled, *Dilexi Te* (I Have Loved You). I invite you to read it.

**St. Clare of Assisi:** "We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become." ❖

## WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER . . .

- Mary Lewis (Springfield) who lost her brother on 8/10/25
- Linda Marti (Highland) who lost her mother on 8/16/25
- Barb Butler (Springfield) who lost her brother on 8/17/25
- Mary Reiser (Springfield) who is in hospice care
- Gloria Guy (Decatur) who is being treated for medical problems
- Mary Wilquet (Green Bay) who is being treated for medical problems
- Kathy Kovell (Eau Claire) who is being treated for medical problems
- For all the Hospital Sisters and Associates
- For peace and justice in our land ❖

## Seasonal Wisdom

By Jerrilyn Zavada  
(Streator)



**Year of Commitment – 2019**

Seasonal Wisdom teaches us be who we really are. As I write, we are just a few days into autumn, my soul season.

When autumn comes, I feel a natural sense of ease. I have no problem letting go of the frenetic activity of summer and slowing down into a more natural rhythm of contemplative living. It is as though my being is wired to react to the change in the atmosphere. I feel a deep sense of relief to be given this season of letting go, in preparation for winter's soul healing gifts of deep rest and hibernation.

Each season offers us its own wisdom. This is why it is important to soulfully engage with them as much as possible, even if we have to schedule it into our days. Just as the seasons turn in cycles, so do our spiritual lives. When we spend time outside in prayer and meditation throughout the year, we are infused with the wisdom nature holds, even if we are unconscious of it while it is happening. We are, in turn, able to live a more grounded, purposeful existence.

As Franciscans, we know this on an intuitive level. Our beloved patron saint had a deep spiritual connection with the world around him, and all of its creatures. It is just one of the many qualities that has endeared him to millions of people down through the centuries.

I love animals, and I have always appreciated the many churches and pastors who honor our pets on Oct. 4, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi with a 'blessing of the animals.' Even with everyone on leashes or in carriers, the scene can get a bit noisy and chaotic, but that just adds to its charm. Our pet friends aren't trying to impress or influence anyone. They simply are who they are, and we can learn much from them.

There is a popular saying on social media, that I think speaks to the truths our animals model by

just being themselves. ***"Your purpose is not the thing you do. It is the thing that happens in others when you do what you do."***—  
**Caroline Leaf**

To put it another way, it is not necessarily what we do with our lives, as much as it is who we are and how we interact with others, that makes a difference in the world around us.

It is our soul, our spirit, that infuses everything we do. We all play different roles at different times in our lives, but there is a golden thread holding it all together, and that is the essence of our being.

A somewhat similar adage goes like this: ***"how you do anything is how you do everything."*** People will know who we are by the way we show up in this world, by the things we say and the way we say it. They will know us by the things we do and how we do them. They will know us by the way we make them feel inside when we do what we do.

When we live intentionally peaceful and welcoming lives in accordance with the teachings of St. Francis, and the tenets of the gospels, there will be no doubt in others' minds of who we are and what we stand for. This autumn, allow the season to help you let go of whatever is keeping you from engaging with life on an organically spiritual level, in a peaceful, life-affirming way.

Let go of the noise of the world shouting and screaming and pointing you in a million false directions, and return to your center, where you will hear the still, small voice of the one in whom we all live and move and have our being. Listen to that voice. Rest in it, and allow it to remind you who you are, and to whom you belong.

Then, when spring returns, we can recommit to inspiring 'peace and all good' in others when we do what we do.

**SPIRIT MATTERS** is a weekly column that examines spirituality in The Times' readership area. Contact Jerrilyn Zavada at [jzblue33@yahoo.com](mailto:jzblue33@yahoo.com) to share how you engage your spirit in your life and in your community. ❖



## 150th anniversary

This year's anniversary has been filled with joy and thanksgiving. The Sisters celebrated with four of their hospitals that were founded 150 years ago, and one of their hospitals that was founded 125 years ago. This year also marked the 100-year anniversary of the mission's founding in China. The Sisters hosted events and traveled to events, all in which they gave thanks to God for many blessings. ❖





# Associate Recommitment

By Nancy Davis

Recommitment has been ongoing throughout the summer and fall, and I am pleased to report that over 90 percent of the Associates have renewed their commitment to live out the healing charism of the Hospital Sisters in their lives for another two years. I always learn so much from this process and having the privilege of learning how others are living out their commitment. We had a Day of Reflection on July 27, 2025 and it was a wonderful day to experience three presentations, visit with Associates and Sisters, and relax. The day concluded with a service in the St. Clare of Assisi Adoration Chapel. ❖







Green Bay



Highland



Streator



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

### Upcoming Events . . .

**November offering** – On Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 6:30 p.m., the Associate Meeting will be held in the Family Room. Fr. Joe Molloy will speak about the liturgical season of Advent. This meeting will also be presented on Zoom.

**December offering** - On Thursday, December 11, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in Bon Hall. Associate Advent/Christmas Gathering with a theme of “Remembering Christmas Past.” Please bring your favorite holiday snack to share and wear holiday attire.

2025 is winding down as the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Sisters and four of their hospitals: St. John’s, St. Elizabeth’s, St. Francis, and St. Anthony’s Memorial. 150 years ago, November 6, 1875, 20 Sisters from Germany arrived in Alton, IL. ❖