spring 2015

interchange

hope

Sisters of Saint Francis

Exploring values common to you and today's Rochester Franciscans

interchange
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editor
Kathy Gatliff

layout/design
Audrey Caseltine

telephone: (507) 282-7441
fax: (507) 282-7762
info@rochesterfranciscan.org
www.rochesterfranciscan.org

1001 14th Street Northwest
Rochester, MN 55901

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Focus: hope

2 **Year of Consecrated Life**
by Sister Christine Stanoch

3 **A New Call to Conversion**
by Sister Kathy Warren

4 **60 Years of Living with Hope at Assisi Heights**
by Sister Marlys Jax

7 **With Hope for the Future - Our Vision**
by Sister Marlene Pinzka

8 **Celebrations: Jubilarians**

9 ***Annual Report:*** **In Memory of...**

10 ***Annual Report:*** **Fiscal Year Report 2013-2014**

11 ***Annual Report:*** **With Grateful Hearts**

12 ***Annual Report:*** **Gifts in Honor of...**

13 **Women of Wisdom:**
Celebrating 90 Years of Life

14 **A Saga of Hope: Three Different Journeys**
by Sister Tierney Trueman

16 **In Memoriam**

18 **Reflection on Hope**
by Sister Therese Jilk

19 **Hope and Faith Witnessed by Students**
by Sister Ramona Miller

20 **2015 Summer Retreats and Events**

21 **Chapel Restoration Continues**
by Barbara DeCramer

Letter from the President

Sister Marilyn Geiger

Dear Family and Friends,

We are surrounded with so many negative images in our world today from headlines, newscasts, content in television shows and movies; is it a wonder that one could lose hope? Yet, in spite of this chaos, we see people willingly *embrace* hope. They maintain an optimistic attitude, set their sights on the future, knowing that something better will come along.

We are in a moment of transcending what it means to hope, recalling to mind that *"faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"* (Hebrews 1:11). The Oxford Dictionary defines 'hope' as a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. Reading what has evolved in the lives of the Sisters of Saint Francis over the past 135+ years, we can only marvel at the presence of the grace of God in all that has been and is for us at this very moment in time.

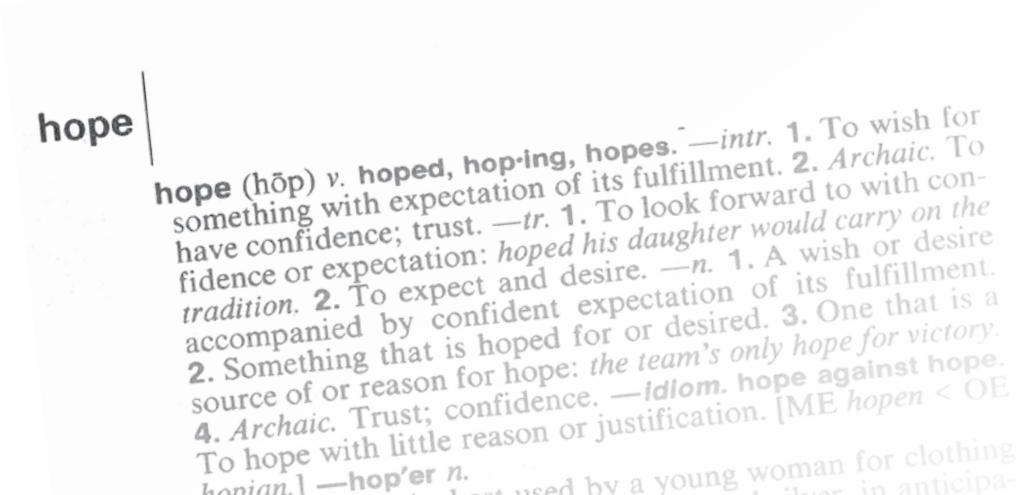
The Sisters of Saint Francis have learned to wait, to endure and to stay the course of time. We have faced the fears about what is to come and learned how to navigate the uncharted waters of a future unknown. Those of us celebrating our Jubilee this year know well that our religious life opens us to live with ambiguity and uncertainty.

In this issue, we reflect on the many influences of our past as we plan for the future. We revel in the knowledge of how the smallest acts of kindness can overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. We celebrate when others begin to exhibit signs of hope.

Thank you for your many kindnesses, your support and your prayers. We pray that you continue to be blessed with faith, love and hope in your future.

Sr Marilyn Geiger, osf

Sister Marilyn Geiger



Year of Consecrated Life

by Sister Christine Stanoch

Have you ever received a letter from the Pope? Several million consecrated men and women have recently received a letter from Pope Francis. Of course, it is in the Pope's style, but if you read between the lines you recognize that this letter is different. Pope Francis writes to engage consecrated men and women in a way that is personable, inclusive, affirming, and challenging. He states that his aim in writing this letter is threefold: "to look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and to embrace the future with ***hope***." Despite the fact that he defines these aims early on, Pope Francis wants to reach out and have a personable chat about living and witnessing to Christ in the Church and world.

Pope Francis is a strong believer that, despite the world environment, the Holy Spirit is sending consecrated men and women to follow Jesus and the Gospel, while inspiring others to do the same. This challenge is pointed out in the letter; engaging us all to examine our fidelity to the Mission entrusted to us through our Charism. Consecrated women and men, Sisters and Brothers, have much to offer the Church. A charism interprets the Gospel in our times. Jesus asks us to live the Gospel and to make the words real through our witness and actions.

During the Easter season, communities of believers are asked ***to be of one heart.*** Living in this manner would be, as Pope Francis calls it, ***the crowning point of human history***. We experience conflicts, feelings of powerlessness, disappointment and, at times, discouragement... sometimes even to the point of hopelessness. Taking up our role to "wake up the world" through prophetic actions and words is an essential part of our commitment. The Church and its people depend on it! Being filled with joy in following Christ calls us to a new openness to conversion. There is no wonder that we should be filled with the hope that gives us courage to move forward.

None of this is possible without fidelity to the inner call of God and a willingness to be open to challenges. Pope Francis encourages persons of other faiths and all Christians to recognize "their consecrated life" through Baptism and other aspects of their traditions.

Pope Francis' letter also includes his own desire to live his consecrated life in community. He joins us in the challenge and, in the gifts of the life shared by consecrated women and men, he promises his support through prayer as he gives us his apostolic blessing.

In summarizing the invitation of this personal letter may you, too, be encouraged to live these words: ***Love Your Life, Live It With Passion!***

A New Call to Conversion

by Sister Kathy Warren

The month of March found me leaving the frigid temperatures of Minnesota for the warmth of the Arizona desert. The obvious contrast was both drastic and delightful. The desert, in its own unique way, opened up for me the Year of Consecrated Life theme: to "Wake Up the World!" Indeed, the desert invigorated me and filled me with hope!

I went to the desert to enter into solitude, to wrap myself in quiet and peace, to listen and receive desert wisdom and God's goodness. Ah! Surely I was not disappointed! I asked for the grace to be attentive to my surroundings and for the gift of deeper conversion. Day-by-day my prayer was heard and the gifts were abundant.

Brother Sun

Brother Desert spoke loud and clear beginning with daily breathtaking sunrises. Oh! The mystery and splendor of a single sunrise, much less such a daily miracle! In the stillness of dawn, one grows in patience when watching and waiting for the sun to rise. And Brother Sun spoke of expectancy, fidelity, humility, radiance . . . and then there was light! Brother Sun invites: "You, too, are Light: Join Me in Waking Up the World!"

Sister Water

Sister Water visited the desert and was most welcomed! Two afternoons received a plentiful rain shower. Our prayer leader, commenting on the rare cloud-filled morning sky, began our prayer: "This is a soft day in the desert. Clouds bring softness to our lives." And in the softness, plants and animals and soil joined in the chorus: "We Live! Awake With Us!"

Sunrises and desert rains spoke eloquently not only of life, but how to live: patiently, humbly, softly. (Rather underrated practices in today's world!) Calls to conversion often involve radical stances. What else captured my attention and called to my heart during my desert time?

A Statue

In the center of a budding cactus garden was a statue of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, offering her Son to the world. The intensity of their eyes, their welcome gaze, the tenderness of Mary's arms embracing and supporting Jesus and his outstretched arms, which serve as a welcome, called me to Wake Up. The form of the two figures captivated me. And the words Francis wrote about Mary came to me:

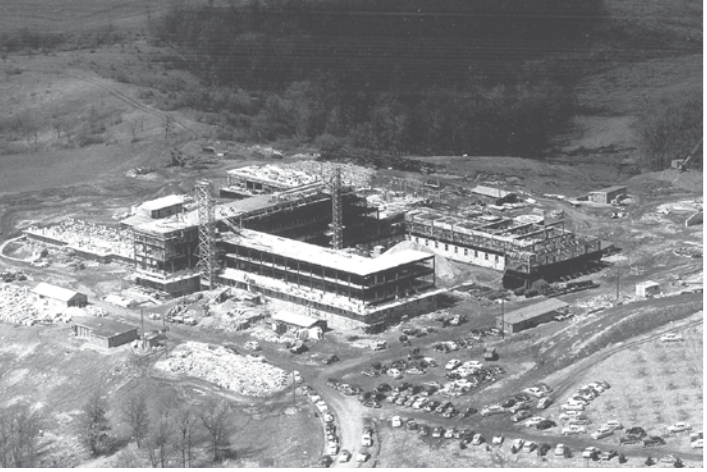
Hail His Palace
Hail His Tabernacle
Hail His Dwelling
Hail His Robe
Hail His Servant
Hail His Mother.

I see in this statue all those truths about Mary. I also heard the call to let those words identify me, for are not each of us to be Christ's Dwelling place, Christ's Garment, Christ's Servant; indeed, one who brings forth the presence of Christ in our world today, as did Mary?

Attentive to the environment around me, my desert time invited me to a deeper conversion. In this Year of Consecrated life it is my great joy and desire to embrace more passionately the Franciscan Way of Life joining all creation, and each brother and sister along the way, to be a sign of hope in our world. I pray for myself and for each of us an abundance of energy to discover the gifts God longs to fill us with (in my case, patience, light, softness) to help "Wake Up the World!"

A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol. 1, p.163.)

See Francis' First Letter to the Faithful, 6-10, for more on this theme. (Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Vol. 1, pp. 41-42.) See also Mark 3:35 and Matthew 12:50.



Clockwise from upper left: The building of Assisi Heights; Assisi Heights in 2014; the Center Street Motherhouse in 1954.

60 Years of Living with Hope at Assisi Heights

by Sister Marlys Jax

Assisi Heights is a limestone building with a red tile roof situated on a northwest hill in Rochester. Days at Assisi Heights officially begin with the ringing of the Angelus bells for a 7:00 am call to prayer. Now, sixty years after construction, the visual impact of Assisi Heights perched on the hilltop still remains. Assisi Heights' mystique has not dimmed.

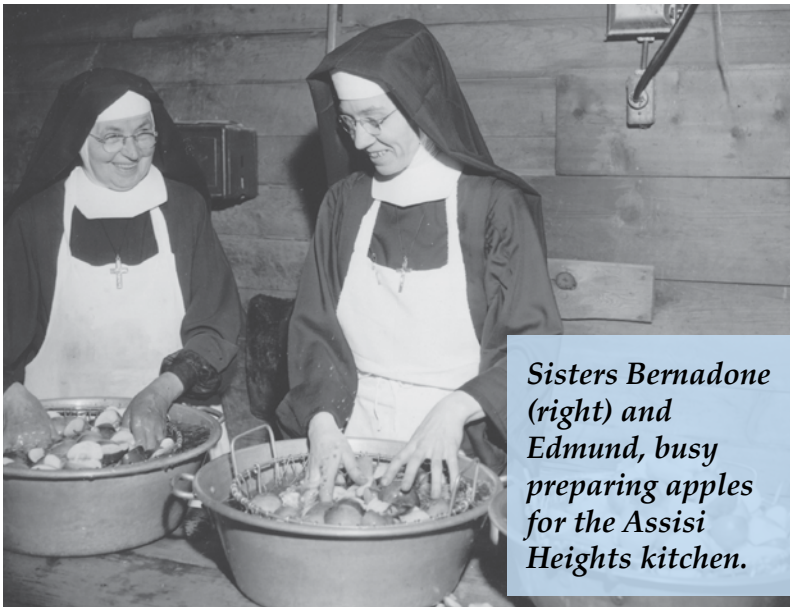
The excitement started well before these walls were erected. In fact, the walls of the original Motherhouse on Center Street, in downtown Rochester, echoed with choruses singing "We are moving to the country." Indeed, corn fields and Holstein cows inhabited the northern boundaries of the city, where land was purchased in 1949. Prior to construction, novices trekked through town to tend the vegetables and an orchard with 1375 apple trees. One novice remarked, "I thought life was a bowl of cherries, but now I know it is bushels of apples!"

The original Motherhouse on Center Street was built in 1877, of French Second Empire design, common in the late 19th century. Architects of the new facility, Maguolo and Quick, adopted an Italian Romanesque style to link mid-20th century Rochester Franciscans to Assisi, Italy. Unfortunately, the architects' plans were put on hold for a few years. Following WWII, the U.S. government rationed building materials except those deemed necessary for security. With the assistance of Hubert H. Humphrey, demands for school buildings were pushed to the top of the waiting list. Since the original architectural plans included a portion of Assisi Heights to be designated as "St. Clare School" for the education of teachers, the necessary building materials were released, thus expediting the construction in the spring of 1952. A private blessing was held at the site on April 16, Francis' day of profession. The official ground-breaking took place on Friday, the 13 of June, 1952, the Feast of St. Anthony, 75 years after laying the Center Street cornerstone.

In anticipation of the ground-breaking ceremony, the walls of the Motherhouse on Center Street vibrated with constant activity. Novices polished the old walls, combed rug fringes, and Chef Kelly, of Hot Fish Shop fame, prepared to grill fish for this Friday affair! Bishop Edward A. Fitzgerald arrived for an early morning Mass. The day began with a mighty rain storm. Electricity was absent…

"I thought life was a bowl of cherries, but now I know it is *bushels of apples!*"

With over 1,000 apple trees, everyone helped out in the orchard.



Sisters Bernadone (right) and Edmund, busy preparing apples for the Assisi Heights kitchen.

only the six High Mass candles brought light to God's word. Bishop Fitzgerald pontificated, despite the darkness.

Ground-breaking was set for midmorning at 1001 14th Street Northwest. But a deluge of heavenly moisture changed the course of the day. Mud forced the bus to park at the bottom of the hill. Novices trudged the muddy path, sidestepping the ruts left by the vehicles carrying the Bishop and other important dignitaries. Many adaptations were made, but Bishop Fitzgerald's blessing was carried out with a prescribed formula. No shortcuts! Novices walking up the hill did not delay the event… he simply started before they arrived! Then the novices sang a version of the Mass of the Angels a cappella. (It was notable that the Bishop chose to add the Church's holy water, when God provided more than an adequate amount of liquid from above!) A formal dinner followed at the Motherhouse on Center Street. Novices had to return and change into dry habits [their form of dress], move tables and chairs indoors, and re-set a makeshift dining space to accommodate the guests.

Now celebrating the 60th anniversary of residency at Assisi Heights, we often reflect on the many unique, inspiring, and colorful individuals who have graced these halls. In the 1950s, you would find Sister Lucretia Beth, the novice director, with a flair for interior design, often creating vignettes by arranging fabric artistically in spaces around the house. Our chief engineer, John Haefner, was lured away from the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Mankato, to work at the Center Street Motherhouse. At Assisi Heights, he was charged with coordinating the efforts of a few lay employees in the engineering department. Sister Edmund Sullivan, director of the house, known as being a "Sage of Ordinary Life" – always helping others – was known far and wide for her hospitality. Sister Mary Agnes of Assisi Keating, was our Curator of Documents; and Sister Placida Wrubel, of Polish descent, laundry governess, walked the grounds with her dog, Toby. She had him in complete obedience, as if she was an earlier version of the current day "dog whisperer." Father Tom Ploof, was our resident Chaplain and Theology professor. Sister Adele O'Neil, a meticulous coin counter, handled the Treasurer's duties.

From Left: Sister Adele O'Neil, Mother Callista Hynes, Mother Alcuin McCarthy, and Father Tom Ploof.

Sister Josette Huerkamp was our dietary guru, instructing the novices in the kitchen detail. Sister Collette Neeb was the sewing room tutor and mistress of habit-making. All were under the direction of Mother Alcuin McCarthy, a formidable presence who was the impetus behind the building of Assisi Heights. Together, they formed a cohesive unit to conduct the business of the Congregation in the hallowed halls of this "city seated on a hill."

Sister Callista Hynes, Vicar, was the connoisseur of decorum and diction. Sister Marcelline Roll, armed with Motu Proprio,* promoted perfectly pitched Gregorian chant intonations and pronunciations! Sister Ann Clemens, talented with needles, managed to cover the 1215 windows with drapes. Sister Annella Rohde, novice mentor and expert dust remover, confessed her operational dilemma with only two green moving carts for the whole building! Sister Blasia "Blaze" Roth lived up to her name, leaving all in awe, including one union worker, as she drove up the hill, unpacked and distributed plants and vines to niches, while he was still installing doors and doorknobs!

During the early 1960s, our teaching Sisters were still only paid $35 per month each, which bonded us in years of crisis. We depended on nurses and music teachers to add to the revenue base. Sister Adele managed to keep the voices of lenders at a whisper. Major social issues were beginning to be spoken aloud and the Vatican II spirit within us took flight.

With the onset of the Vatican II Council, walls came tumbling down. No, not plaster walls – the walls of everyday life! Vatican II opened all 1360 doors at Assisi Heights. It catapulted Sisters into a new style of dress, different ministries, and prayers in the vernacular. The world became our cloister! We stepped out from behind a "camouflage of routine" and into the chaos of the 1960s and 70s. The winds of change blew on the hill and we stepped into inclusiveness, collaboration, collegiality, and Christian unity. This hill was alive with more than music!

Expansion was evident in many areas: in buildings, diverse ministry choices and job relocations beyond the borders of the U.S. Ministries called us to champion the rights of the poor and disenfranchised and to live in economically deprived areas. These changes caused multiple challenges and broadened our horizons. We were called to refocus, giving time to embrace again the Franciscan charism and the tenacity of Mother Alfred Moes.

Today, you will find that the actual walls at Assisi Heights do talk! Twenty–one quotes engraved in the limestone quadrangle of the cloistered courtyard speak softly to those processing along the covered walk. "Courtesy is the sister of Charity." "Support everything with patient humility." "Keep nothing of yourselves for yourselves." These walls are anchored in Francis of Assisi's 13th century origins.

Even in 2015, the walls still call us to be grounded in our contemplative stance and help us face the evolving global consciousness. We are challenged by Pope Francis, our fearless, charismatic leader with a Franciscan heart, to go again to the margins of society; to welcome more ethnic and cultural diversity; to honor shifting world views while searching for ways to secure the common good for all.

In this hurting world, we hear the walls still calling us to offer hospitality and compassion to those who search for security and peace at our doorstep. We hear the cry to create places for open honest exploration of pressing issues in our church and world. Walls summon us to support and empower feminine gifts, talents, visions and leadership in all facets of society. The walls bid us to build a society where there is equity and justice across racial and faith traditions.

Today, we hear a call to tend the birthing of God on our globe!

**Document on Sacred Music*

One of many Wisdom Circles: sitting, l to r: Sisters Clairvaux McFarland, Judi Angst, Anne Walch, secretary, and Johanna Orlett. Standing, l to r: Sisters Nancy Casey, Bernadette Novack, Wanda Mettes and Rosemary Zemler.

With Hope for the Future - Our Vision

by Sister Marlene Pinzka

Planning for an event next week, next month, or next year is a part of our individual lives and our family/community life. We may be waiting for tomorrow, making plans for a vacation, anticipating retirement, or just a relaxing evening with friends. Planning is an integral part of life and, as we age, it seems to become more critical.

Like an individual or a family, we Rochester Franciscans have been involved in planning for our future throughout the past years. However, we are at a new stage, as we currently have 219 members with a median age of 80. We have contracted Sister Barbara Mullen, CSJ, from West Hartford, CT, to serve as our long-range planning committee consultant, and are focusing on three major areas: Mission and Community, Eldercare, and Resources (property and finances). Subcommittees were formed for each of the topics to develop reflection questions for each Sister to consider.

In order to hear the voice of each Sister, Wisdom Circles were formed by randomly assigning 10-12 Sisters to a Circle and they began to meet monthly. During February, Sisters explored the first area: Mission and Ministry (the core of our life together). Each Sister was asked to share her wisdom on the reflection questions provided while the others listened intently. While no discussion occurred until after each person had spoken, to assure that each voice would be heard, there was an opportunity to ask clarifying questions so that a Sister's sharing was totally understood. This same process continued in March on the topic of Eldercare, and in April on Resources.

In June, our Community will gather for a "General Assembly" – days of prayer, reflection, focused conversation and in-depth sharing. As we establish the foundation for setting our future direction and any decisions that lie ahead, we pray and trust we will be led into our future – the plan God has in mind for us!

Celebrations: Jubilarians

artwork by Barb Agerter

50

Golden Jubilarians
1965-2015

S. Jesse Capparelli
S. Diane Frederick
S. Marilyn Geiger
S. Kathryn Minar
S. Ruth Peterson
S. Arnold Ritchey
S. Clara Marie Schotzko
S. Tierney Trueman

†**S. Mary O'Hara**
†**S. Elaine Wicks**

60

Diamond Jubilarians
1955-2015

S. Zoa Braunwarth
S. Yvonne Elskamp
S. Marga Ernster
S. Virgeen Ernster
S. Dorothy Hansen
S. Neal Logan
S. Monessa Overby
S. Carmen Sonnek
S. Lorraine Stenger

†**S. Mary Frances Crawford**
†**S. Elaine Fritz**
†**S. Louise Kellen**
†**S. Campion Markey**
†**S. Patricia McGinty**

75

Diamond Jubilarians
1940-2015

S. Regina Buskowiak
S. Yvette Kaiser

†**S. M. Maigread Conway**
†**S. M. Caroline Cook**
†**S. M. Elaine Greenwood**
†**S. M. Christopher Jewison**
†**S. M. Laureen Korth**
†**S. Margaret Lynch**
†**S. M. Angelique Pflanz**
†**S. Mary Alice Schreiber**
†**S. Magdalena Stolz**

In Memory of...

God's work of peace, unity and love has flourished because of our generous benefactors. Many gifts were given in memory of a Sister or loved one who had been a vital part of your life. Their memory will live on in the prayer life and work of the Sisters of Saint Francis. We remember you through the daily prayers of our Sisters.

Gifts received October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014.

Sister Ancina Adams
Sister Thomas A'Kempis
Donald Alberg
Aaron Allshouse
Vivian Balinski
Warren and Catherine Barry
Teresa Bauman
Bill and Irene Biesanz
Sister Alphonse Billian
Sister Gemella Bishop
Peggy Bissonette
Sister Romaine Boch
Sister Camille Bowe
Phillip Brieske
Sister Marcianne Budnick
Barb Byron
Sister Anicetus Cacka
Sister Marion Cacka
Sister Alice Ann Campion
William O. Christopherson
Sister Emmanuel Collins
Bernadine Comstock
Sister Joan Connors
Red Crumb
Eugene, Cassie and Mark Cullen
Jeff Daood
Ellen Degnan
Patrice Elaine Degnan
Sister Elsbeth Dejon
Judy Dellenbach
Irene DeVos
Susan Doyle
Clare and Harriet Duggan
Sister Antoinette Ehbers
Sister Nadine Ellis
Mary Ann El'Tonnis
Father Milo Ernster
Joan Erpenbach
Sister Helen Jane Eynon
Sister Jacqueline Farrell
Sister Edana Farrell
Sister Ethelreda Fisch
Jean Fishbune
Sister Elaine Fritz
George Gallagher
Sister Lydia Gaspard
Mercedes Geist
Teresa Gembicki
Emil Goossens
Sister Olga Graf
Mary Grasdalen
Sister Jane Frances Gregoire
Bill and Agnes Haag
Sister Conleth Hager
Sister Allan Halbur
Sister Eileen Haugh
Francis and Helen Hebel
Henry and Barb Heimer
John and Louise Hermann
Joseph, Melissa and Dan Herzog
Leroy S. Hoge
Laverne S Horihan
Marjorie J Horihan
Sister Macaria Horsch
Sister Julitta Hosch
Sue Huey
Donald Huntley
Sister Ralph Jahner
Donald Jenkins Sr.
Ron Kamen
Florence Karasch
Mary Larene Keller
Conor Kelly
Don Kelly
Sister Irene Kelly
Sister Mary Carol Kelly
Dr. W. Charles Kennedy
Sister Rosita Krzmarzick
Art Krzmarzick
Cindy Landwehr
Sister Jo Anne Lawson
Fred Lickteig
Sister Fidelis Logan
Louis and Dolores Loosbrock
Sister Jeanine Luger
Midge Macken
Sister Bridget McLoon Mahoney
Sister Arlene Majerus
Anne and James Malone
Maggie and Martin Manahan
Todd Mancl
Mary Elizabeth Martin
Frank and Rose McAleer
Kathryn Ann McFarlan
Sister Gentillis McGrath
Sister Frances McManimon
Sister Dora Medina
Deanne Milks
Ruth and Charles Miller
Pamela Fitzsimmons Miller
Sister Margaret Mary Modde
Marvin Moes
Susan Ruth Eyde Morgan
Patsy and Al Moxness
Sister Bona Mueller
A. J. Mullen
Tom Murphy
Alice Jankowski Noll
Ruth K. Oakley
Gene O'Brien
James O'Laughlin
Joseph and Anita Ozeckowski
Augustine Palzer
Sister Gabriella Palzer
Pauline Pinzka
Sister Tressa Piper
Pauline E. Pisarik
Mary Ryan Pofahl
Sister Ricarda Raab
Ralph and Marcelleen Rath
Ray and Margaret Roberts
Anne Rodd
Lola Romero
Ruben and Marie Ruehle
Julia Ruiz
Sister Guillaume Ryan
Dorothy Sabo
James E. Salmon
Sister Francis Clare Schroeder
Sister Jean (Lea) Schulte
Francis Seikora
Marian J. Sellner
Sister Luke Seykora
Sister Mary Alice Seykora
Sister Lillian Silvers
Sister Genevieve Speltz
Gary and Louise Speltz
Raymond Stringham
Sister Bernadette Svatos
Maureen Dougherty Theisen
Jack Tuzinski
Marcia Udenberg
Bill Van Meter
Alois Vromen
Sister Cabrini Walch
Sister Renata Walch
Sister Romana Walch
Roman Walch
Janice Wanek
Eunice Warren
Mary Margorie Watry
Theresa Wicka
Sister Mary William
Joe Wirtz
Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Wood
Ted Zelewsky
Sister Audrey Zenner
Lyle Zimmerman

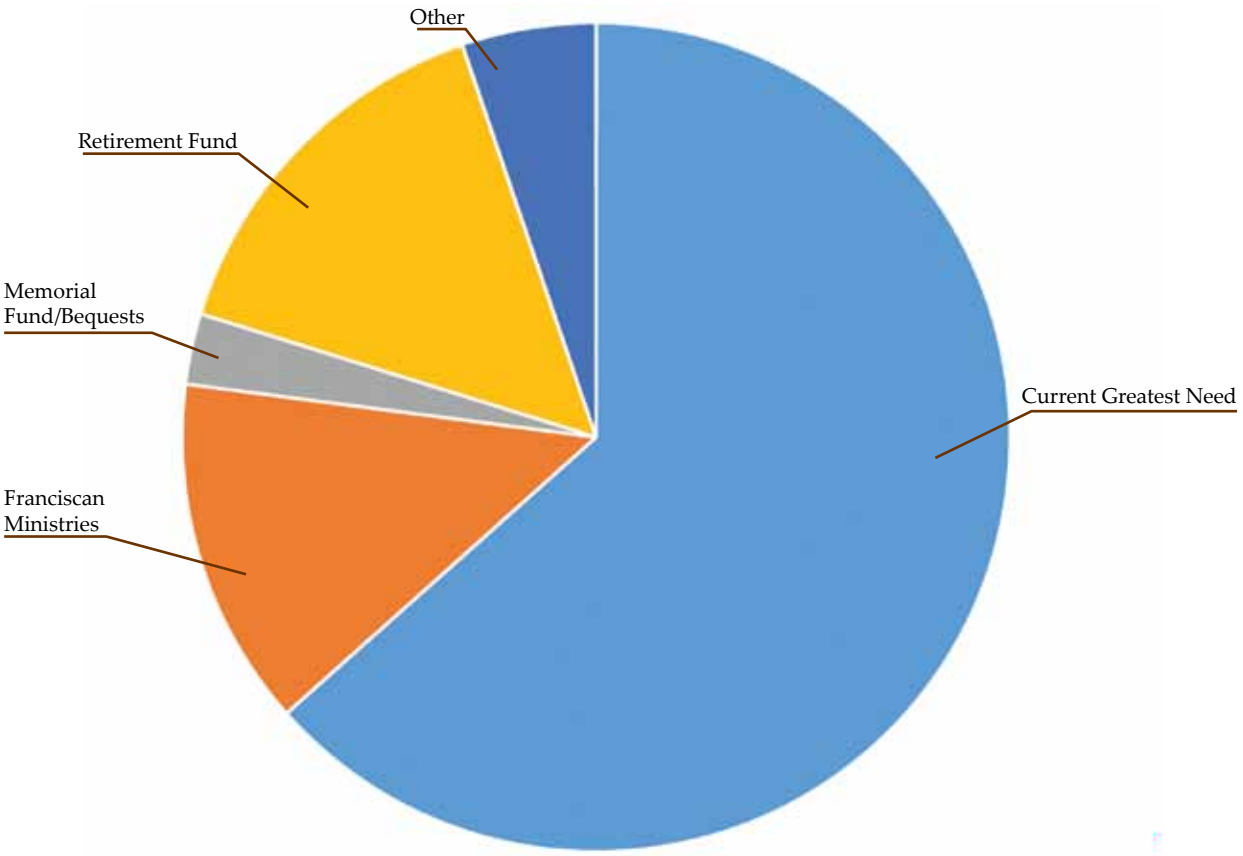
From Top: Sister Claren Sellner gives a hand massage to Sister Philothea Kadrlik, as part of the Caring Hands program. Sister Marcella Reilly keeps up with all the sports scores. A Caring Hands volunteer sits with Sister Clairvaux McFarland for some gentle massage.

Sisters of Saint Francis

Development Office
Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Report

Current Greatest Need	$253,470.01
Franciscan Ministries	$54,506.73
Memorial Fund/Bequests	$11,045.00
Retirement Fund	$59,757.00
Other	$20,940.09
Total	$399,718.83

Colegio San Francisco de Assis
Student Scholarship Fund
Contributions: $159,291.61



With Grateful Hearts

It is with grateful hearts that we report to you on our 2013-2014 fiscal year. During this past fiscal year, 1,290 generous benefactors gifted the Sisters of Saint Francis with financial support. Of these donors, 519 were first-time donors to the Sisters. Just as you have your special connection to the Sisters of Saint Francis, in turn you are truly a blessing to the Sisters.

Because of you, the "Lifelines Project" became a reality. Before last year, there was no reliable system for a Sister living at Assisi Heights to summon assistance if she fell at night, or in an area of the house or grounds where she might be alone. Your gifts to the Sisters of Saint Francis provided for the installation of a nurse alert system in the hallways and outdoor walkways at Assisi Heights. Sister Helen perhaps said it best – "It's a great comfort to me to wear the nurse alert device wherever I am, knowing that help will be on the way should I get into trouble!" We deeply appreciate your generosity that made this project possible.

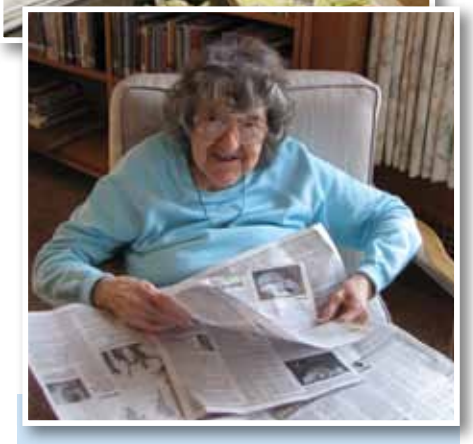
Thanks to your help, Lourdes Chapel at Assisi Heights was restored and revitalized with a fresh coat of paint on the ceiling. While we never intended an artistic masterpiece like the Sistine Chapel, the results of this renovation were every bit as exciting for all who worship in this magnificent space. Painting Lourdes Chapel was a project that was made possible by generous donors who directed their gifts to the Chapel Fund. In the coming year, we look forward to getting started on the next project for Lourdes Chapel, making necessary repairs to the beautiful stained glass windows.

Recently, a friend of the Sisters of Saint Francis sent a message filled with memories from his school years. Stephen told the story of Sisters Padraic and Colman, who were an important part of his life at St. Mary's School in Owatonna, Minnesota. He wrote, "Sister Padraic taught more than forty of us in one room – eighth grade no less. Sister Padraic was fresh air for all of us. I realized over the years that her 'magic' was straightforward: she considered each of us smart. She was no nonsense in the classroom, yet loud laughter was highly valued. We adored her." Meanwhile, Sister Colman was the high school principal. "Sister Colman, in her one-to-one with us students, seemed to be coaching, not castigating. We left her company feeling smarter and better." Stephen concluded, "It is profound how life-changing a teacher can be."

The Sisters of Saint Francis continue to change lives in their ministries of education, health care, justice and peace, ecology and fine arts, prayer and spiritual guidance. Thank you for your gifts, your friendship and your prayers. May God give you peace and all good.

Barbara DeCramer
Director, Office of Development

At Top: Sister Helen Chatterton orders supplies for the Assisi Heights Support Office, on her wrist is a Lifelines bracelet. At Bottom: Sister Yvonne Elskamp is hard to catch up with as she takes her morning walk. She also finds freedom with the Lifelines system!



From Top: Ss. Lorraine Stenger and Ruth Peterson review the housing list of Assisi Heights resident Sisters. S. Ramona Kruse, philatelist, writes thank you notes to those donating stamps to her collection. S. Iria Miller, an active member of Franciscans International, catches up on world news.

Gifts in Honor of...

God's work of peace, unity and love has flourished because of our generous benefactors. Many gifts were given in honor of a Sister or loved one who has been a vital part of your life.

We remember you through the daily prayers of our Sisters.

Gifts received October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014.

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Women of Wisdom: Celebrating 90 Years of Life

Front row, left to right: Sisters Ethylind Loudner, Edith Zamboni, Marcella Klein, Iria Miller, and Virgana Kacmarcik. *Back row, left to right:* Sisters Moira Tighe, M. Severina Caron, Marcan Freking, Lorraine Landkammer, and Neal Logan.

We asked: *"What gives you hope?"*

Sister Edith Zamboni: "My hope is that Jesus promised to be with us until the end of time."

Sister Ethylind Loudner: "As much as we can, I hope that [someday] we can go back to the 'old normal.'"

Sister Iria Miller: "Knowing that God is at my side as we journey into the future."

Sister Lorraine Landkammer: "My hope is gratitude for the Sisters whose lives have modeled for me a future full of hope."

Sister Marcan Freking: "Knowing that God is present and active in our lives."

Sister Marcella Klein: "This quote from the Bible: '… and I say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'"

Sister Moira Tighe: "My faith gives me hope."

Sister Neal Logan: "What gives me hope? Tomorrow is another day."

Sister M. Severina Caron: "My faith in God's goodness gives me hope."

Sister Virgana Kacmarcik: "At the end of my life's journey, my hope is that Jesus Christ will grant me the perfect gift of His Holy Presence, a Blessed Resurrection and Life Everlasting!"

A Saga of Hope: Three Different Journeys

by Sister Tierney Trueman

Earlier in my life, a ministry assignment made it necessary for me to learn Spanish. Now, many years later, that gift continues to provide extraordinary ministry experiences for me. It invited me to meet and walk with three women, on three different journeys, as I offered translation services. I share their stories.

"...SHE KNEW HERSELF AS POSSESSING THE DIGNITY OF BEING A *woman.*"

Journey #1

Looking at her, what did I feel? Pity? Sadness? Sympathy? Disgust? Judgment? She was the epitome of the least attractive, least desirable of all women. She identified herself: "I'm nobody." She was the image of what would be technically diagnosed as "medically complicated obesity." Her short straight hair was streaked, partially painted the color of ripe cranberries. Bright blue eyebrows perched jauntily above her eyes. She wore sunburnt lipstick, with lips boldly outlined in black, and a jewel stud claimed a space on her lower lip. Bright chartreuse polished toenails blinked from her sandaled feet. She was dressed in a bright orange lacy-style top, that revealed the bra beneath was too small to hold her abundant breasts. What could one feel looking at this pathetic image of a woman? Why was she here? Why had she come? What did she want from us?

As she began to unravel the threads of her life, tears came to my eyes. Under all of the negative accoutrements that life had piled on this woman, layer upon layer, there was an undeniable spirit, a tenacity – dare I say *hope* – to find life. She was raped at 13, and bore a child, a son, who died shortly after birth. At 16, she was married, and bore two sons, and struggled to survive in a violent, abusive, painful relationship. (She lost custody of her sons, believes them to be in their late teens today, but has not seen them for years.) An attempted suicide formed another chapter of her life journey. The one singular strand of motivation, during those 15 years of violence and abuse, was her care for her mother. "I had to care for her, find a place for her to live, pay the rent, buy food." Feeling a totally worthless person herself, finding any employment was utterly impossible. And, in her own words, "I became a woman of the night." *I became a woman of the night!* She did not describe herself as a prostitute; rather, as a woman. The words jarred me. In all the violence and abuse, the utter brokenness that was her life that seemed to define her as "a nobody" (which she repeatedly stated throughout the conversation). Somehow, perhaps deep within her, she knew herself as possessing the dignity of being a woman. Was this a desire, a longing, that someday, some way, somebody would recognize her dignity?

The counselor never physically touched her, but he embraced her emotionally and held her to his heart. He gently, lovingly, compassionately kept assuring her, "You are a good woman, you are a good woman."

Was it for counseling that she came? There appeared to be no need for any medication. Depression did not seem to be evident in her conversation. Something was being birthed within her – new life, a reason for living, *hope*? In that incredible moment, when he emotionally "touched her and held her to his heart" and assured her that she was a good woman, he helped her see the good within herself. She received the gift of believing in her own goodness. Some sense of her dignity as a woman was restored to her that day. A total stranger was able to look into her heart and find, deep within, the woman that she so wanted to be, no longer a woman of the night, but a woman now given rebirth in the light of the day.

Journey #2

She was young and beautiful; long, black hair that framed a lovely oval face; two obsidian eyes that spoke a silent message of sadness. Her fingernails had been chewed to the midpoint, beyond whatever I had ever seen. She was thin and a bit malnourished, fearful and trembling. She sat quietly with her friend who gently encouraged her to tell the counselor what she was experiencing. The symptoms were almost generic for every person who came that day: sleeplessness,

irritability, lack of appetite, headaches, nervousness. How could someone so young be experiencing such a painful way of life?

Her story was short, but filled with all-too-many chapters of fear, hardship, and pain. She was a Latina who found her way to the states by the most difficult route – through the desert, guided by coyotes. Few words were needed to describe her struggle for life and survival during this cruel chapter of her life. Would she ever recover?

The counselor was extraordinarily gentle, patient and kind, and took what seemed to be an endless amount of time, carefully reviewing the different possible medications that could be of help to this beautiful creature, to restore healing and hope. Finally, together, they decided on what would be the best choice. I took her hands – with the battered nails – and asked her to promise me that she would come back again. She agreed.

Six weeks later she returned, flew to meet me, and stretched out her hands to show me. New nails had grown to fullness. She was beginning to learn English, and helping care for an elderly lady. Her dark eyes were lights of new life. Hope for a brighter future was now a possession she treasured.

"How could someone *so young* be experiencing such a painful *way of life?*"

Journey #3

"Be sure to attend the mother before you see the daughter," the counselor instructed. Her story was legion – an abusive, violent relationship, where frequent beatings and fear were part of daily life. Three older daughters had left the home, but the 8-year-old remained. The woman assured the counselor that her husband would never return. Tragically, the little 8-year-old saw her father beat her mother so severely that she had to be taken to the Emergency Room of the local hospital. Then he turned on this girl, his youngest child, and beat her, forcefully striking her across the face several times and throwing her to the floor.

"You speak her language. Invite her to come in, and her mother and I will just sit here and be present," said the counselor. The child came timidly and sat down in front of me. She was pale and a bit underweight. (The mother had told us that she was not eating well.) So we began a conversation.

"I'm a teacher. Let's pretend that you are a new student who just came to my classroom today. I would like to get to know you a bit, so I would like you to tell me a few things about you. Is that okay?" And she began. She liked school, art was her favorite subject, and someday she hoped to become an artist. Did she have a special friend? "Yes, Maria*." Her conversation was punctuated by her reference to her "buena mama" – they obviously had a very special relationship. As she continued to converse with me, she became comfortable and her conversation was animated.

Obviously, school was a safe and positive environment for her. "Is there anything you don't like?" I asked. Yes, she did not like to be surprised by someone coming up to her suddenly and scaring her. I could understand that. "Is there anything else you don't like?" A hesitant answer followed, "Yes... when my buena mama is not at home." (I knew that the three older sisters had now returned and were again living at home, so when the mother was not in the home, the older sisters were present.)

I then asked the key question, "Why do you not like it when your buena mama is not at home?" The dam was broken, and words poured out, describing the frightful experience that was indelibly imprinted on her mind and her heart. My tears met her tears as we sat holding

**fictional name*

hands. I affirmed that what she had experienced was a terrible tragedy, and I felt her pain.

"You have got to try to forget this nightmare, put it down," I said. Her reply, "I can't ever forget it!" "Look, hold out your hands. Put this nightmare in your left hand, close your fingers tightly around it, and try to put it down. You may never be able to forget it, but you might be able to put it down, so that it does not control the rest of your life. Now, hold your desire to be an artist in your right hand, open it wide and raise it up. Let this take you up, up, up," I encouraged her. A smile began to creep across her face.

"I want you to try to remember three things. First of all, something terrible was happening to your father that he would do such awful things to you and your mother. We may never understand what that terrible thing was that was happening to him. Secondly, you are NOT responsible for how he acted. Nothing you said or did caused his actions. Finally, your buena mama will never allow him to return, so you do not have to fear that he will ever come back and hurt you or your mother again," I stated emphatically. "Now, I have a favor to ask of you. I will be back again. Would you draw or paint one of your pictures for me?" She beamed, "Yes!" I followed up with, "Is that a promise?" "Yes!" she exclaimed. "And you need to eat a bit more so you are not a 'skinny minny'!" I finished the conversation. She laughed.

The common thread through these three true stories was the magnificent healing environment in which these three encounters occurred. When persons of genuine love and compassion for their brothers and sisters who suffer, reach out to touch their pain and suffering and offer hope and healing, new life is born, and hope that a different future is possible for all, especially if we take the time to see our brother, Jesus, in their eyes, and become part of that Church of the poor and for the poor.

In Memoriam

Sister Lucille Haas

January 31, 1939-November 28, 2014

Lucille Margaret Hass, formerly known as Sister Margaret, was born and raised in Austin, Minnesota, later moving to Adams, Minnesota. She was the youngest of four children, with two sisters and one brother.

In 1965, Lucy professed perpetual vows with the Sisters of Saint Francis. Lucy was both a teacher and principal in Winona, Wilmont, North Saint Paul and Bloomington, Minnesota, as well as Chicago, Illinois and Emmetsburg, Iowa. Her degrees in elementary education, education administration and a specialist licensure prepared her well for her teaching ministries, as well as serving in personnel placement in the Archdiocese of St. Paul, and in parish ministry for the St. James tri-parish and Leroy tri-parish.

For the past eight years, she ministered in adult education at St. Anastasia parish in Hutchinson, Minnesota. She continued to travel back to Hutchinson between her chemo treatments so she could stay in touch with her friends and parishioners.

Lucy shared her total self, spirit and generosity in all gatherings. She was elected to a term in Congregational Leadership and willingly served on many committees. Her desire was always to serve other people for God. She remarked that the best parts of her life were teaching children, the opportunities to meet so many people, and the many special relationships she developed as a result.

Family was precious to her. A special highlight for Lucy was visiting family during Thanksgiving and Christmas, where they shared their faith and significant experiences in their lives.

Lucy was a day brightener for many. She lived life to the fullest, as she set about to spread JOY!

In Memoriam

Sister Michaea Byron

August 7, 1927-February 1, 2015

Sister Michaea Byron was born and raised in Waseca, Minnesota, with two brothers and one sister. She spent her high school days at Sacred Heart School in Waseca, where she became well acquainted with the Sisters of Saint Francis, whose example and care paved her way to the Franciscan way of life. She attended the College of Saint Teresa her freshman year and joined the Franciscans in the fall of 1945. She received a Bachelor's degree in Education, a Master's degree in Education, and then a Ph.D. in Education and Anthropology.

For 30 years, Sister Michaea taught at the College of Saint Teresa in the areas of Anthropology, Social Science, and Gerontology. She was greatly loved by her students, which was so evident by the many alumni visitors who came to visit her at Assisi Heights. She became president of the College of Saint Teresa from 1985-1989. During these years, she courageously served faculty and students and helped all involved in the closing of the College in 1989.

Sister Michaea dedicated many years of service to the Sisters of Saint Francis. In 1956, she became the Mistress of Postulants, and in 1959, she served as Juniorate Mistress. In later years, she served on the Executive Council and the Gift of Years Committee. She was a member of Saint Marys Hospital Sponsorship Board and also served on the Ethics Committee. She was the Chair and Board member of Saint Anne Hospice in Winona, Minnesota. She also spent a period of time serving the poor in Wallin, Kentucky. In 2004, she became the Diocesan Coordinator of Health Ministry in St. Cloud, Minnesota. There, she became co-director and founder of Parish Nurse Partnership of Central Minnesota. She helped facilitate the integration of St. Cloud Hospital and Clinic as it formed the CentraCare Health System.

Her retirement years were spent at Assisi Heights; but did she really know what retirement meant? She valiantly struggled to keep health issues from interfering with her involvement in social justice. We will remember Sister Michaea for her full and wonderful life.

Sister Mariana Boltz

November 4, 1917-April 2, 2015

Sister Mariana Boltz, was born in New Albin, Iowa, and grew up in Caledonia, Minnesota. Baptized Eulalia Magdalene in St. Peter Parish in Caledonia, she was not quite twenty on August 29, 1937, when she was admitted to postulancy. She lived to celebrate life and her seventy-fifth Jubilee.

Thirty years of primary school teaching followed her first profession. She loved the children and enjoyed the art of making bulletin boards and teaching aids.

"She always challenged herself," recalls her classmate, Sister Margaret Clare Style. As an example of this, Sister Mariana began her second career by studying Library Science at Bloomington University in Bloomington, Indiana. She fulfilled her love of books working as a school librarian at St. Margaret Mary's in Golden Valley, Minnesota, then at St. Pius in Rochester. While she was at St. Andrew the Apostle in Silver Spring, Maryland, she saw the sights of Washington, D.C. and a performance of Swan Lake with Baryshnikov. As librarian at Highland Catholic School in St. Paul, Minnesota, she worked alongside her lifelong friend, Sister Sharon Gondek of the Sisters of St. Joseph. During her five years at St. Marys Hospital, where she served as a patient visitor, and a librarian, she took in a few ElderHostels and found a way to get to her favorite chocolate store while volunteering at the Rochester Public Library.

Sister Mariana's close ties with nieces and nephews were deepened by her visits to her sister Marge in the Minneapolis area. She treasured regular updates on grand and great-grand nieces and nephews, especially Lucy and Ellie. During recent weeks, she could be found reading her nephew's novel *Timber* and writing in her "Gratitude" diary.

At Assisi Heights, she was an active member, enjoying activities and visitors. We would often hear her clear voice singing favorite tunes like "Blessed Francis" and "The heavens are telling the glory of God."

Reflection on Hope

by Sister Therese Jilk

One morning, in late Spring of 1989, after my Mom had died of pancreatic cancer on January 25, my Dad got up in his now-very-lonely house and ate some breakfast. Still deeply grieving the loss of his first, last, and only love, he decided to take a nap on the davenport before getting to the work of the day. He just wasn't feeling good, he told me later. But in a little bit, he suddenly got off the davenport, put on his old straw hat, went out the back door, and just stood there, looking at the day.

"Hell, I can't die today; I have to mow the lawn!" he exclaimed.

The lawn on our farm homestead was very large and hilly, and mowing it meant using a couple different mowers. Dad got into the work, completed mowing and trimming the enormous lawn, including paths around the piles of his artistically stacked wood in the pasture. I know it looked beautiful, because I'd seen him do the same many times, along with "giving the weeping willow trees a haircut."

Somewhere, ***hope*** is called "…a thing with feathers..." When Kathy [Gatliff] invited me to write a reflection on ***hope***, I looked at what many others have written about it, including the dictionary and the Internet. I also asked a good number of persons what ***hope*** is to them. Everything each one shared was meaningful, pushing me inward and asking, "…but you, Therese, what is ***hope*** to you…how and where have you experienced it and known it to be the real thing…?"

Dad didn't report seeing anything with feathers that morning, but something unseen was surely alive in his grieving spirit, and he responded; one might even say he was raised up to be alive in the new day, created and given him by the God he believed in all his life. Though Dad always said he walked in doubt, not faith, I think it was ***hope*** that woke him to the new day at hand, trusting it was his best choice.

Thanks, Dad, for telling me this true story many years ago. I saw you live it many times before and after that Spring morning in 1989. ***Hope*** led you on the path you travelled… finding peace in uncertainty and loss. I pray for the gift of ***hope*** — not just for myself — but for all my Franciscan Sisters, our families, friends, employees, and guests here at Assisi Heights; we're all aging every single day and it is Hope which sustains us, as we look out on each new day before us, giving our grateful "Yes!"

Hope and Faith Witnessed by Students

by Sister Ramona Miller

Before embarking upon a pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy, with Lourdes High School students, I was given a card that read "Anyone who worries about the next generation can feel encouraged." Indeed, the pilgrimage gifted me with wonderful encouragement and hope for the future as I interacted with the enthusiasm of the students for their Catholic faith. The idea for this pilgrimage began with Fr. Will Thompson, the Winona Diocesan Director for Vocations. Fr. Will approached Lourdes principal, Joe O'Toole, to discuss the idea. Thus began the planning for a Franciscan pilgrimage to Assisi and Rome, Italy, that would take place over Christmas break: December 27, 2014 thru January 5, 2015.

Sister Ramona Miller and her niece, Clare Cholewa, during a light snow near the remains of a 13th century leprosarium.

At left: The pilgrimage group.

Robert Gardner, Bill Crozier, and I co-taught the course, *Franciscan Foundations*, which was a requirement for registering for this pilgrimage. The course sufficed for the semester theology credit for the students. The students struggled with the literary genre of Paul Sabatier's *Life of Francis*, pursued assigned research topics on Saint Clare, gained knowledge of Francis' respect for Muslims, and were impressed with the vastness of the Franciscan movement through the centuries since Francis died in 1226. This history came alive for them once they were in Assisi walking in the footsteps of Francis and Clare.

One of the rituals the pilgrims experienced was a reenactment of Clare's departure from her home during the night of Palm Sunday, 1212. We began the night walk from the upper level of Assisi in front of the Cathedral of San Rufino, proceeding down through dark stairways and paths to Porta Moiano, a gate leading out of the city. Occasionally we would stop and listen to a reading that allowed us to imagine what Clare was thinking and praying as she left Assisi. Students who will soon be departing from their homes for college and pursuit of employment could readily identify with Clare's fears and her trust in God's calling. Observing the hopefulness of these students on the threshold of their adult lives encouraged me to praise God for their steadfastness in faith.

During their final semester presentations, one student wrote what he had gained from the pilgrimage course: "a better understanding of our faith; a strengthened relationship with Christ; and a realization of why my parents brought me into Catholicism." The new consciousness of what it means to be Catholic with two thousand years' history, happened while visiting the foundational places such as the Basilica of Saint John Lateran; "the caput et mater (head and mother)" of the Church. Another student wrote "Rome was a very good experience for me: St. Peter's Basilica was beautiful. Seeing the Pope gave me a good feeling. [We were in St. Peter's Square on Sunday, January 4, when Pope Francis led the Angelus prayer and gave us his papal blessing.] The Sistine Chapel gave me the most spiritual moment in Rome because it is the best art I have ever seen, only God could inspire someone to do this."

Pope Francis wrote in *The Joy of the Gospel*, "How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction!" The student pilgrimage in the footsteps of Saints Francis and Clare stirred up enthusiasm for living a life that witnesses to the Gospel. The next generation provides us hope and encouragement.

2015 Summer Retreats and Events

Assisi Heights, Rochester, MN

To register for retreats and events at Assisi Heights Spirituality Center, contact Angie Grimm at 507-280-2195 or e-mail: ahsc@rochesterfranciscan.org

Franciscan Mysticism and the Story of the Universe

May 31, 6:30 pm-June 6, 10:30am
Norman Comtois, OMI
Cost: Overnight $450, Commuter $250. Deposit $50, non-refundable.

The retreat will integrate the mystical insights of Francis of Assisi with new scientific theory and ecological understanding including our current environmental crisis. Participants will explore Francis' love of creation and its implications for our lives today. Unlike a workshop, retreatants will be encouraged to prayerfully experience communion with creation through daily prayer exercises.

Family Festival: Exploring Nature on Walnut Hill

June 13, 2015 | 10:00am-3:00pm; Rain Date: June 20, 2015 | 10:00am-3:00pm
$25 for family of four. $8 for each additional person.

Explore the natural wonders of Walnut Hill, located on the upper edge of Assisi Heights. Listen for the call of birds, wind in the trees, buzzing of bees. Roam the prairie grass, pick wild flowers, walk the labyrinth. "Meet" Dr. Louis and Maud Wilson, St. Francis, and Mother Alfred Moes. Learn about beekeeping, the original 1000 apple trees, and the nearby Native American burial grounds. Identify prairie grasses, flowers, trees, and bird songs. Enjoy storytelling, a petting zoo, and healthy foods for sale.

The Enchanted Garden: An Afternoon Garden Party at Assisi Heights Charm School

August 18-19, 2015 | Tuesday: 10:00am-3:30pm, Wednesday: 12:30-3:30pm
$50 per child.

Calling all girls 9-12! Let's plan a garden party, while learning all that goes into the preparation. Join us for this interactive workshop on etiquette, manners, decorum, handling awkward social situations, sports etiquette, proper introductions, party preparations and more. Casual dress is appropriate for Day 1. Party attire is requested for Day 2.

Holy Spirit Retreat Center, Janesville, MN

To register for retreats at Holy Spirit Retreat Center, contact the staff at retreat@frontiernet.net or 507-234-5712.

Quiet Retreat, July 3, 5:00 p.m. – July 12, 2015, 1:00 p.m.
Sisters Charlotte Hesby, JoAnn Haney, Monique Schwirtz
Cost: $400 (includes retreat fee plus room and all meals).
This is an opportunity for a private meditation, or directed retreat – you decide what your heart needs at this time. We will provide meals and the quiet of our peaceful lakeside setting, along with optional daily group prayer, meditation times, liturgy and group sharing of experiences and questions in meditation practice. Our experienced spiritual directors will be available for one-to-one sessions for those who wish. This is your time to use as best suits you.

Chapel Restoration Continues

by Barbara DeCramer

Inset: Close-up of improperly cemented stained glass, the solder joint is loosening and the brace is falling off.

The stained glass windows in Lourdes Chapel at Assisi Heights were created and installed in the mid-1950s. A number of years ago, while the maintenance staff was putting new storm windows on the large chapel windows, it was discovered that the stained glass on eleven of the sets had never been properly cemented when the windows were originally installed. Without this step, air and moisture move through the panel and the entire panel bends and bows. Eventually, the solder joints loosen and the braces fall off.

In December, 2013, examination of these windows indeed found breaks in the lead in many places. This is, in part, due to the age of the lead which has reached the point that it has lost its elasticity (the ability to stretch and contract with temperature changes) in its setting in the chapel, as well as the problems with the original installation. Original bracing is loose on several panels, and has fallen off in some cases.

In order to repair and restore the windows, it will be necessary to remove the windows from their openings, take the stained glass apart, remove and recycle the lead, and reserve all the glass. The glass will be cleaned and new lead will be used to reassemble the stained glass. New solder will be used to secure the joints and new cement and braces will be applied. This process will restore the windows to "like new" condition and give them an expected 100-year lifespan going forward.

The estimate to restore the stained glass is just over $20,000 for each of the eleven sets that need repair.

It is in moments like this that we are so very grateful for the kind donors who share their gifts with the Sisters of Saint Francis. Because of the generosity of those who have been directing your gifts to the Chapel Fund in recent years, funds are available to begin the restoration work on the three sets of windows most in need of repairs. Of course, this leaves eight more sets of windows that need repairs.

Lourdes Chapel at Assisi Heights is a place of great beauty and a wonderful venue. Most importantly, it is the heart of the powerhouse of prayer that is Assisi Heights.

We invite your gift to the Chapel Fund as we continue to be good stewards of our buildings and grounds.

For more information on the Stained Glass Restoration Project, contact Barb DeCramer at Assisi Heights, barb.decramer@rochesterfranciscan.org or (507) 282-7441, ext. 536.

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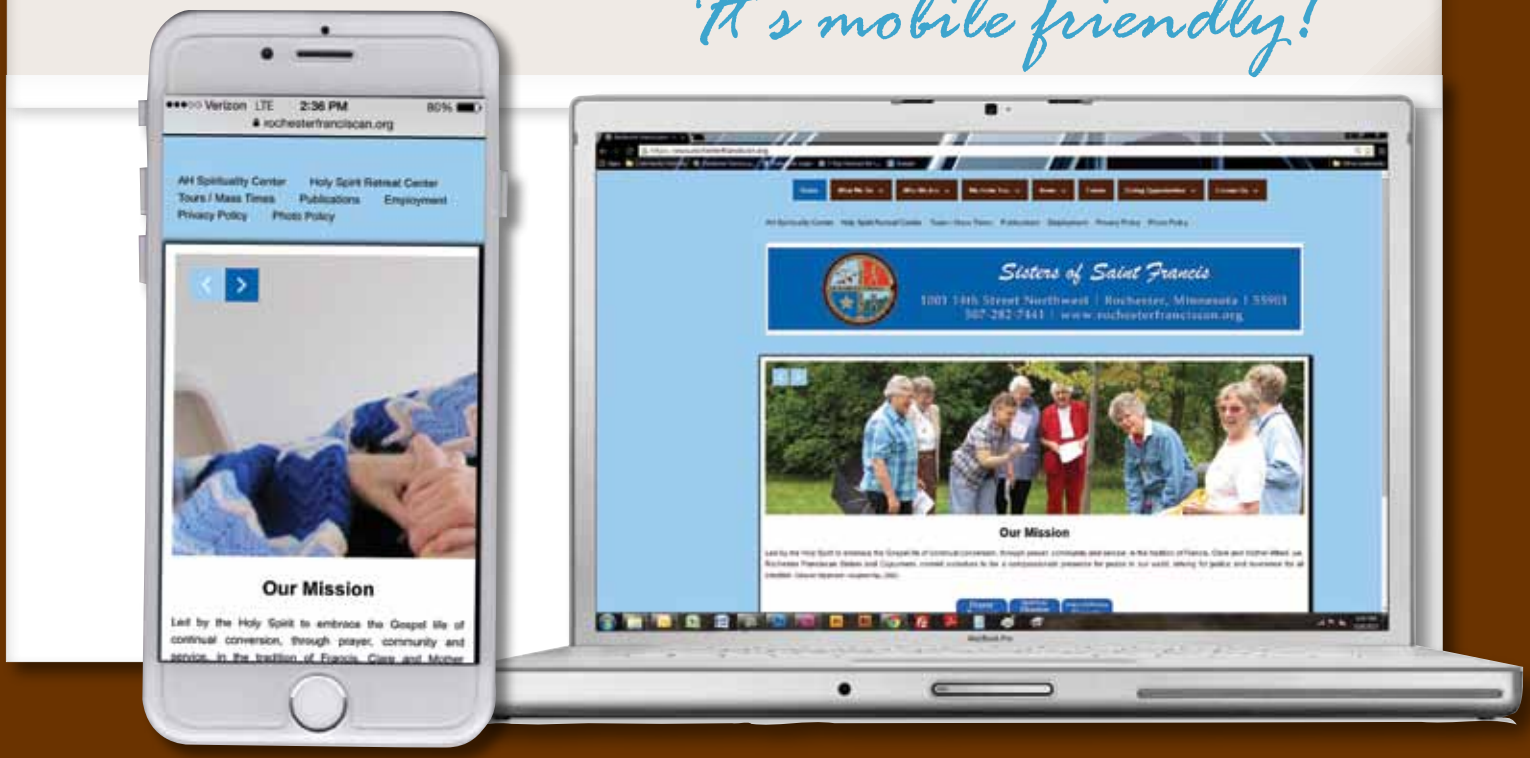

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