



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

Save the Dates:

Autumn Feast

October 16, 2011
Bolingbrook Country Club

Day of Recollection

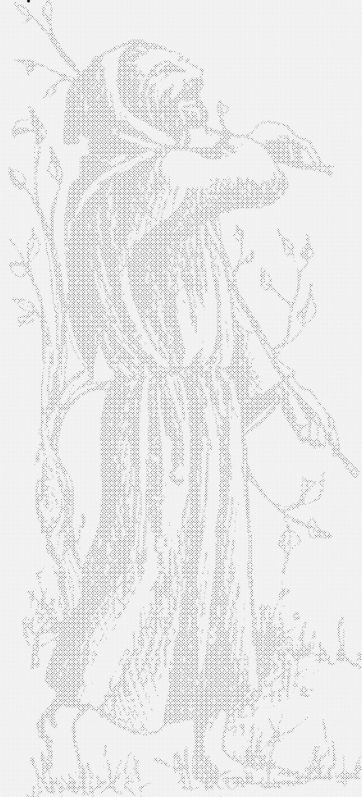
October 29, 2011
Joliet Franciscan Center

Congregation Chapter

April 9 – 16, 2012
Potawatomi Inn
Pokagon State Park
Indiana

Associate Weekend

April 28 – 29, 2012



Congregation Welcomes Five New Associates

The Congregation's annual Associate Weekend, which was attended by over 85 Associates and Sisters, took place on April 30-May 1. The focus of this year's gathering, *Journeying Together as Gift*, brought together three panels of Associates and Sisters who gave insights into their personal experiences of Prayer, Mission and Ministry, and Companionship. After the presentations, there was ample time for table conversations. At the end of the workshop an "open mike" forum took place. The day concluded with a grand dinner in celebration of the 145th Anniversary of the Congregation and a talent show.

On Sunday, May 1, during the celebration of the Eucharist officiated by Father Dennis Schafer, Connie Blackwell (Companion Sister, Sandra Sudkamp), Larry Burich (Companion Sisters MJ Griffin and Meg Guider), Marilyn McGowan (Companion Sister, Sandra Sudkamp) and Lynne Sparks (Companion Sister, Rose Marie Surwilo) pronounced their commitments as Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate. The previous day, Eileen Hartke (Companion Sister, Sandra Sudkamp) made her commitment in front of Sisters and Associates after the workshop had ended.



Connie Blackwell



Larry Burich



Eileen Hartke



Marilyn McGowan



Lynne Sparks

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Central Illinois Associates and SistersAnne Craig-McEldowney

On Saturday, August 13, the Central Illinois Associates gathered at Sr. Sandra Sudkamp's home in Effingham, Illinois. Associates came from as close as Effingham and as far as Lincoln, Normal, and Springfield, Illinois. Sr. Jennifer Byrnes, from Joliet, had driven from South Carolina where she had made a retreat at the Monastery of St. Clare, to join us! The day started out with the threat of stormy weather but cleared early to a beautiful, warm and sunny day. Louise Johnson, Margaret Peifer and Anne Craig-McEldowney were met and greeted by Sr. Sandra with a warm welcome and hugs all around.

We were afforded a tour of Sr. Sandra's new home, a light and airy space, conducive to gatherings and prayer. What a blessing to help her celebrate this new home!

As with all Franciscan gatherings, hospitality was abundant. The hosts from Effingham provided a wonderful meal, including luscious desserts, for their out-of-town guests. This gave us all an opportunity to pray, visit, become reacquainted, to laugh and to share a meal prepared by loving hands. What a joy to be together!

After dinner and dishes, we gathered in the living room for a service focusing on *Clare, Sister and Healer, Simplicity and Humility*. From the gathering blessing, the music, the readings, and the reflection time, we shared the opportunity to become closer to our Lord, to Clare as model of humility, and to each other as Associates and Sisters.

With the waning afternoon sun we came to realize that it was time to part although we would have liked to stay long into the summer evening. God had truly blessed our time together and surely will bring us back together again soon, at least in spirit!



Top Row:
Pat Kulavic, Rosie Myers,
Sr. Sandra Sudkamp, Margaret Peifer,
Louise Johnson

Bottom Row:
Anne Craig-McEldowney,
Eileen Hartke, Connie Blackwell,
Sr. Jennifer Byrnes

A Seed for Thoughts

by Josephine Collins

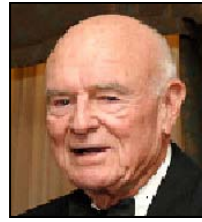


Being a Franciscan is part of us. And giving is being Franciscan....

When you reflect on life and what more you can do to help others, did you ever think of how you can change the quality of another's life by giving a part of you? Living organ donors save lives. If this is a path that you could consider, I would be happy to discuss the process and encourage you to consider this "opportunity for grace." You can obtain the information regarding the testing process by searching "kidney donor statistics" on the computer or contacting the National Kidney Foundation at 800/622-9010.

When asked by my granddaughter why I was a kidney donor, I explained to her that God gave us two kidneys, but we only need one. Whether you donate to a relative, friend, or a complete stranger, you are giving love in the form of life. The beautiful lyrics from *Les Miserables* contain the phrase, "Remember the truth that once was spoken, to love another person is to see the face of God." This is love on its highest level, helping another through this gift of you!

Associates Recognized



On Sunday, September 25, Associates Bitz and Dottie Brown will be honored for their countless contributions as the University of St. Francis names the the *LaVerne & Dorothy Brown Library*.



There will be a liturgy at 11 am with Bishop Joseph Imesch followed by brunch. If you plan on attending please RSVP by September 21.

On October 16 at the 22nd Annual Franciscan Autumn Feast, Associate Karen



Fleshman will receive the Mother Alfred Moes Award. Karen was also featured recently on Ohio's NBC Channel 4, *Paying it Forward*. Karen was recognized as "a remarkable woman who can't seem to get enough of her workplace and spends her off hours bringing compassion to a floor at Nationwide Children's Hospital."

Also, long time friends of the Congregation, George and Regina Block and Father James Lennon will receive the Joliet Franciscan Heritage Award during the Autumn Feast.

Associate Attends Franciscan Federation Conference

.....Dolores Dean



I was privileged to attend my first Franciscan Federation Conference in July along with my companion, Sr. Peggy Quinn. The theme of the conference was *Becoming a Sacred Flame: Francis, Clare and John's Gospel*. Among the approximate 500 attendees, there were over 60 Franciscan congregations represented; these Francis and Clare followers were definitely aflame with energy, compassion, hospitality, love and peace. In fact, at the final banquet dinner, there were people dancing in the aisles as we listened to some wonderful musicians from the Milwaukee area.

For me, it was a spiritually rich and inspiring event. I know that we have heard the Gospel of John; however, these keynote speakers offered a deeper insight into the Gospel. I liked the creative format that Father Michael Blastic, OFM, and Sister Nancy Schreck, OSF, used to convey their message of Francis and Clare and the Gospel of St. John. For about an hour, one would give a presentation, then, after a short break, the other speaker would give a reflection on the living out of the message.

I am still pondering the words of Sr. Nancy who spoke, "I say in the measure we know and live the Gospel, in that measure, we are truly Franciscans. We must follow the example of Francis and Clare listening carefully to hear what God is saying to us in the words of the Gospel heard in an entirely new time." She illustrated this message using the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Sr. Nancy went on to explain how Francis lived out in his lifetime the message of the Good Shepherd story, the foot washing, and the passion. Sister Nancy then challenged us to "not just to be acquainted with the gospel but to become through it a person in love with God." Over these past weeks I have personally come to appreciate more hearing the gospel at Mass; I am finding a deeper meaning in the words and the message.

In addition to the thought-provoking words from the keynote speakers, there were presentations from the three commissions: CEL-Commission of Elected Leadership, CCS-Commission of Charism Services, and COR-Commission of Regions. In particular, I found most interesting the JPIC-Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation committee's informational report on the "Trafficking of Human Beings: Our Response as Franciscans." The committee asked for the passage of the resolution: "As Franciscans, we commit ourselves to prayer and advocacy for an end to human trafficking and for respect and justice for all victims."

I was so grateful to be part of the recognition banquet. It was exciting to celebrate with Sr. Karen Berry as she was recognized for her "Teaching, writing, photography, and her way of being with and for others" as noted in the vitae of the honorees. It is my hope to attend next year's conference with Sr. Peggy, to be held in Cincinnati, July 27-30. The keynote speakers will be Joe Chinnici, OFM, and Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA, whose presentations will focus on ecclesial identity. There is much information regarding this conference and the work of the Franciscan Federation on the web; may I suggest that you take a look. (www.franfed.org)

Mission Trips OfferedRita Travis



The Commission on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation will begin to sponsor at least two mission trips a year to a location where the Joliet Franciscans minister. All sisters and associates are invited. The first trip will be to Hayneville, Alabama, where Sisters Rosemary Fonck and Kathy Salewski minister. Sr. Rosemary is the Director of Good Shepherd Catholic Center Ministry. The Center provides a safe place for persons in this poor, rural area in which there is only one convenience store. They offer a food pantry, clothing through a thrift store, a senior program, an after-school program, and some home repair and yard cleanup, as funds permit.

Assistance is needed in all these areas. The first trip is planned for the week of March 11, 2012. School is closed during this week and special help is needed in working with the children. A shorter, more local mission experience will also be planned.

Any sister or associate who is interested in being part of the mission trip should contact Rita Travis at farstar2542@sbcglobal.net or 815/592-2376.

Associate Meeting at Summer GatheringJanine Hicks

On Tuesday, August 2, twenty-four associates gathered at the Joliet Franciscan Center to share a simple breakfast, time for reflection and conversation. We began with the same prayers that the sisters were using at their meeting at the University of St. Francis. Jeanne Foley and I led the group reflection on what we had learned at the summer gathering so far. Several of our Effingham associates had left at the crack of dawn to join us for the day in Joliet.



One of the topics of the morning was the need for articles for this newsletter and for the *Confiança* magazine. Have you read a good book lately? Send us a book review! If any associate has news about what they are doing at work, as a volunteer or at a meeting they attended, we would love to hear from you! Please contact Sr. Sharon or me and we will let you know the next publication date. Our fall day of Reflection will be October 29 at the Joliet Franciscan Center. The next spring Associate Weekend is April 28-29. Dolores Dean spoke about the Franciscan Federation meeting she attended. Ann Hunter spoke about the Franciscan Federation and Diane Stocum spoke about a great conference in Los Angeles. Finally we shared the evaluations from the Spring Weekend and Jeanne reminded us what a great resource Chapter 1 of our new Associate Manual is. As usual we ran out of time before we ran out of things to talk about. It is always a pleasure to get together with our associates.

Associate Report at Summer Gatheringby Sr. Sharon Frederick



On August 2, during the Congregation Summer Gathering, I was asked to give a 3-year report on the Associate Relationship. Although it is several pages long, I thought you would like to read it.

Although the majority of you are aware, for those of you who have forgotten, a little bit of history. In the early 1970s, lay-men and women were looking for ways to embrace and live the charisms of religious communities they were familiar with.

Soon groups of individuals who had a commonality of thought were coming together and a new movement was born. According to the National Association of Religious and Associates (NACAR), 50% of associate relationships within Congregations began in the 1980s. NACAR, which is nation-wide, and Midwest Kindred Spirits, an organization of 20 other congregations besides ours, offers guidance and support through meetings, workshops and conferences.

Our Congregation, as you know, began its Associate Program in 1974 when we opened our doors to a young lay-woman, *Meg Guider*, as our first Associate. Since that time 200 associates have expressed their desire to walk with us as committed individuals. Today, in 2011, we have 136 associates living in 14 states, and of the 136, 22 live in Brazil. Of these individuals, 118 are women, 18 are men, and 16 are former Sisters. Several of our Sisters companion more than one Associate. Throughout our Associate history, 5 Associates have become professed members. Twenty-one Associates have passed away.

In the year 2000, when the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate underwent an exhaustive study on associates and religious in the United States, there were 25,500 associates. Today, ten years later, from all reports, the number has doubled with several thousand in process across the United States and Canada.

Why do men and women seek to become Associates? Simply put, they are looking for something more than they have already. They are looking for spiritual fulfillment that will influence their daily lives, and they want to be in relationship with others whose interests are similar. And most importantly—they are drawn, perhaps because of previous experiences, to certain religious Congregations, and their desire is to form a deeper bond with them.

Any baptized individual who feels called to share in the ministry, mission and vision of the Sisters can apply to become an associate in our Congregation. Our formation program has not changed much over the years. Why? Because it is a solid program that was begun by Sisters with a future vision, a vision to bring together individuals who sought a more formal way to connect with the Congregation without being vowed members.

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Associate Report at Summer Gathering (continued)

Now, a little bit about our formation program. The formation of a potential Associate takes several months and begins with a conversation during which the individual expresses an interest in wanting to know more. The person is then put in contact with the director and an information letter, briefly explaining the relationship, is sent to the individual along with an application. The individual is then asked to reflect and respond to questions. The next step in the process is for the applicant to write his or her autobiography, which is key, because it gives us pertinent information about the individual, such as family statistics, where the person worships, church involvement, and life experiences. Throughout this process, the prospective associate is in contact with one or more of our Sisters they have named on their application as someone who will share the journey with them. If no one is named, or an individual does not know someone to ask, the director will then talk to the applicant and suggest someone who might be willing to companion the Associate. The applicant is then asked to write a letter to the President of our Congregation asking to make his or her commitment as an Associate.

The last part of the formation program involves the individual coming to Joliet and meeting with archivist Sr. Marian Voelker and Jeanne Foley, a member of our Associate Leadership Council. Every year, Sr. Marian and Jeanne spend several hours educating the individual on the history of our Congregation, which includes our sponsored institutions. Jeanne meets with the new Associates to talk about Franciscan spirituality and what it means to be an Associate. Of course, the entire process culminates in the Associate Weekend. We usually have about 70 Associates and Sisters attending this worthwhile event.

During the year, 3 major Associate events take place: The Spring Associate Weekend, the Summer Gathering and the Fall Day of Recollection. Forty-five to fifty Associates and Sisters attend the Recollection Day. This summer we have 25 Associates attending all or part of the Summer Gathering.

The themes for the Spring Associate Weekend have greatly varied but always, always, spirituality is the main focus.

In the spring of 2009, Sr. Madge Karecki gave a presentation on *Living the Franciscan Rule*. The culmination of the weekend was on Sunday when 3 Associates made their commitment. In the fall, Father Vaughan Fayle, OFM, gave a Day of Recollection on *Living the Beatitudes*.

In the spring of 2010, Jo Giarrante was our presenter. Her presentation on *The Awakened Heart* was based on her spiritual experiences as a recent heart transplant recipient. The following day, 6 women made their commitments as Associates. In December, on a cold and blizzard day, Sr. Theresa Galvan, CND, Vicar for Religious of the Joliet Diocese, gave a Day of Recollection on *Living with Stress as Men and Women of Faith*. Thirty people attended.

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Associate Report at Summer Gathering (continued)

Last year, 4 Associates and Sisters traveled to St. Louis to attend NACAR's Annual Conference to hear Father Michael Crosby on *Leavening for the World*.

This year, rather than have a speaker or presenter for the Weekend, the Associate Leadership Council changed the format and a panel of Associates and Sisters shared their insights about how they pray, how they live out their mission and ministry, and how they companion each other as Sisters and Associates. We called it, *Journeying Together as Gift*. In the evening we celebrated our 145th anniversary as a congregation. The following day, 5 individuals made their formal commitments.

During the spring 6 Associates and Sisters traveled to Dubuque, Iowa, to attend the *Bi-Annual Midwest Gathering of Associates, Sisters and Brothers*, along with 500 other participants. The featured speaker, Edwina Gately, was at her best. *In God's Womb-Your Soul Journey with God* had such an impact on us that we used it as part of the presentation last Spring for our Associate Gathering. While in Dubuque, we also had the opportunity to see the marvelous exhibit, *Women and Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America*, which, by the way, is coming to South Bend, Indiana.

During the last three years, new opportunities for growth have emerged. Since the very beginning 37 years ago and into the present, there have been areas in the country where many Associates, through the efforts of our Sisters, have asked to share our journey. To name a few:

In Columbus, Ohio, Karen Fleshman, our former Sister Naomi, through her witness as a gospel woman, continues to gather 10-12 Associates and Sisters monthly, as she has for many years, with the invitation, "come join me on this gospel path." They are also involved in many volunteer efforts in their communities.

In Chicago, Illinois, it was Sr. Dominic Krivich, who in 1989, brought several individuals together and became the inspiration for many who asked to become associates. I was one of those individuals and it was that group, those individuals, who helped to make my decision to enter the Congregation possible. The "South Side Missio Group," as we call ourselves, includes 21 Associates and Sisters. We continue to meet monthly to share our lives, our hopes and our dreams. Twenty-two years is a long time for any kind of group to be together. The Spirit at work, if you will.

Several years ago, through the efforts of Sr. Agnes Good, Logan, Ohio, became a "mecca" if you will, of Associates. Although Sr. Agnes no longer lives in Logan, the "beat goes on." These women are bonded by their Church and their ministries to the poor. Even though there has not been a Franciscan Sister among them for several years, these women serve as models of how to live Franciscan life as Associates. Cathy Kerns and others are committed to the Associate Relationship and to reaching out to the less fortunate.

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Associate Report at Summer Gathering (continued)

At the present time, Effingham, in Central Illinois, has now emerged as a new area of growth. Under the direction of Sr. Sandra Sudkamp, and prior to her involvement, Barb Pals, (through her own personal witness as a gospel woman), several individuals in this area have become Associates. A number of them are former Sisters and Aspirants, and so the connection remains. They were with us in their "youth" and now a new dynamic is being born. Every week these women come together to pray, to reflect on their own call as Franciscan women, and to be together as a community of believers who are called together as Associates and Sisters.

Yes, the Associate Relationship in our Congregation continues to grow and flourish. Within the last three years, 14 men and women have made their commitments as Associates. New developments have included updating our Associate Brochure and producing a Program Booklet. We also continue with our Associate Newsletter, *The Companion*, which is published 3 times a year.

An Associate Pin was designed which symbolizes the Associate's commitment. It was given for the first time to the Associates during the 2009 spring commitment ceremony. A statement of approbation is also given to each Associate upon receipt of the pin.

To honor an Associate who has died, a framed Commitment and Tribute is now presented to the family during his or her funeral liturgy. Our intention is that family members will find consolation in knowing that their loved one was dedicated to living gospel values as an Associate with our Congregation.

At the present time the Associate Leadership Council is in the process of writing an extensive Orientation Manual which will serve as a Resource Book for Associates and Companion Sisters. We hope to have the book completed in two years.

And speaking of the Leadership Council Last year the Governing Board set up an Associate Leadership Council (ALC) to replace the former Associate Advisory Board. The Council is composed of the Director, Assistant Director, 3-5 council members and the liaison to the Governing Board, currently Sr. Peggy Quinn. The purpose of the Council is to offer suggestions, provide leadership, offer assistance and direction to the Companion Sisters, contribute to the associate orientation, and help with ongoing spiritual development and renewal. At the present time the members of the Council are Sr. Sharon, Director, Janine Hicks, Asst. Director, and council members Sisters Sandra Sudkamp, Lucille Kripple, and Associates Ann O'Brien and Jeanne Foley.

Let me end with just a short comment. The Associate Relationship continues to flourish, as demonstrated by the fact that every year 4-6 individuals make their commitments. These new associates are committed to us as a Congregation. It is indeed a blessing and a mystery and a real sign of the power of the Holy Spirit in our Church and Congregation. Let us all, Associates and Sisters, continue to move forward with strength, wisdom, and conviction. We are all Franciscan!
We are all called!

Summer Gathering of Associates, August 2



Bottom row: Anne Tietyen, George Hunter, Ann Hunter, Jeanne Foley

1st row: Maureen Casey, Alie Phillips, Teresa Aguirre, Diane Stocum, Cheryl Shaw

2nd row: Eileen Hartke, Marie Lynch, Vicki Hodgman, Marilyn McGowan,
Josephine Collins, Mary Braun, Janine Hicks

3rd row: Jim Lynch, Helen Lawson, Jean Roach, Louise Johnson, Lynne Sparks,
Dolores Dean, Rosemary Myers, Connie Blackwell,