

Our Journey

Fall 2018 • Vol. 37 No. 1



FRANCISCAN SISTERS
OF LITTLE FALLS, MINNESOTA

Our Journey

FALL 2018 • VOL. 37 NO. 1

Our Journey is published three times a year by the Community Relations Department of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, for donors, associates, friends, relatives and employees. This publication shares the journeys of our Franciscan community as the sisters work in joyful service in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare.

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Cover: Associate Elise Spofford, Jeff Ambrosier and daughter Citori.

Our Mission:

We, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, are a community of women religious whose members are called to live the Gospel joyfully and to reverence the earth and all of God's creation. In the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare, we embody a life of prayer, simple living and service to those in need.

We are committed to nonviolence as we recognize the need for healing in ourselves and in our world. We seek to build communities of peace and justice wherever we are called to serve.

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Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls,
Minnesota



What's in store for me?

Associate Elise Spofford

As I write this reflection, I am walking along a gravel road in Alaska at the Ninilchik River Campground. I often return to this refuge, following a familiar figure eight loop, breathing slowly, basking in quiet and marveling in gratitude—"Thank you, God!" What grace and benevolence surrounds me, the aspen and birch trees with their autumn yellow leaves, the bright red cranberries, the little birds and their calls from high places unbeknownst to me. What immense beauty there is in the Divine mysteries of life.

I often think about Saint Francis while I am here and how he humbly walked around Assisi in contemplation and prayer, reaching out with unconditional love to all of creation crossing his path. This Franciscan charism has formed and shaped me from the time I was a little girl.

I first remember going to St. Francis Convent with my parents, Greg and Vicki Spofford, for an overnight retreat when I was about 7 years old. In time, I have connected closely with many Franciscans, Sisters Aggie and Carol at Clare's Well and Sister Anita in Texas for two home building projects. I have had the privilege of spending time with Faithful Fools in San Francisco, as well as making a trip to Nicaragua with Sisters Carmen and Susan. I have and continue to connect with Sister Michelle, and during my visits back to Little Falls, my daughter Citori and I thoroughly enjoy our time with Sister Lillian.

There is a vibrant vitality that accompanies Franciscan charism. This emanates from the hearts of the sisters I have walked with and the associates I have come to know. It is amazing to consider how far and wide the spirit of Francis extends. A couple of years ago I received a message from another associate, Cheri Hample, who also lives in Alaska! And my parents and I recently hosted Sister Pat and a group of Mexican friends who are contemplating a formal commitment to the Associate Relationship.

As we contemplate our lives as Franciscans in our communities and in our world, I find myself wondering, what is in store for my life? How can I best prepare myself each and every day to more consistently open my heart to love abundantly? Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr offers this wisdom: "More than ever . . . we have to dig deeper spiritual roots and that means practicing contemplative nonviolence. We have to take time for quiet meditation with the God of peace every day. . . . It's hard to change the world; we can barely change ourselves. But God can change us and the world if we allow the God of peace to touch us, disarm us, heal us, and send us out as instruments of God's peace." (Center for Action and Contemplation, "Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation" 9/15/2017)

Dear friends,

For the past year and a half, my ministry was in Ocampo, Mexico, along with Sisters Aurora Tovar and Isa Berrones. One day, when I came into the house of Pancho Lopez, he called from his bed, right there in the living room, “It’s a miracle; I’m seeing a miracle.” My understanding of a miracle, according to Siri, is a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws, and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine agency. Thank you, Siri. (For those of you wondering, Siri is a voice-activated information tool, similar to a Google search on the internet.)

Everyone called him Pancho, the familiar name for Francis, another reason he was so dear to me. Since he was very hard of hearing, I had to keep my sentences short. We would sing familiar songs together. The communion that I brought would make his eyes sparkle even brighter than usual. I would turn around as I left, blow him a kiss, give him the sign of the cross or a salute. He did the same back to me. A simple connection. Hearing loss and limited language are no obstacle to saying I love you, God bless you, you are my hero. Pancho passed away in January, and I came to see that our encounters carried that touch of the Divine.

Just the other morning, I was invited into the Divine. I noticed that the sky was a deeper blue than usual and the cardinal in our back alley was singing like crazy. I couldn’t possibly count the greens of Minnesota foliage. A phrase at morning prayer called on all creatures to praise the Lord. And, God willing, today a child somewhere will look with wonder as s/he turns over a stone in the woods and finds all kinds of life quietly happening. Simple as that. I see that to experience a miracle isn’t all that unusual after all.

Encountering the Divine demands us to be aware, to pay attention, to make a connection—and almost always includes a call to action. Articles in this issue of *Our Journey* tell the stories of recognizing the force of the Divine, of reaching out in care and compassion, of responding to that call to action.

It’s been just three months since the new Leadership team has been in place, and this is my first communication to *Our Journey* readers. Sisters Grace Skwira, Charlene Grossman, Carolyn Law and I are learning . . . learning what it means to lead our community while still being *sister* in our new roles and with each other. Learning.

So, with this issue, I extend my sincere thanks for your support, friendship and willingness to walk with us in mission and ministry.

Peace and all good,

Sister Carol Schmit

Sister Carol Schmit
Community Minister/President



Sisters Carol Schmit, Carolyn Law, Charlene Grossman, Grace Skwira



Women pose in 1969 outside the National Black Sisters' Conference headquarters in Washington.

Standing on the promise

Elizabeth Rydeen



Sister Callista Robinson lives in Milwaukee and is the assistant administrator of an adult GED program. She also serves as the coordinator of the Brother Booker Ashe Lay Ministry Program for African American Catholics.

was enlightened by what she heard and encouraged to bring black sisters together to address the issues affecting black communities. The Most Rev. John J. Wright, bishop of Pittsburgh, supported her efforts and sent letters to religious communities throughout the United States, requesting the presence of black sisters at a conference to be held at Carlow College in Pittsburgh that August.

One of the letters was received by Mother Yvonne Becker who, understanding the importance of such a gathering, sent Sister Callista Robinson to Pittsburgh to attend. Sister Callista, who grew up in Chicago, said, "There

Many of us remember 1968 as the year of the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy and the race riots prevalent in the North and South. It was also the year the National Black Sisters' Conference was formed, inspired by Sister M. Martin de Porres Grey, a Sister of Mercy who had been the only woman religious in attendance at the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus earlier that year. Though she was denied membership in that all-male organization, she

were almost 200 of us from 79 national and international communities, though the majority of the sisters were from the United States. I had no idea that there were so many black sisters—and so many that held such high positions as hospital administrators and college professors." Sister M. Martin (now Patricia Grey, Ph.D.) was elected president and a board of directors was selected.

Today, 50 years later, the National Black Sisters' Conference is 145 members strong with women religious and lay associates. Sister Callista is a founding member and has served on the board and as vice president and president from 2013-2017. For five decades, the conference has worked to develop the personal resources of individual sisters and deepen the spirituality, unity and solidarity of black sisters and the African American community. Looking back, Sister Callista said, "Really, we were dreamers. We thought things would get better, that race relations would get better. True, there's been legislation passed that has improved the lives of African Americans in some ways, but racism and discrimination prevail today. The conference has been a constant source of energy and support for me in my ministry. We share a mutual understanding." Black women religious continue to stand at the forefront in the struggle for justice, giving witness to the saving truth of the gospel and the mission of Christ's Church on earth.

The National Black Sisters' Conference and the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus celebrated the 50th anniversary at the Joint Conference in New Orleans in July.

From the Franciscan Sisters Leadership team . . .

In recent months our hearts have heard the cries of refugee children at our nation's borders. These children were separated from their parents by our U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Many scripture passages about compassion and welcome come to mind.

"Can a mother or father forget their nursing child or a woman show no compassion for the child of her womb?" (Cf. Is. 49:15-16) Will we forget these children's cries for their parents? If these mothers and fathers and their children were today's representation of the Holy Family, would we so easily deny them safe passage into the inn of our hearts?

"When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do them wrong. You shall treat the strangers who sojourn with you as the native among you. You shall love them as yourself, for you were once strangers." (Lev. 19:33-34) How do we reconcile ourselves to our nation's practices in the light of this passage?

Matthew 25:31-40 reads, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, all the nations will be gathered before him. He will separate them one from the other . . . And he will say: when I was hungry, you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, a stranger and you welcomed me . . ." Will Jesus say to us one day: I was in danger and you turned me away? I was desperate for a job to support my family and you jailed me? I was cold and you gave me a silver foil blanket?

Pope Francis guides us with this reflection from his address to the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 24, 2013:

The Church is Mother, and her motherly attention is expressed with special tenderness and closeness to those who are obliged to flee their own country . . . Christian compassion—this "suffering with" compassion—is expressed first of all in the commitment to obtain knowledge of the events that force people to leave their homeland, and where necessary, to give voice to those who cannot manage to make their cry of distress and oppression heard. They are all elements that dehumanize and must push every Christian and the whole community to concrete attention.

Any policy that demeans the human person or divides a human family is not just and will never provide the peace and security we seek. As Franciscans we deeply hold in our hearts that we are all brothers and sisters in one human family. Let us find ways to further extend our care and compassion to the strangers among us. *May it be so!*

In solidarity and hope,

Sister Carol Schmitt Sister Grace Skwire

Sister Char Grossman Sister Carolyn Law

Sabbath House ministry bids farewell

Sister Carol Schmit

When Sisters Aggie Soenneker, Mary Obowa and I were elected to the Franciscan Leadership team back in 1984, we chose to live in the Twin Cities. (Sister Carla Przybilla, community minister, and Sisters Judine Cassidy and Elizabeth Weier lived in Little Falls.) Joined later by Sister Bernice Ebner, we four came together with many and varied experiences—foreign missions, business administration, health care, parish ministry—but basically we were rural farm girls. Our realtor, Fred, assured us that with 18,000 living units available, we could easily find a house big enough for several sisters with enough room to offer hospitality to other sisters and associates. It wasn't easy at all.

Then, one day, Fred said he found “just the thing” at 3228 Portland Avenue South. We toured and liked the large windows, lovely wood floors and trim and the finished third floor. The 1905 home had recently been renovated by Project for Pride and Living and restored to much of its original dignity. The Franciscan Sisters purchased the home, and we moved in, soon to discover the location was just right. It was in a diversified neighborhood, and we had our choice of vibrant Catholic parishes and endless cultural and community opportunities.

The house became a central gathering place and a hub for activities, such as Sister Joan Tuberty's centering prayer group. Sister Betty Berger lived there with other sisters at a time of heightened crime and drug dealing. National Guard helicopters even patrolled the neighborhood, and Sister Mary Wentland became skilled in identifying gunshots and calling the police. The sisters joined neighborhood



organizations, were active in National Night Out, and prayed with MAD DADS, an organization of men seeking alternatives to gangs and drugs.

In 2003, Sister Joanne Klinnert, who had moved into the house after returning from Nicaragua, and Sister Noreen Bentfield developed the concept of Sabbath House as a place for rest and reflection, retreat and spiritual renewal—an urban retreat center of sorts where people could experience Sabbath in the heart of the city of Minneapolis. Sister Joanne thoughtfully prepared weekly prayer during both Advent and Lent, which were well attended. She engaged liturgists and musicians who came to call themselves “Joanne’s Band.”

Over time, interest and participation in the ministry waned, and with fewer sisters to carry on the work, a decision was made to end the ministry. On July 1, over 75 people were on hand to celebrate Sabbath House with a closing ritual. Sisters and associates shared stories about their experience, as did Joe Selvaggio, founder of Project for Pride in Living, and other friends and neighbors. Bill Bailey, who attended to both the sisters' computer and the “rain barrel,” told of how the sisters helped him find a place to live when he had to move from his home and family. Those stories and more were indeed treasured memories and brought both laughter and tears.



Sisters Betty Berger, Joanne Klinnert and Isa Berrones in 2010. Over the years, many people enjoyed the quiet of Sabbath House and beauty of the adjacent meditation garden.

Come Holy Spirit

Sister Joan Tuberty

When I was invited to write a reflection on the Holy Spirit—her place in the Trinity and her gifts—I found myself on a journey beyond the familiar prayer: “Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, kindle in them the fire of your Divine love and renew the face of the earth.” I was pleased to find the ancient source of this prayer in the ending of Psalm 104:30: “When you send forth Thy Spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth.” I learned that the Hebrew word for spirit, *ruha*, means breath, air, wind or soul and that the Holy Spirit has always been associated with the wind because one never knows where it comes from or where it goes.

As I pursued the Holy Spirit, I found it was both *everywhere and nowhere!* It was known by what it had done, transformed or inspired. The Spirit hovered over the waters as creation began. The Spirit overshadowed Mary after her consent to bear the child Jesus, overshadowed Jesus at his Baptism and led him into the desert. All descriptions of what the Spirit did! But did this third person of the Holy Trinity have a personality, a character of its own? It appeared to me that the Spirit was about to come or had just been there! Jesus said of himself, that whoever had seen him had seen the Father. The father/son relationship is real, tangible. How does one relate to this elusive Spirit person? The Holy Spirit was always coming or going, so perhaps merited the name “The Go between God.” The other name, “Breath of God,” revealed the Holy Spirit as *giver of all life!*

I am comforted by the words of Jesus when he says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, heal the broken hearted, give sight to the blind . . .”

At the Baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was present, portrayed as dove! Jesus baptized with water and the Holy Spirit. Throughout Jesus’ life, it appeared that the Holy Spirit was a constant companion and comforter. Jesus said,

“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” (Jn 16:7) Yes, there is a reason why we are always asking for the spirit *to COME!* Paul also tells us, “The Spirit of God, as love, is active in us!” (Rom 5:5) Here is my prayer to the Holy Spirit:



Come Holy Spirit, Breath of God, Breathe in Me!

We are in need of you at this time when even truth is in trouble and money and personal gain appear to outweigh every other value. Mother earth, our home is used but not loved. Pour out your spirit again in the hearts of those who hope and trust in you to renew the face of the earth. Help us to move from being self-centered persons to become other centered, as we become loving, spirit-filled persons shining as stars in a dark night! We journey with our sister Mary and walk in the footprints of Jesus, her son and your son! Amen!

ADVENT DAY OF REFLECTION

“Receiving Life as a Gift” Presenter: Sister Elise Saggau

Saturday, December 1, 2018 • 9:30AM–3PM

St. Francis Hall, St. Francis Convent, Little Falls, Minn.

Register by November 22

Call (320)632-0668 or email: franciscanlife@fslf.org



PLANNED GIVING

Please let us know if you would like more information on remembering the Franciscan Sisters in your will and estate planning.

Contact: Sister Bernice Ebner
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In community, all are included

Sister Joanne Heim

Several months ago, I began visiting our sisters receiving care on Second Floor of Clare Residence and others in Angela Community, our memory loss unit. Over time, I witnessed many acts of compassion and loving care.

In both places, there are sisters who gather for a snack and relate in a loving way to one another around a table. Despite their limitations they can tease, laugh and accept one another. Even the confused are included. Both groups readily welcome a visiting sister and more conversation emerges. It gives them joy to be remembered. I appreciate the signs of care that the sisters bestow upon one another. Sister Louise McKigney, with memory loss, maintains her spirit of hospitality, welcoming guests, offering a cup of coffee or cookie. One day I felt she was overlooked when a visitor gave attention exclusively to another sister. I told Louise how I felt. She said, in loving kindness: "That's okay." (This was an inspiration to me.)

Sisters living on campus and elsewhere visit randomly, engaging sisters in conversation, keeping friendships strong. There's a network of sisters who drive and accompany sisters to appointments. Others ensure that sisters make it to chapel for Sunday Mass or the dining room for festive celebrations. Some write cards and letters, read aloud or take sisters for a walk outdoors—a special treat. Another provides music, helps put puzzles together and various other acts of care. Sister Paula

Pohlmann brings her gifts of healing touch and massage.

I rave about our sisters and the care and compassion they provide, but our hired caregivers are just as much an inspiration. They are kind and manifest our core values, foreseeing the needs of individual sisters. Love seeps from the pores of Cheryl Aswegan, the activities director who never runs out of ideas for play, parties, outings and other special ways to engage, motivate and entertain the sisters. Another employee, hair stylist Mary Poser, builds self-esteem as she loving cuts and styles hair. I witness the signs that God is in our midst. Love is palpable.



Sister Joanne Heim (left) visits with Sister Siena Wald. "It is my joy to spend time with my sisters."

Good fences, big walls

Sister Mary Hroscikoski

Mom used to tell us kids, “good fences make good neighbors.” But why? and how? I often wondered.

Where I grew up in Los Angeles every house had a fence around it. Some were tall and took a lot of climbing to peer over—even as their height shouted, “Private! Keep out!” Some were short or see-through. They marked a clear boundary yet still seemed to invite a respectful approach.

My 8-year-old self was so surprised when we first visited Grandpa’s house in a small Iowa town: there were no fences! All the yards ran together. Then we kids discovered a row of peonies out back. That row gave the comfort of knowing the limits of where we could play and still respect the neighbors. Later I would come to wonder what would happen if someone else moved in: would they plant thorny rosebushes instead of peonies? Would they someday build tall fences in Grandpa’s town the way they did back home, or were Grandpa’s neighbors different? Borders, it seemed, were artifacts of time and context and the particularities of those living side by side.

So fast forward, and I now live on the borderland between the United State and Mexico, in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Our Franciscan community has sisters *in* Mexico, sisters *from* Mexico, and many associates in Central and South America. So living along the border is one way of declaring that we are all neighbors, all sisters and brothers.

Today the literal border wall here is intermittent—but the virtual wall made by our severe unwelcoming of even good neighbors stands thick in this area. The literal wall pushes people, good and bad alike, from legal crossing areas in urban centers into areas more rural—pushes them into more risky situations where it is both more dangerous to cross and, especially for the likes of drug or gun smugglers, harder to capture.

Today, part of my ministry is with the nearby Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center. Most of the people we see there are coming as refugees from the Central Triangle of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. They are fleeing extremes of poverty and violence, pushed by the powers of drug cartels and systemic corruption that leave them without any state protection and any hope of a future. When would I want to flee my U.S. homeland and all that means home to me with only a small personal bag? When would I make a risky three-four week journey, often on foot, to a strange land and strange language where I’d first meet an unwelcoming wall? I cannot imagine.

But “Christ has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” (Eph 2:14) This means that at the Respite Center, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Mt 25:35) The respite is small: a shower and clean clothes, a meal, help arranging bus tickets to join family sponsors, and gentle, non-prying interest in their stories. Most especially, we offer words of welcome and the kindness of caring for these newcomers, these human beings, as sisters and brothers on incredibly risky and arduous journeys.

Got it, Mom! Good fences do make good neighbors. Impermeable walls do not. Robert Frost said it right:

Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That wants it down . . .

—*Mending Wall*, by Robert Frost



Sister Mary Hroscikoski at the border wall in McAllen, Tex.

Hitting the right note for 40 years

Sister Adela Gross

Ever since it was created by Sister Cecilia Schmit almost 40 years ago, St. Francis Music Center has been much more than a place where students receive music instruction. Over time, staff and teachers have become friends, mentors, counselors and healers for students and families. Many of the teachers currently at the Music Center have been part of this extended family for many years.

Sharing honors for number of years of service at the Music Center are Pamela Wolters and Kathy Pederson. Pamela began teaching at the center in 1984, under the direction of foundress, Sister Cecilia. However, in 2001, she interrupted her tenure for a number of years following the death of her husband. She returned in 2008. Pamela's teaching has included piano, voice, guitar, band instruments, and currently several violin students. Pamela is dedicated to her students, always looking for original ways to meet each individual's needs. She delights in seeing her students perform and in seeing them go on to pursue

their education and become professionals.

Kathy Pederson has taught piano and vocal skills to numerous students in her more than 25 years on the faculty. Kathy shares with fellow teachers, parents and students many stories about Sister Justina Bieganeck, a dear friend and mentor for many years. Sister Justina was part of the Music Center from its beginning in 1979 until her death at 100 years of age in 2012. Sister Bernadine Prozinski also taught with Kathy at the Music Center; they shared not only their love of music but of teaching music. Kathy uses her acute listening ear, not just to measure musical progress of her students, but also to listen to them, especially in times of stress and tension. Her toy box has brought a smile to many a child's face.

Pat Boser, music therapist and organ and piano instructor, has shared her gifts at the Music Center for almost 18 years. Pat has several students with special needs, now young adults, with whom she has worked throughout

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Pamela Wolters



Kathy Pederson



Pat Boser



Kevin Steuven



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her tenure, helping them improve their skills, enjoy the gift of music and develop bonds of friendship and caring. Pat's concern and care for all her students is so evident as she looks for a Band-Aid for a sore finger or expresses concern about a sick or injured parent.

Celebrating 20 years at the Music Center is Kevin Steuven, another gifted and caring teacher. A talented musician and director, Kevin teaches piano, as well as accordion, clarinet, many band instruments, guitar, and most recently, ukulele. He currently teaches, along with fellow teacher Melissa von Itter, the ukulele classes offered to older adults. He quickly develops a rapport with students of all ages with his friendly, welcoming attitude. The students sense his genuine care and concern for them and their families. When not teaching, Kevin can often be found in the pit directing the orchestra for a musical performance at a local high school or the Paramount in St. Cloud.

At the heart of the Music Center for 27 years, Robyn Gray has animated and encouraged staff and students to excellence in teaching and learning. Besides dealing with a diverse staff of 14 to 17 teachers and the student population of more than 300, plus members of the orchestra, chorale, various ensembles and specialized classes, she always finds time to listen to the teachers, encouraging, counseling and offering loving compassion and understanding.

The Music Center is blest with many other teachers who are equally dedicated in using their talents to meet the individual needs of students, both youth and adults. Families and students find the Music Center a welcoming and safe place where bonds of friendship are created among instructors, staff and other families. This is especially true for families enrolled in dance and gymnastics classes as well as orchestra. Since these families meet one another weekly throughout the year, all come to know one another and form friendships that last well into the future.



Sister Mary Pat Burger, Robyn Gray and Sister Justina Bieganeck receiving the Sally Award in 2009.

BVM statue brings back memories

Sister Mary Fabian Schneider remembers kneeling before this statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a young girl, praying for the grace to become a sister. "She's just special," said Sister Fabian. The statue, which originated from her grandmother, sat prominently in the dining room of her childhood home in Flensburg. After the death of Sister Fabian's mother, various members of the Schneider family have held the statue in safe keeping.

It was quite a surprise when her nieces, Anne Packard, Mary Cline and Rita Alexander, arrived with the statue just before Sister Fabian's 103rd birthday. "This statue is yours until God takes you home," said Anne. "All of my 11 siblings have passed away. Having the Blessed Virgin Mary with me makes me feel closer to my mother and father and my whole family," Sister Fabian said.



Movie brings Pope Francis to the big screen

Sister Jan Kilian

Some movies just need to be seen more than once. Because I experienced being with Jesus and Saint Francis through our pope in this movie (*Pope Francis – A Man of His Word*), I went back again and again, for a total of three times.

Early in the film, Saint Francis is seen praying before the crucifix and hears Jesus say, “Go, and repair my church. You can see it is falling into ruin.” Pope Francis is motivated by Saint Francis’s response. Both he and Francis realize it is the church, consisting of the hearts and souls of people, that Jesus calls them to rebuild. This church can be rebuilt only through lives of care and compassion that reach and heal hearts and souls. Jesus built his church and taught his disciples through works of mercy and compassion.

The film begins in Buenos Aires in 1999 when Pope Francis, still archbishop there, addresses a crowd. It moves quickly to St. Peter’s Square in 2013 when the newly elected pope appears to the crowd at the Vatican. His appearance there already speaks of his choice of a simple lifestyle. No ermine cape or gold jewels. Pope Francis goes where the poor and distressed people need encouragement and support. The movie depicts his presence with crowds in many different countries: Argentina, Brazil, the Middle East, and in a Philadelphia prison where the inmates “hang on his every word of forgiveness.” He gets as close as possible to people, touching them, blessing them, holding them in his arms. “God’s image is found in the faces of the most vulnerable, the defenseless and those in need.” “The future has a name,” he says, “and it is hope.”

Pope Francis speaks of an endless list of issues: environment, immigration laws, the global economic imbalance, the state of the family. . . . He speaks with a wisdom that comes from traveling the world and meeting



so many people. “Love is a choice.” The producer, Wim Wenders, connects Pope Francis to the life of Saint Francis living a life of no wealth and in tune with nature. There are birds in this film with a bird trainer listed in the credits! The small car Pope Francis uses gets mentioned, as does eating with those who beg for food.

Powerful interviews with Pope Francis show him looking directly into your eyes as he looks into the camera. I felt I was in the room in a wonderfully intimate conversation with this holy man as he addressed global concerns. His writings are also no-holds-barred calls to action. His 2018 exhortation, the *Call to Holiness (Gaudete et Exsultate)*, insists holiness is not only possible, it is an expectation God has of every one of us. Holiness calls us to live Jesus’ life in our own lives. This is what Saint Francis did. This is what Pope Francis strives to do.

Donating to the Franciscan Sisters:

Please, feel free to express any wishes you may have for your gift. However, be advised that in order to ensure that donors will be entitled to a federal income tax deduction, Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota, is required by Internal Revenue Service rulings to retain full authority over the assets granted to it and cannot accept gifts that are required by the donor to be paid, or to be used, only to further the work of a specific individual or that are required to be used in another country by FSLF or another foreign charity or religious institute.

'In simple gratitude, we give'

Sister Cordy Korkowski, director of Donor Relations

One of the joys of my ministry is knowing the affection and support that comes from donors like Ann Sang and Jerry Pietrzak. I invited Ann to share her story, their story. Thank you, Ann, for this beautiful account. I can feel your spirit and smell that bread.

My first impression of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls was attending the graduation of my cousin, Mary Hageman, from St. Gabriel's School of Nursing. I fell in love with Sacred Heart Chapel. Many exploratory retreats later, I was accepted as a candidate in 1977. My practice of a love-based way of living during those nine months with the sisters formed the foundation for the rest of my journey, especially my 36 happy years of marriage to Jerry. It is in simple gratitude that we give, hoping to provide the sisters with resources to inspire a new generation, knowing that no penny is spent unwisely.

We retired to Sun City, Tex., 15 years ago and find lots of opportunities in our community to express the joyful, gospel life that Francis so exemplified. I spend time each day sitting quietly, reflecting on a loving God and smiling at the world around me as I do needlework while Jerry is out golfing. Taking care of our neighbors, reaching out to the newly widowed, visiting neighbors in the hospital are all just a daily part of living here.

Our favorite way of taking care of ourselves and others is to make a big pot of soup, bake a loaf of fresh bread and invite folks to come break the bread of their lives at our table. So much laughter, which is my major memory of the Franciscan charism, many hugs and simple peace. One of

my simple, basic life-affirming accomplishments has been teaching folks coast to coast how to bake bread . . . taste and see (and smell) the goodness of the Lord.



Jerry Pietrzak and Ann Sang: "It is in simple gratitude that we give, hoping to provide the resources to inspire a new generation and knowing that no penny is spent unwisely."

Feast of Saint Francis

Transitus

Wednesday, October 3
7 p.m.

Eucharist

Thursday, October 4
11 a.m.

St. Francis Convent
116 8th Avenue SE
Little Falls, MN

All are welcome!



Blessing of Animals

Sunday, October 7, 2018

Washington Park, 113 NE 4th Street, Little Falls, MN

Engaging Franciscan Spirituality – Still Engaged now complete

Associate Rick Dietz

You might remember back in September 2015 when 13 individuals desiring to learn about Franciscan spirituality formed our inaugural Engaging Franciscan Spirituality cohort. The 20-session program, which met monthly, concluded in May 2017.

To the happy surprise of the organizing team, nine participants wanted to continue learning. The team responded by creating a second phase entitled “Still Engaged.” The program had ten sessions, still meeting one Saturday a month. Phase Two had the participants read St. Bonaventure’s book *The Soul’s Journey into God*, as well as take part in activities that brought out major concepts contained in the book. They especially enjoyed the chapters dealing with how nature reveals something about God, how our five senses bring that revelation to our mind and how our mind is highly helpful but also limited in its ability to comprehend God. There were also sessions delving deeper into the Franciscan understanding of peacemaking and an incarnational worldview.

Still Engaged concluded in May, but the group intends to meet quarterly to continue their learning on their own. It is truly gratifying that they have found our Engaging Franciscan Spirituality program (both phases) enlightening, enjoyable and spiritually fulfilling.



Still Engaged participants - front row: Garry Dahl, JoAnn Dahl, Maureen Spanier; back row: Pat Flicker, Kathie Pflueger, Lori Johnson, Sandy Scholz, Debora Galvez (not pictured: Brianda Cediel)

St. Francis High School Gathering

Sister Elise Saggau

On Sunday, July 15, the fifth St. Francis High School Annual Gathering took place at St. Francis Convent in Little Falls. Over 100 graduates, former students, faculty, staff and guests came together to celebrate Mass in Sacred Heart Chapel, after which everyone enjoyed a simple lunch and an afternoon of visiting and touring the former high school building. The anniversary classes of 1948, 1958 and 1968 were well-represented and specially honored.

The goal of this event is to keep alive the relationships formed at SFHS and to nurture and promote the Franciscan spirit that was instilled during those special high school years.



Connie Ortman Banach (class of '65), Stephanie Larson Motzko (class of '72), and Mary Ellen Imdieke (class of '64), all members of the planning committee, oversaw the registration and welcoming process.

.....12th Annual Green Fair Folk Festival

Fantastic music, exhibits, vendors, food and awesome activities for kids combined for another successful Green Fair Folk Festival on the grounds of St. Francis Convent. The Franciscan Sisters welcomed 'Homemade Jammin'' as the opening act, followed by The OK Factor (all the way from the Twin Cities). The entertainment continued with various ensembles from St. Francis Music Center: percussion, ukulele and performances by URock, the popular summer music program for kids who have always wanted to play in a band. All the music was made possible through grants from Aurora Philanthropies, Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, Minnesota State Arts Board and Five Wings Arts Council, through an appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature.



Faith
and Fun
with
Franciscans

Faith and Fun with the Franciscans, the annual Girls Camp sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters, welcomed 21 girls to St. Francis Convent for a three-day outdoor camping experience. This year, the campers spent time in the Peace Garden with Associate Bev Gerads, who guided them in a meditation exercise and a deeper way to be silent in nature.

- F R A N C I S C A N -

Harvest Supper

November 10, 2018 4:30–7 PM - St. Francis Convent

Chicken, sausage, garden vegetables, coleslaw, breadsticks, homemade bars and beverages will be served.

Adults \$10 • Children (5-12 years) \$5 • Children under 5 years - Free

Tickets available at the door or by calling (320) 632-2981 Monday - Saturday

Proceeds from the Franciscan Harvest Supper benefit St. Francis Health and Wellness Center and St. Francis Music Center, Little Falls. For more information, contact (320)632-2981 or info@fslf.org; www.fslf.org.

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Franciscan Associate honored

Associate Geri Dietz

The mission of the Franciscan Federation is to promote exploration and study of the Franciscan evangelical life and its implications for these times and for our world. It provides opportunities to gather, collaborate and extend the values of continual conversion, contemplation, poverty, humility and peace. What a mission!

Each year, the Federation honors men and women who exemplify a Franciscan value, based on the theme of its annual conference. This year's theme was Franciscans and Muslims: Lessons from the Past and Prospects for the Future. The criteria for the award: people who "exhibit an openness to the other and who, in their service, transcend prejudices, engage in interfaith dialogue or cross-cultural ministry and witness to unity in diversity."

Franciscan Associate Brianda Cedral, St. Cloud, is this year's honoree. For 15 years Brianda has served people from over 26 countries through Hands Across the World, a nonprofit she co-founded with Sister Tonie Rausch. About nine years ago, the Federation began opening its doors to associates, meaning individuals who live out the values, but are not vowed members of a religious community. To my recollection, this is the first year that an "associate" has received the award.

Brianda exemplifies openness through interfaith dialogue and service to immigrants and refugees, reminding them they are loved by God. Although they may worship or pray differently, they share mutual respect and see God's presence in one another. Most of the immigrants settling in central Minnesota are war or economic refugees. Brianda provides services to those who do not have the language or living skills to thrive in their new home. She also offers a safe place for families to gather and socialize and to share their stories, concerns and questions.



Brianda Cedral proclaims that God loves diversity and all are united as sons and daughters of God. "Every day I need to connect with God and need God's presence to give good counsel with hope. I have been part of and witnessed great growth in the lives of the people I serve, and Saint Francis has been a guide for me."