



Save the Date:

Associate Weekend
April 30-May 1, 2011
University of St. Francis

Summer Gathering
July 30-Aug 3, 2011

Congregation Chapter
April 9-16, 2012
Potawatomi Inn
Pokagon State Park,
Indiana



December Day of Recollection

On Saturday, December 4, Associates and Sisters gathered together at the Joliet Franciscan Center for a Day of Recollection. Sister Theresa Galvan, CND, Joliet Diocese Vicar for Religious, spoke to the group about "Living with Stress as Men and Women of Faith." Throughout the day we were given some helpful, practical hints on how to cope with stress and how to use prayer, especially scripture, during the stressful times in our lives. The part that God plays in our lives during these particularly challenging times was also discussed. Sister Theresa also spoke of the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary and the joys and stresses that both Mary and Joseph experienced. In spite of the snow storm that was occurring outside, it was a wonderful day.



Sr. Theresa Galvan, CND



Jeanne Foley



Lou Ann Kinney, Ann O'Brien, Sr. Verene Girmscheid,
Cheryl Shaw, Sr. Elaine Kerscher

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Southern Illinois Associates and Sisters . . . by Eileen Hartke



Front Row: Connie Blackwell,
Eileen Hartke, Rosie Myers
Back Row: Barb Pals, Belinda Minko
Sr. Sandra Sudkamp

Each Wednesday evening a group of Associates, Sisters, and a few other women from the local area have been meeting together to share prayer, song and life. Eileen Hartke, who will be making her commitment as an Associate this year at the Associate Gathering, states that these women who meet regularly "are an adventurous and spirited group of women who strive to be a support system for each other. We are gift to each other and we encourage each other to be the best that we can be with the talents that God has given us. We do not want to hide these talents but desire to share them happily with the community around us."

As Eileen relates, "Our adventurous spirits lead us to celebrate a lot, especially new life as we celebrate becoming new grandparents for the first time. Celebrating birthdays is always special in that it gives us the opportunity to recall all the things that have happened in our lives to make us the persons that we are today. Holidays keep us mindful of the world around us, keeping us aware of the struggles and victories of those who have gone before us. Holy days give us pause in our daily lives to be appreciative of our faith and church communities around us. We celebrate anniversaries,



Connie Blackwell

recoveries from illness, and all joyful events in our lives. Giving thanks to the Lord for all God's blessings in our lives keeps us focused on the awesomeness of our God."



Connie Blackwell, Sr. Sandra Sudkamp,
Barb Pals

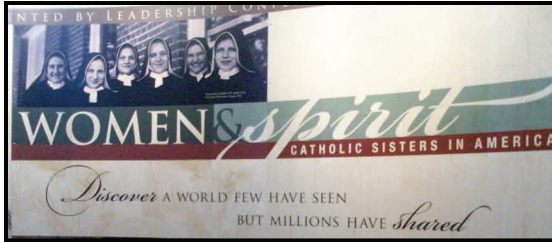
To lead a life of simplicity and grace they look to their role models, St. Francis and St. Clare. At the present time they are discussing the book, *Living Like Francis Today*. The group is also exploring the life of Mother Alfred Moes and the Franciscan charism.



Rosie Myers, Barb Pals,
Belinda Minko

Associates and Sisters Attend Midwest Gathering

... by S. Sharon Frederick



On April 2 Janine Hicks, Ann O'Brien, Michele Phelps, Sr. Verene Girmscheid, Sr. Sharon Frederick, and Sr. Sandra Sudkamp traveled to Dubuque, Iowa, to attend the Bi-annual Midwest Gathering of Associates, Sisters and Brothers. The featured speaker was Edwina Gateley, national and international speaker



Sr. Sharon Frederick with photo of Sr. Anthony Claret Sparks at the LCWR Women & Spirit exhibit.

and leader of retreats and parish missions, author of 12 books, recipient of numerous awards, poet, mom and advocate to end the plight of homeless women and those involved in prostitution. Edwina was the founder of *Genesis House*, a house of hospitality and nurturing for women involved in prostitution in Chicago. During her presentation, "In God's Womb-Your Soul Journey with God," we experienced a day filled with contemplation, poetry, music, visuals, and prayer. We also were given time to share our dreams and concerns. It was truly a "vacation day" filled with God's embrace. The next day we drove a short distance to the Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium to experience the **Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America** exhibit. Through visuals, audio presentations and artifacts, we learned how American women played a vital role in shaping American life from its earliest days. A picture of Mother Alfred Moes, founder of our Congregation, and a life size photograph of our former Sr. Anthony Claret Sparks, one of the Loyola University students who joined the picket line in objection to the exclusion of Black women in the athletic center, is featured in the exhibit. What a wonderful tribute to religious congregations all over America. The exhibit has been traveling around the country since 2009. In September it will be sponsored by Notre Dame University and St. Mary's College in South Bend, Indiana. Goggle www.womenandspirit.org for further information.



Janine Hicks, Sr. Verene Girmscheid, Edwina Gateley, Ann O'Brien, Sr. Sharon Frederick, Michele Phelps, Sr. Sandra Sudkamp

God is at home, it is we who have gone out for a walk . . . *Edwina Gateley*

Human Rights Update: Land Victory for Comunidad Romero! . . . by Jeanne Foley

In a recent *Staying Connected* issue I asked for prayers for one of the communities I visited in El Salvador last year. They had been struggling against bureaucratic opposition to legalizing the land they have been living on and tending for the past six years. I have just received news that they have received a written agreement from the Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Transformation (ISTA) making it possible for the 75 families currently living in Comunidad Monsenor Romero to move forward with a potable water project, and gain the title to their land and additional land for raising vegetables, setting up a community library and other communal purposes.



As a result of your prayers and about 40 emails from delegation members in the USA, some of which were read aloud at inter-governmental meetings, the following actions were taken:

- A letter authorized the Community to begin work on the land as soon as the legal measurements were completed.
- The Civilian National Police (PNC) and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security agreed to support the process and provide security when needed and participate in conflict resolution in the area. (Prior to this residents were subjected to hostility and death threats.)



- The Community now has a green light to go forward with their potable water project and seek financing and donations for dignified homes.

Having listened to their story, talked with them and walked around their little village, this means so much to me. The privilege of going there on a delegation impels me to continue to share their story. This kind of solidarity gives them hope.

To read more, please visit www.vis-elsalvador.org. This very effective grassroots organization has been advocating tirelessly for human rights, human development, education and women's advancement since the end of the civil war almost twenty years ago.



Associate Gerarda Seemayer . . .



On March 5 Associate Gerarda Seemayer died after a long illness. Several Associates and Sisters attended her Memorial Mass at Maternity BVM Church in Bourbonnais, Illinois. What follows are excerpts taken from the eulogy that her good friend, Reisha Raymond, SFO, gave.

Our friend, Gerarda, first a daughter, then a sister, a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a friend, a senior companion, a Franciscan — these were the vocations in life that Gerarda fulfilled. I believe she loved life, cherished it and lived it according to God's plan for her.

Gerarda was a simple person. She didn't desire a whole lot of things in life. She was content with her cute place behind K Mart and usually would tend to "give away" her belongings as Franciscans are known to do. She got some flowers and plants from the yard at St. Clare's via Sr. Dorothy, and they were planted around her apartment building. Gerarda enjoyed people — people of all sorts, all types. Everyone she met was a potential friend. A loving, caring person with a big heart is one way she has been described, especially when helping the elderly or sick. She really enjoyed being a Senior Companion for Catholic Charities and she treated it as her loving duty. She would faithfully bring people to doctor's appointments, talk with those at nursing homes and felt privileged to be able to bring others the Eucharist. Gerarda, being a faith-filled Catholic, loved her God, her religion, and, as an extra gift in her life, becoming a Secular Franciscan. After Gerarda became professed to the Franciscans she stated her "dream had come true." She even took upon herself to spread the Franciscan spirit to young people and volunteered to talk to the students in the Religious Education and Confirmation classes to tell them all about St. Francis.

She so much desired to be associated with the Joliet Franciscan Sisters. Gerarda admired them immensely and wanted to become part of what they stood for and the life they lived. When the day arrived that she made her commitment as an Associate, she was totally in seventh heaven. She cared deeply about her relationship with the Joliet Franciscans.

I know Gerarda didn't have an easy life. I know she had trials and suffering as we all experience, but I believe she was sure that God was with her through every situation. During the last couple of years while dealing with her overwhelming health problems, I think she came to accept her own personal suffering, but it seemed she also grew in grace. Gerarda was a cancer survivor, and that battle built up her inner strength and courage.

Today I am full of joy for Gerarda because she is alive in paradise with the angels and saints, relatives and friends and dwelling in peace, happiness and God's presence forever. Gerarda, we will miss you, we will cherish your memory, we will hold you close to our hearts and when we meet as Franciscans, we know you will be near.

Save the Dates ... April 31-May 1

“Journeying Together as Gift”

Associates and Sisters ...

Join us as together we learn from each other on what it truly means to be
Companions on the Journey.

*University of St. Francis
Joliet, Illinois*

There's still time to attend
Associate Weekend!
Let Janine Hicks know if you are coming.
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Associate Weekend