Sisters of Saint Francis
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interchange

...reflecting and reminiscing

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Dear Family and Friends,

When we were children, summertime was magical... the days seemed endless. Much time was spent in observation of all the things around us. Our minds would wonder and *wander*. We let our imaginations take over… *Why? How? What if?*

Now, as adults, we have refined that process. Yes, we still experience feelings of awe and wonder about life and still spend time observing, but much more time is spent reflecting and reminiscing.

So, too, it is for our Rochester Franciscan Sisters. Here are some of their stories. We hope you enjoy this trip down "Memory Lane" as much as we enjoy the opportunity to share these stories with you! And we offer a special thank you to Sister Therese for interviewing these Sisters and capturing their essence!

Sister Therese Jilk

Kathy Gatliff
Editor, Director of Communications

Spiritual Growth through Iconography

Most Rochester Franciscans probably identify **Sister Clairvaux McFarland** as "our iconographer." So it's most fitting that she identifies the highlight or most fulfilling moment in her ministry as writing the icon of the Holy Trinity for Saint Marys Hospital. The task was challenging because of the energy-sapping need to stand for much of it, since it happened shortly after her life-changing car accident in 1994. She moved to the Cottage at Assisi Heights, which became a wonderful new home for Sister Clairvaux's ministry. "Had I not had this accident and been moved to the Cottage, I would not have such a wonderful space to do my ministry of Icon writing."

She recalls fond memories of other opportunities for spiritual growth and prayer, to include the gift of a 30-day retreat in Gloucester, Massachusetts, tailored to her singular way of praying. There she enjoyed the beauty of the ocean. Since then, water continues to open windows of the purity and surprises of God for Sister Clairvaux. Spiritual growth was also the fruitful gift of assisting Br. Joseph Kilikevice in retreats; guiding our Sisters at Tau Center, Assisi Heights, and Lake Elysian.

Another experience of deepening her spiritual growth was the three-week visit to Assisi, Italy, led by Sister Ramona Miller. Much of that time was spent researching the lives of Francis and Clare to prepare for writing their icons.

Without a doubt, Clairvaux's iconography serves as her role of being "a co-creator with the Spirit" and it has deepened the spiritual feelings of many persons who view them in churches, private collections and at Assisi Heights; all places where the icons were consecrated, prayed and given depth and invitation to enjoy this visual experience. What a valued and sacred contribution to the larger mission of Jesus and our Community, especially, as Clairvaux concludes, *"In a society that is always in a hurry or 'doing' rather than 'being', I find as I am becoming less mobile, the Prayer Before Icons, the prayer of 'being' is again, such a reward."*

Thank you, Sister Clairvaux, for awakening us to this singular privilege of being in the Heart of God, where the Spirit of God keeps being planted anew on the journey to our eternal home.

A Kind, Quiet Presence

Before **Sister Delphine Klein** came to Assisi Heights to retire in 1989, she served in housekeeping ministry at several parish missions where Franciscan Sisters taught. From 1958-1989, she was missioned to the College of St. Teresa (CST). When asked why she chose housekeeping, Sister Delphine said, "I only had an eighth grade education, so housekeeping was the only other choice besides teaching."

Listening to Sister Delphine's description of the golden times spent at CST, it is obvious that there was a great difference between CST and small missions. "I wasn't alone at CST, like in the small missions before. Cooking for me was boring, but cleaning gave me a wonderful sense of having done something where I could see the results!" At CST, she experienced friendship with students, faculty members, secretaries and visitors. Sylvia Odegaard, her supervisor, and Sister Egbert Flannery were very significant guides and friends. In 1982, the graduating class of CST requested that Sister Delphine receive the Teresa of Avila Award.

"They felt that they knew me," said Sister Delphine, happily amazed! It was then that Dr. Thomas Hamilton named her "a valiant woman: a woman possessed of an inexhaustible gift of self... She brought to all at the college an appreciation of their home away from home."

Not surprising then, is that Delphine realizes her greatest gift has evolved from childhood, spanning all her years as a Franciscan Sister. "I'm quiet like my Dad. Observing the older Sisters made me more gentle and kind as I grew older here at Assisi Heights, learning from both bad and good examples. I learned to forgive others and myself. I can take suggestions from others. Before I die, I want to thank all my Franciscan Sisters... [they've been] like a family."

"A few years after CST closed, Sister Avila Schurb appeared to me in a dream and said to me, 'Pray, Pray, Pray.' As our world is now, those words help me to accept what is--especially in these hard times for our world, our country, our church, our community. Also, my sisters, Ss. Judine and Jeanette, and my parents gave me wisdom by their own examples. My favorite belief comes from The Holy Family, 'I can't leave St. Joseph out, that's why!'"

Sister Delphine sums up her view of life and of being a Franciscan as beautifully simple as she's lived: "To me, especially at CST, as well as other places, we Franciscans have been so willing to open up and be women of great kindness and goodness."

That's the heart of the matter, Delphine; your story proves it!

The Missionary Trio of Graceville

Sisters Parma, Amadeus and Virgeen

Sisters Amadeus, Parma and Virgeen formed a special missionary trio and responded to a call from the small community of Graceville, Minnesota. It was May, 1976, and though this was a small community, the call to serve was large in scope: to supervise construction of and manage a sixty-bed nursing home. During construction, Sister Amadeus, the administrator, directed operations needed for occupancy, hired staff, took applications for residency and met with pastors of various Church denominations, encouraging them to participate in their mission. And they did! Sister Parma served as the director of environmental services and seamstress. She did all the sewing for the Grace Home. She also managed the gift shop and postal services. Sister Virgeen was the business manager. She set up the business office and, together with Sister Amadeus, took care of financial matters.

Grace Home's doors opened on June 13, 1977. Five happy residents were welcomed by an equally happy staff. They were blessed with permission to have the Blessed Sacrament housed permanently in the Chapel, and the services of a daily Chaplain. With the help of volunteers from the area, they were able to provide various events for the residents. On one occasion, they organized a parade several blocks long which ended at a fair for the residents on the Grace Home grounds. The fair featured Bingo, Fish Pond, Refreshments, Used Clothing Shop, etc. Grace Home had truly become a "home" for the residents; so much so, that on holidays they preferred to stay at Grace Home and go to their families at a later date. Sister Virgeen recounts a very special story:

"To show their appreciation for the care given to the residents, the Board Members had a picture taken of the three of us to be displayed in the front hall of the Home. On the day we were leaving, we were invited to be present at the placement. As the three of us walked to the site where the picture was to be hung, Sister Parma said to Sister Amadeus, 'Have you ever been hung before?' We believe our heartfelt laughter enhanced the occasion. The picture is still there today, and Grace Home continues to offer service and comfort for the elderly."

Sister Virgeen continues, "We valued this six years of ministry as a contribution to the mission of Jesus and the Church through our care for the elderly, participation in community events, and as an offering of a spiritual, dedicated witness to the persons of Graceville." Showing kindness and interest in the lives of others was the heart of their ministry.

In addition to the Graceville ministry, Sister Virgeen shared a personal reflection. "The highlight fulfilling my years of ministry was spending 19 years living with Sister Amadeus. Her deep and beautiful spirituality cannot be described in words. To me, it was like reading a spiritual book every day." Sister Virgeen also identified a few specific memorable moments in Community life as the celebration of her Silver and Golden Jubilees, as well as her 60th Diamond Jubilee. She is grateful for the wonderful opportunities for retreats and programs she participated in here at Assisi Heights.

And *we* are grateful for her smiling presence every day!