



Associate Newsletter of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate • 1433 Essington Road • Joliet, IL 60435-2873

Save the Date:

Day of Reflection

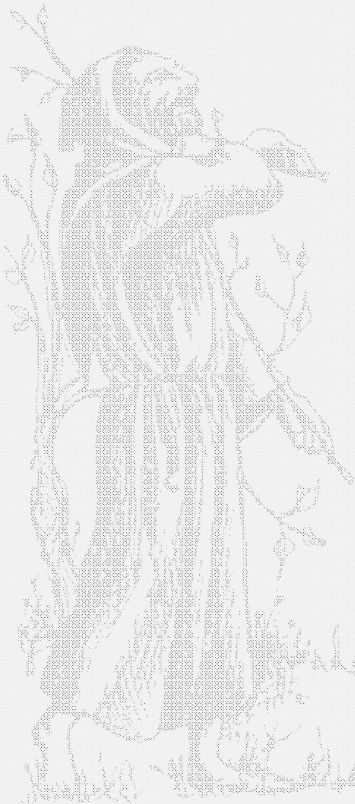
Saturday, Dec. 4, 2010
Joliet Franciscan Center
Sr. Theresa Galvan, CND

Associate Weekend

April 29-May 1, 2011
University of St. Francis

Congregation Chapter

April 9-16, 2012
Potawatomi Inn
Pokagon State Park, IN



Congregation Welcomes Six New Associates...

On Sunday, April 18, during the celebration of the Eucharist officiated by Father Chuck Faso, Vicki Hodgman, Louise Johnson, Patricia Mathieu, Belinda Minko, Rosemary Myers and Lolita Ranchoero pronounced their commitments as Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. Vicki's Companion Sisters are Sr. Mary Fran Seeley and Sr. Juanita Ujcik; Louise asked Sr. Karen Berry to walk with her as her Companion; Sr. Jane Nienaber is Patricia's Companion Sister; Sr. Meg Guider was asked by Belinda to be her Companion Sister; Rosemary chose Sr. Verene Girmscheid to walk with her and Lolita's Companion Sister is Sr. Maria Bui.

The University of St. Francis hosted the weekend which was attended by 100 Sisters, Associates and guests. On Saturday, former Congregation member, Jo Giarrante, gave an inspiring presentation on "The Awakened Heart: Listening For What Our Heart Longs For." In 2007, Jo received a heart transplant, so her talk was particularly poignant. Since her transplant, Jo has focused her work on exploring the spiritual dimensions of her medical experience. The day concluded with brunch in San Damiano Hall.



Vicki Hodgman



Louise Johnson



Patricia Mathieu



Belinda Minko



Rosemary Myers



Lolita Ranchoero

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Reflection on Associate WeekendElizabeth Bach Luong



Spring is my favorite time of the year. The glory of Easter is still present everywhere. The trees are greener, the flowers are blooming, the days are longer, the morning sky is clearer. There is something enchanting in the air that makes me happy, and most of all — in this happy time, together with the Sisters of St. Francis, a cheerful event took place — the Associate Weekend, 2010.

On Saturday, April 17, Jo Giarrante, a talented speaker, led us through sharing sessions on a very interesting theme, "Listening to What Our Heart Longs For."

We meditated and reflected and dialogued on our heart and soul. On Sunday we celebrated the formalization of six new Associates who joined the family of Sisters and Associates. Six diversified, colorful flowers added to God's garden.

The ceremony was solemn and very touching to all who attended. As we raised our hands to pray the Prayer of St. Francis for our new Associates, my mind flashed back to this time in 2002 when I had my special ceremony. I still remember every detail as if it were yesterday — the same chapel, the same exciting happy moment, the same blessings bestowed on me. To make my commitment as an Associate of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate was a life changing moment for me.

The sweet memory goes back to the time I first met some of the sisters at my godmother Ta's house in Joliet during the summer of 1999. The first impression I had was the spirituality, calmness, and warmth of the sisters. After that first encounter, I was invited on more than one occasion to visit the Motherhouse. I had a strong desire to become an Associate and to even enter religious life when God's time comes. To prepare for my formalization as an Associate, Sr. Marlene Ambrose gave me a haircut. At that time my hair was long; it reached almost to my waist. It was actually more than a haircut. I remember looking at the hair falling on the floor and knew from that moment on, I would become a different person. For me, it was just like a farewell to an excessive luxury of life, a commitment to start anew.

Another memory from that time was Sr. Albert Marie Papesh giving me valuable advice and Sr. Maria Bui also helping me to solve some matters of the heart as she was guiding me closer to Franciscan spirituality. Sisters Marlene, Albert Marie, and Maria have always been there for me, supporting me in different ways. My haircut became a symbol of who I aspired to be. From a confused, lonely, timid, arrogant and selfish person, I was transformed.

To be an Associate not only means to be able to gather and to celebrate special events with the Sisters and Associates, it also means to share in the mission of the Congregation and to share Franciscan values. Now I am in a big family. Now I am able to enjoy with heart and soul the beauty of spring and the happiness of companionship: I am an Associate of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate.

Why I Am An Associate

...by Ann O'Brien



The spirit of the Sisters of St. Francis inspired me a long time ago to become an Associate. The invitation from the Sisters was welcomed as I needed to be part of something more than just a faculty member or a parishioner. The prayer-life,

bonding, retreats, discussions, etc. were welcomed in my life. Becoming an Associate helped me to grow spiritually.

I have been an Associate since 1980. I was a teacher and principal, and lived with the Franciscans in Chicago at that time. The hospitality, friendship, and welcoming I received was awesome, and I have never forgotten the graciousness and the kindness I received. My 30-year journey has been a magnificent experience. I continue to enjoy the experience of community living. Sr. Verene Girmscheid has been my companion sister. She has been an example of Franciscan life over the years.

Since we moved to Joliet in 2007, I have enjoyed sharing with several communities in the area. Associates and Sisters enjoy time together at meals and gatherings. We have great discussions and enjoy card playing occasionally.

Life is good! I volunteer and help when I can, here, there and yonder. My family in the USA and Ireland, and I are well connected. I am happy that I have time to help wherever needed.

It is wonderful to be able to attend the many functions in Joliet. I appreciate the opportunities to experience life with the community.

Citizen of the Month

....by S. Sharon Frederick

Margaret "Martha" Peifer was chosen by *The Courier* Newspaper in Lincoln, Illinois, as its March Citizen of the Month. According to *The Courier*, since arriving in 1992 to take a position as an education administrator for the Logan Correctional Center, Margaret has worked to make Logan



County a better place. Among her many volunteer activities, Margaret has organized groups and raised funds to erect Illinois State Historical Markers in Lincoln. She visits homebound seniors, is active in her parish, Holy Family Church, and has held leadership roles in the youth program. She also serves as a Eucharistic Minister. Margaret has served on several boards in Logan County including the United Way and Catholic Social Services. She is a member of the advisory board for the Liftoff Program, a Logan County endeavor to identify and encourage youth who might not otherwise attend college. Although "retired" Margaret still teaches at community colleges once in awhile and continues to mentor young people through the YMCA and her church. Margaret made her commitment as an Associate in 2002. Her Companion Sister is Sr. Marie Grunloh.

Reminder — if you would like to write an article for *The Companion*, or have an item of interest you would like the associates to know about, please send it to Sr. Sharon. The next publication will be in December so we will need your article or item by November 1.

Leavening for the World ... Associates and Sisters Togetherby Jeanne Foley



The NACAR Conference 2010 (North American Conference of Associates and Religious) was held in St. Louis, Missouri,

from June 4-June 6. Attending the conference were Jeanne Foley, Ann O'Brien, Sr. Peggy Quinn, Nancy Rubadue Quinn, and Sr. Sandra Sudkamp. What follows are notes taken from Fr. Michael Crosby's keynote address.

The Context

The charism of a congregation has to be broader than a celibate/vowed expression of it if it is to be in service to the church. The Associate relationship is moving us to work out non-traditional ways of cultivating and nurturing these distinctive charisms. As Fr. Michael travels around and meets with many different congregations, he has studied the dynamics of these new forms of Associate relationships and has concluded that there is much to learn from each other.

Leaven as a Power Dynamic

"To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch of dough was leavened." (Luke 13:21)

If we are called to be leaven for the world, we must be aware that Jesus teaches about two kinds of leaven, positive, as in Luke 13 above, and negative, as in Mt. 16:6-12. "Take care; be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

If we think of leaven as a power dynamic in our charisms we can examine how we live out this "gift," either positively or negatively. The earliest source of the word "charism" is in 1Cor 5:6-8, and then again in the familiar 1Cor 12:4-31. "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them..." Using our power/influences is nothing if it is not at service to the community.

Becoming a Positive Leaven for the Charism of our Congregations

We can learn a lot from the new science of quantum physics. How all the molecules connect and are in relatedness. All matter is ultimately energy that is connected. So what is the energy in our particular situation, positive or negative? We see how Jesus incarnates in our world as a new energy, teaching us a new structure of connectedness. When we contemplate the Trinity as a model for living and governance, we see that we believe in a God of equal partnership. No one of the "Persons" is greater, above, lording it over the other. There is no hierarchy; each is in service (love) to all. What a model for church we have here and how aware we are of our blatant measure of power in our church!

Becoming the Leaven of Christic Cosmic Transformation

"...on earth as it is in heaven." We have to grow in our consciousness, from a patriarchal model to the cosmic, CHRISTIC model of the living Christ in each of us. "Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come." (2Cor 5:17)

Associates Meet at July Gatheringby Janine Hicks



On Saturday, July 17, as part of the July Gathering, the Associates met at the Joliet Franciscan Center for a half day of presentations and discussion led by Jeanne Foley, Ann O'Brien, and Janine Hicks. The morning began and ended with prayer and song. I then gave a brief synopsis of the article: "Associate Membership-Called to Community" by Catherine M. Harmer, M.M.S., Ph.D., which Jeanne and Ann received at the NACAR Conference in June.

There are several points that were shared with the group. There are many different understandings of what it means to be an Associate of a religious congregation. It could be being part of a group of people who are bound to a congregation mainly by prayer or a group committed to the financial support of the Congregation or a way for former members to be in touch with the congregation.

Many Associate organizations go beyond these understandings and that is what the author focused on. Two major forces move people toward Associate programs:

1. A strong desire of many lay people for a deeper spiritual life that will influence how they live and work
2. A growth of the understanding of the potential role of the laity in the church
 - There are many who want a greater role in the church but do not find it to any significant extent in the parishes.
 - They are interested in a richer liturgical experience and find a home with the religious congregation

The author states: "The great potential of Associate programs lays not so much in a revitalization of religious congregations...but in a renewal of the spiritual life and power of the laity." Associate programs could have an impact on the church itself. Could all of the changes in the church and the lack of religious vocations be God at work, aiming toward a greater empowerment of the laity? The partnering between religious and associates should be one that aims at the future of the church and its life. It can be a very rich connection, personally and communally!

The Associates broke into four groups to discuss the following questions:

1. Why are we Associates?
2. What are the gifts I bring to the Associate relationship?
3. How can I use my gifts to enhance the Associate program for me and my fellow Associates?
4. Is there something more I would like out of the Associate relationship?

The discussion was lively with many ideas shared. Before we summarize these ideas with you, we would like to have your feedback on these questions. **Please take some time to fill out the questions** following and mail them back to Janine Hicks who will compile them for the Associate Board. A future article will summarize all of the results.

Associate Survey

(Please return this to Janine Hicks, 909 Cypress Lane, Joliet, IL 60435 by August 31, 2010)

1. Why am I an Associate?
2. What gifts do I bring to the Associate Relationship?
3. How can I use my gifts to enhance the Associate program for me and our Associates?
4. Is there something more I would like out of the Associate Relationship?
5. Additional Comments:

NAME:

Leavening for the World

(continued)

Cultivating a Heart of Compassion

The heart is the core of the person; the "I am," the "isness," the "haceitas." Everything in creation participates in this image of God. The heart is the center of perception, emotions, assumptions, thinking, feeling. My uniqueness is at the service of the ministry, at the service of the cosmos. Before my heart takes a beat, there is silence. The way of silence is the way of feeling. In order to exercise positively the power we each have, the charism we have been given so extravagantly, we need to move from **MIND** to **HEART**.

Father Michael's Power Chart

For 15 years Fr. Michael has been working on a way to bring together his study and experience of power. In the second half of the keynote he presented an amazing chart which summarizes the positive and negative uses of power. We purchased and have available for any sister or associate his course, complete with workbook and DVD presentation divided into 20 minute segments that are being used for training in corporate, church and personal venues.

Summarizing, positive ways of relating begin with **CARE** which creates trust and freedom. Care is the minimum requirement to sustain any group or relationship. Care leads to collaboration, non-violence, peace, love and finally compassion. In contrast, **CONTROL** creates fear and intimidation. **Control is at the heart of sin in the world.** Control leads to abuse, which is "any way a person is controlled by fear." (US Bishops on Domestic Violence). Abuse becomes destructive and leads to conflict, violence, the outbreak of war, divorce, strikes. Hate follows and ultimately leads to

indifference which is expressed either in apathy ("I don't care") or hardness of heart.

This is only a brief summary of a very rich presentation. Each of these topics was expanded and provoked profound questions and comments. In addition to the course, "**Choosing Compassion: The Paradox of Power**" mentioned above, we also have available an audio CD of the entire keynote which is about two hours long.

Please contact Sr. Sharon Frederick if you would like to borrow either of these.

Rest in Peace

On April 3, 2010, we commemorated the death of Betty Maloney with a special remembrance of her commitment as an Associate that was given to her family during her funeral liturgy. On May 24 at the wake service of Pat Knoop, in Logan, Ohio, we presented Pat's brother, Doug, with the commemoration that he chose to place in her coffin. Our intent in the future is to honor each Associate at the time of death with a similar commitment that was written specifically as a tribute to our deceased Associates. We hope that families will find consolation in knowing that their loved one was dedicated to living gospel values as an Associate with the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. Be sure to read the commitment tribute following this article.



Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

*We commit ourselves through relationship to living more fully
the mystery of community where we, as Associates,
though separated by time,
space and lifestyles, are drawn together through prayer
and bound together through mutual support.
As baptized Christians, we commit ourselves to rebuild the Church
in the image of Jesus,
and to discover the presence of the Spirit in the world.
Rejoicing in the Franciscan Clarean charism
which strengthens and encourages us,
we commit ourselves to deepen and celebrate our faith
and to en flesh the ideals of the Gospel and the spiritualities of
Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi,
among our families, friends and all those with whom we interact daily.
As advocates with and for the poor and oppressed,
wherever they may be,
we commit ourselves to work for peace, justice
and the integrity of creation.*

(Name)

made her/his commitment as an
Associate of the

Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate

(Date)



May *(Name)* rest in peace. Amen!

July Gathering of Associates

