interchange

SPRING 2014

ecology

Sisters of Saint Francis

Exploring values common to you and today's Rochester Franciscans

interchange

a publication of the
Sisters of Saint Francis
Volume 20 Issue 1

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interchange is published 4 times a year. Issues are sent via email in Winter and Summer to accompany our magazines published in Fall and Spring. To receive our email editions, please complete the form on the back of this magazine, or send an email request to: info@rochesterfranciscan.org

There is no subscription fee. However, donations to help cover the cost of printing and postage are accepted and appreciated.

Recipient of the 2010 & 2011
Lumen Award
From the National Catholic Development Conference

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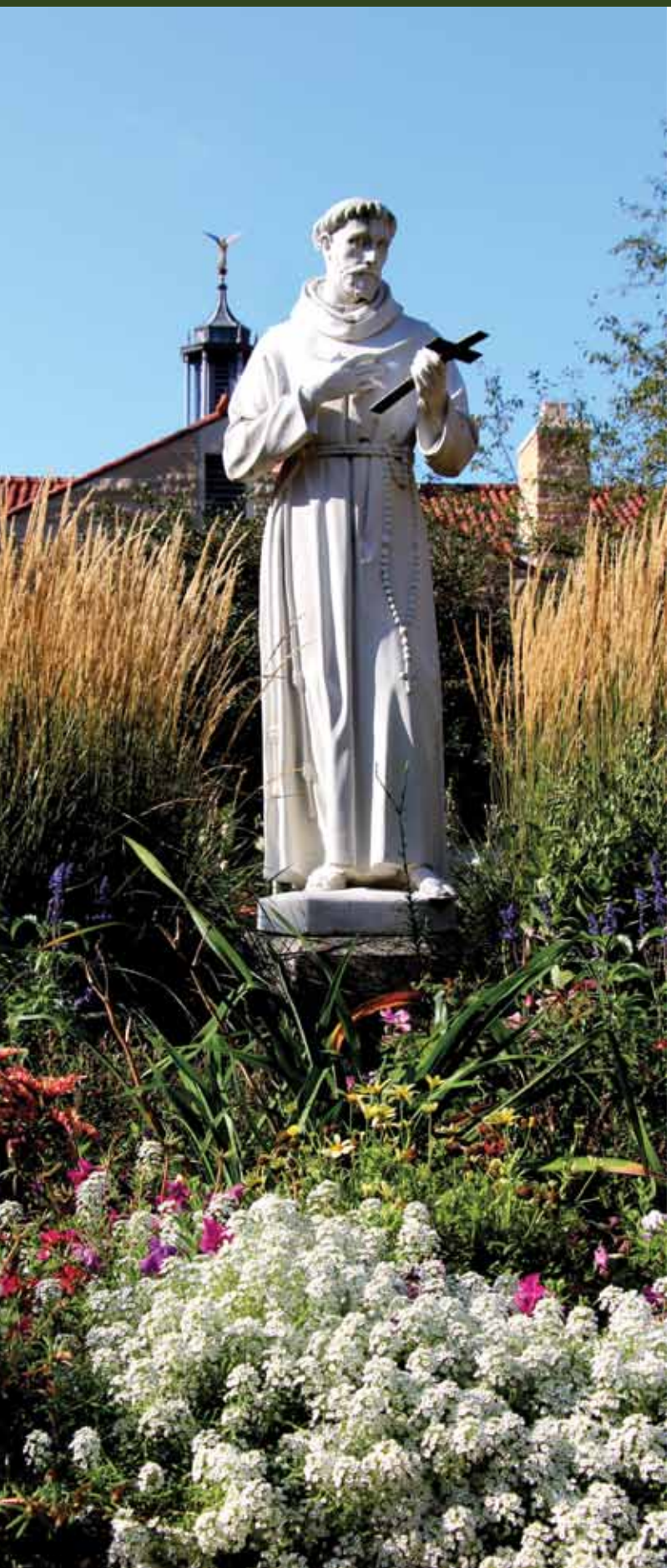


When Pope John Paul II proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi as the patron of ecology in 1979 (Apostolic Letter Inter Sanctos: AAS 71), he stated, "St. Francis invited all creation – animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon – to give honor and praise to the Lord."

It does seem that Saint Francis was ahead of his time. He was very much like today's environmentalists, understanding the delicate balance of the ecosystem and how all living things are intertwined.

Quite often the Sisters of Saint Francis have also been looked upon as being ahead of their time – especially when it comes to ecological concerns. In this issue, you'll see that Sister Antoine, who just turned 100 years old, was ahead of the curve with reusing and recycling – a practice she encouraged at Saint Marys Hospital. Even today, the Sisters are on the cutting edge with the installation of the largest Solar Panel field in southeastern Minnesota.

You'll also find St. Francis' love for all of creation in the activities around Assisi Heights, whether it is beekeeping, gardening or simply listening to the songs of birds. That love was also instilled in the Franciscan Community in Bogotá, Colombia, as they continue to create an ecological haven on their beloved piece of earth, known as Willkapampa.

As Spring brings new life and renewal to nature and our surroundings, we hope the stories in this issue will bring a new awareness and appreciation of the Sisters of Saint Francis, and that they will continue to hold a special place in your heart.

Photo by Amy Ransom

Sister Alice Thraen and the 2013 honey harvest - 950.7 pounds from 5 hives!

Bee-ing Grateful at Assisi Heights

by Sister Rafael Tilton

Once a month, on a Thursday night, the 70 or so members of the Southeast Minnesota Beekeepers Association (SEMNBA) meet at Assisi Heights to update their interest in what is, at the least, an absorbing hobby, and at most, an industry, and for all an interface with millions of God's most engaging creatures.

So, how do beekeepers keep us supplied with that thick golden syrup so unfailingly sweet when poured on our breakfast pancakes? Over the years, Sister Alice Thraen and Sister Marlys Jax have collected the lore, the explanations and the pictures to fill us in.

"Beekeepers were at Assisi Heights before I was," said Sister Alice Thraen, who hosts the Association on meeting nights. "They rented space for their hives so that while the bees pollinated our apple trees, they also collected honey."

Tom Bramble, a beekeeper from rural Olmsted County, suggested Assisi Heights have its own hives. "He helped us set up. We had no equipment at the time," explained Sister Marlys Jax, who was Director of Plant Operations during the days of the Assisi Community Center (ACC). "So we needed to start from the beginning."

"The Assisi Community Center sponsored a class. That started my interest." said Sister Alice. "I was most interested in how that honey came to be." She spent time learning the fascinating routines of how the workers fly out to visit pollen-bearing flowers, sip the nectar from the center glands of the flowers, and return to the hives with food for the rest of the bee colony.

Sisters Mary Frederick, Joy Barth and Alice were on the ACC staff. They built and painted supers (part of the beehive that collects the honey) and fitted the prefabricated frames together. They inserted preformed wax foundations into the frames to save time for the bees so they could collect honey instead of building honeycombs.

"Then the president of our bee club got a sting and his reaction sent him to the hospital," recalled Tom. "He had to give up beekeeping. So he donated all of his equipment to Assisi Heights."

As Assisi Heights continued to establish hives for the summer, Sister Alice became more interested in the life of bees. "They can travel three to five miles, and they remember where the best flowers are and use a kind of radar to make their way back and forth," she mentioned.

Inside the hive, worker bees fan the nectar, evaporating moisture until it is more like syrup than water.

Left to Right: It's not glamorous, but it's a cozy way to travel; the bees arrive in their box. The extractor cylinder uses centrifugal force to spin the honey out of the frames. The extractor deposits the honey out the bottom into awaiting buckets.

Certain bees feed the males (the drones of the hive) and the single female (the queen) of each hive, who must be healthy to continue throughout the season to produce thousands of eggs per day and keep the hive buzzing.

"Tom showed me how to remove a super of filled frames and leave an empty one," says Sister Alice. "A hive of industrious bees will produce anywhere from ninety to a hundred and thirty pounds of honey in a season." Looking over her records of her past twenty years, she adds, "The most we ever averaged here was 195 pounds [per hive] in the summer of 2008."

"If we take all the bees' food, it is our job to feed them over the winter," said Tom. "In the early days we over-wintered all our bees. We were always splitting the hives because they were so vigorous and healthy."

"Nowadays we usually purchase new bee packages to start fresh hives in the spring," explained Sister Alice. "This is partly because of widespread Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). There is a lot of research about why the bees are weaker or die."

Tom has a theory: "Taking the bees to California every winter became the norm. With the bees on a single diet down there – like the almond blossoms – it seemed that the bees didn't understand our varied diet in Minnesota. It's like wanting only ice cream. The varied diet is healthier, makes the bees stronger and more versatile, but they don't know how to benefit. Or they pick up different kinds of mites with no enemies up here. So overwintering is harder now."

Having hives means having another job, taking the honey from the combs where the bees store it. "We decided to do the extracting at Tom's because he had a place set up and because of the danger of the other Sisters getting stung by stray bees," stated Sister Marlys.

"Getting stung is not because the bees are aggressive. It's just that all those bees want to get home. But it's easy not to see a bee under a frame or have it get caught in a tight place on your clothing. That's when you get stung," explained Tom.

Sister Mary recalls getting two stings in the same day. Sister Alice had a copper penny. "I put that penny on the sting and it felt better."

"It's worked out pretty well to do the extracting at my place," said Tom. "We've got more in friendship than we have in honey… especially after I showed the Sisters what it was to clean up afterwards. They are really good cleaners."

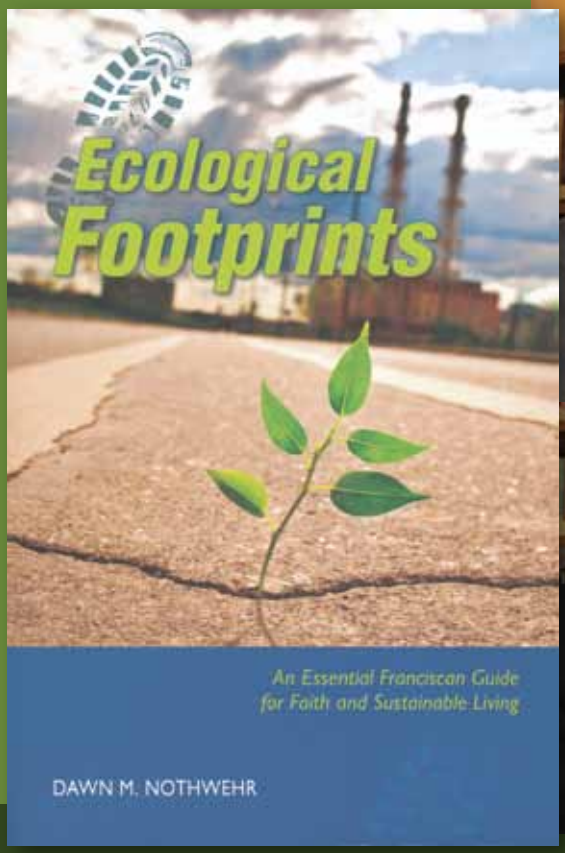
"Sister Mary and I were mainly involved in processing the honey that Tom and Alice brought in from the hives," remarked Sister Joy. "We removed the wax capping the bees use to close each little cell in the honeycomb and stacked the extractor cylinder with its twenty frames."

Centrifugal force spins the honey out of the combs onto the sides of the extractor cylinder. It runs down the sides of the cylinder and into a pail. "I would watch the pail, turn the spigot to shut off the flow, and empty the pail before spinning the extractor again," recalls Sister Mary. "The honey was stored in buckets to freeze it until later."

"The freezing slows down or even prevents crystallization," explained Sister Alice. Sister Mary added, "Later, when we had time to can, we'd thaw the honey in the proofer (the oven used for bread rising). We'd wash and label enough jars for a hundred pounds or so of honey."

"We also have creamed honey," said Sister Alice, "which is artificially crystallized with the help of a commercial product. Then it is stirred rapidly to the proper consistency. When we spread it on our toast, we need to remember that for every third bite of food we take, we owe credit to the honeybee."

Honey is available for sale in the Assisi Heights Gift Shop, open daily from 12:15-1:15 pm.



Ecological Footprints

by Sister Ramona Miller

In 1979, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that Saint Francis of Assisi was the patron of those who promote ecology. In the book, *Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living*, author Sister Dawn Nothwehr exemplifies that Saint Francis and the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition informs her life, and her scholarly writing. The Sisters of Saint Francis celebrated the publication of this inspiring and informative book on Sunday, March 23, 2014, at the Assisi Heights Spirituality Center.

Sister Dawn's Franciscan heart and advocacy for care for creation was first nurtured in her family by assisting with the weeding, tending and ultimately the harvesting of a sprawling vegetable garden. Discovering her heart's resonance with the Franciscan faculty while attending the College of Saint Teresa, she joined the Sisters of Saint Francis in 1977. Years of fruitful ministry as an advocate for social justice, and as an educator, prepared her for her current role as a full professor at Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago. She became the holder of the Erica and Harry John Family Endowed Chair in Catholic Theological Ethics beginning with the 2012-13 academic year.

During the program and reception for Sister Dawn on March 23, she humbly stated that it takes a community to write a book. Her respect and appreciation for the contributions by members of her congregation was evident during the afternoon celebration. She shared the focus of the five parts of the book. It began with Sister Valerie Kilian who commented on Part I, "The Bible: Creation and the Word." Dawn brought attention to the new language that God is Creator of emerging creation, and that there exists a meaningful dialogue between religion and science. Part II identifies Saints Francis and Clare as models for sustainable living, as clearly articulated by Sister Ingrid Peterson. For Part III on Saint Bonaventure, the participants listened to music of Cathy Tisel Nelson, "Trinity of Love," which synthesizes Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology establishing the relationality of all creation with the Trinity. Part IV uses the thought from Blessed John Duns Scotus to deepen the reader's appreciation for the uniqueness of each created thing. These four parts provide the background before addressing in the four vital ecological issues, as identified by the United Nations, in Part V. They are:

scarcity of potable water, human-caused global warming, food insecurity, and lack of sustainable energy. Inspirational poems included in *Ecological Footprints* were read by Sister Therese Jilk and Sister Mary Goergen, with a focus on global warming and reverence for water.

Sister Dawn writes of Saint Francis: "in truly caring for people and God's creation there is potential to arrive where he most desired to go—to the very heart of God." She states that her "purpose in writing this book is to provide knowledge and motivation toward the spiritual renewal necessary to move us beyond the present environmental crises." And, indeed, the reader studying the theological considerations cannot help but recall the message from Pope John Paul II for World Day of Peace, on January 1, 1990, when he announced that the ecological crisis is a moral problem. Sister Dawn's thesis provides a moral compass from the Franciscan tradition for addressing the crises that threaten the global environment.

The concluding feature of Sunday afternoon's program was the viewing of a visual meditation prepared by CTU on "The Way of the Cross and the Suffering Earth." Many years ago, the Sister members of the Water Forum prepared the meditation which Sister Dawn included in the afterword of the book. Graduate students at CTU used the Sisters' writing as the basis for developing a video that evokes great compassion for the suffering of Mother Earth.

Ecological Footprints fills the gap of what's missing in the popular media that either raises fear about global warming, including its dire consequences, or dismisses concern for the increased carbon footprint by a consumerist society. Emphasizing the human-divine relationship, the reader is reminded that Saint Francis discovered more about God and himself through the practice of contemplative prayer in nature. Consoling, and at the same time challenging, the reader is provided with reflection and application suggestions at the conclusion of each chapter. Selections from writings by Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, or Duns Scotus are also included in each chapter. The concluding prayer for each chapter touches the heart while drawing attention to the assistance needed from the Creator for accomplishing the Creator's design for creation.

"Ecological Footprints: An Essential Franciscan Guide for Faith and Sustainable Living" is available for purchase at www.litpress.org

At Left: Clockwise: Sister Therese Jilk reads a poem. Sisters Merici Maher, Helen Chatterton and Colleen Waterman. Sister Marilyn Geiger welcomes everyone. Sisters Dawn Nothwehr, Joan Lewison and Patricia Fritz.

This Page: Top: Sisters Chris Stanoch, Maureen Dolan and Tierney Trueman. Center: Sisters Briana McCarthy, Marlene Pinzka and Jean Keniry. Bottom: Sisters Linda Wieser and Marlys Jax.

A Green Pilgrimage

by Sister Marlys Jax

The natural beauty of Assisi Heights is dressing up as winter wanes, and the green season begins. New seedlings await the sun-warmed soil and delicate spring showers. Soon, the prairie flowers will spread a floral canvas on the mossy carpet of our front lawn. Now is the opportune time for a walking pilgrimage to visit to the sacred spaces and places at Assisi Heights.

Pilgrimage is an time-honored practice shared by the world's various religious traditions. In its broadest sense, it points to the nature of human spiritual life: we are wayfarers, yearning and moving in faith within and toward an unknown mysterious fulfillment. This can become both an inner pilgrimage with outer reflections, and an outer pilgrimage with inner reflections. In a way, our feet are actually lured in a particular direction by the Holy One; attracted toward actual places where the Divine Spirit has shown a particular luminosity. It is at that time when we shift into pilgrimage in the literal sense.

Pilgrimages historically have been undertaken for various reasons: to obtain divine blessing for oneself or others, to be absolved of our waywardness, or as thankfulness for some life-enhancing gift. Sometimes the reason for pilgrimage is more open-ended; often there is just a desire to touch a place God or some spiritually astute person revealed as the intimacy between heaven and earth. There is the hope that by being there, it will deepen our own intimacy or conversion in some yet-to-be revealed way.

There are many different kinds of pilgrimages. Some are as simple as stopping down the block to visit a spiritually-inspired neighbor. Sometimes it is 'paying rent' for use of the back church pew for a quiet moment to recollect how God's thumbprint touches your heart. Sometimes it is taking a meditative walk, as Buddhists do, finding the Holy One's voice in a bird's song. Each one of us can scan the places sacred for us, where, like Moses, we remove our shoes and stand in awe of the Divine Presence with vulnerability inside and out. God's imprint is everywhere and no place more sacred than the other. But with our partially blinded and resistant spiritual insight, the Holy One appears in both familiar and surprising places.

John O'Donohue says, "At its heart, the journey of each life is a pilgrimage, through unforeseen sacred places that enlarge and enrich the soul."[1] This pilgrimage will enrich your soul!

Grotto of Our Lady of Beauraing – one of the sacred spaces to be visited on our grounds.

This pilgrimage is made by walking…designed to be simple – no airline tickets, no baggage and no worries. Bring only a walking stick. A guide with GPS will allow you to experience vicariously the places in the world made holy. It begins at the Peace Pole in the Assisi Heights lobby. We will stroll through the "temple of nature." There will be a garden-warming event amidst a variety of plants in bloom. We meet the daytime pollinators doing their jobs. Then you'll be transported to Assisi, Italy, to hear the story of St. Francis and the lamb and the artist's interpretations. Follow a serpentine path as it carves its way past a colossal cut of old limestone to Lourdes, France, and then off to Beauraing, Belgium at the crest of the hill. While in the "cathedral of nature," you'll see statuary representative of Padua, Italy and the Middle East. Our next turn bears the colors, charm and culture of the Western Hemisphere, found in Mexico. Then, it's off to a "Field of Dreams" of sorts, inviting pilgrims to rest in the beauty of the square, as we relish the God of creativity while pondering the ten sacred sights on Assisi Heights' 120 acres. We'll end our story in Avila, Spain. This two hour route, putting one foot in front of the other, has its benefits! Walking in pilgrimage has its own victory in providing restored physical health. Pondering and praying provides another benefit in creating spiritual wellbeing. God provides; all benefit!

See next page for date and times of Sister Marlys' pilgrimage!

[1] John O'Donohue, *Eternal Echoes: Celtic Reflections on Our Yearning to Belong* (Harper Perennial; Reprint edition March 22, 2000)

Assisi Heights Spirituality Center Events

Pilgrimage of the Outdoor Sacred Spaces
June 7, 10:00-11:00am

Free will donation.

Join in a walking tour of the sacred places on the Assisi Heights grounds. Visit the inspiring spaces with time for reflection and prayer.

Labyrinth – Meditation in Slow Motion
June 9, 7:00-8:30pm

Free will donation.

Learn the history, and experience the balance of body, mind and spirit in walking the labyrinth. It is meditation in slow motion. Taking time in a labyrinth offers the convergence of the movement of our bodies, the sacred soil upon which we walk and the spirit we carry in our mind and heart. This is an indoor and outdoor experience.

The Beauty of Natural Light Photography A Retreat

June 20-21, Friday: 6-9pm, Saturday: 7am-5pm

$230 per person, includes light meals.

Immerse yourself and capture those fleeting, enchanted moments. Includes class discussion, shooting assignments and critiques. Randy Ziegler is an award-winning, internationally published and respected natural light photographer. For more info: www.randyziegler.com

Birds and Bees!
June 21, 9:00-11:00am

$8 per person.

No, this is not the metaphorical story of reproduction, but rather an opportunity to learn about the secret life of bees and birds! You will meet the bees, learn hive structure, beekeeper dress, and bee identification. Taste their gift while learning of their important contributions to the world. You will also meet the owls, hometown birds who do not migrate! You will fall in love with this fascinating bird and learn of its natural history. This two-hour event, hosted both indoors and out, is for persons of any age who have an inquisitive mind and a fascination with nature.

To reserve your seat for any of these events, go to www.rochesterfranciscan.org or call Angie Grimm at 507-280-2195.

Assisi Heights Spirituality Center
1001 14th Street NW | Rochester, MN 55901-2525
www.rochesterfranciscan.org | 507-282-7441

Life on the Farm: Willkapampa

by Sister M. Carolina Pardo

Building a house with plastic bottles? It sounds like the story of the "Three Little Pigs" or building your house on sand; however, the Franciscan Sisters in Bogotá decided to study this interesting technique. It was developed by German Andreas Froese who "found his calling in helping the poor and disadvantaged build homes out of waste materials. Froese began to develop his technique in 2001 in Honduras."[1] The process consists of filling plastic bottles with sand, dirt, plastic bags or waste in order to make an eco-brick for any kind of construction. The Franciscans decided to give it a try and presented the idea to the seniors at Colegio Anexo San Francisco de Asís (CASFA) who decided to build a grotto for Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception at Willkapampa – the Sisters' farm in Bogotá – using this technique.

We started by collecting bottles, lots of bottles! On the Saint Francis Day celebration in 2013, all the students helped fill those bottles. It proved to be a favorite for those children labeled as hyperactive! Over 70 250ml bottles were filled with potato chip bags, and 250 2-liter bottles were filled with sand and dirt. The process was not easy. It took a lot of patience and time since the bottles need to be solid as a brick, and you can only put in a little bit of material at a time through the narrow opening!

Two seniors, Eliana Hernandez and Stephany Baron, involved their families in the project and completed the final step of building the grotto. The bottles were tied to each other and then adhered together with mud and cement. Over the course of several weekends, the grotto was finally finished! On March 2nd, during the visit of nine people from the United States here for the Bogotá Experience, we blessed the grotto with the statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.

Meanwhile, life at Willkapampa continues to grow and present new challenges. In the last several months, we have seen

Step 1. Stuffing chip bags into the plastic bottles

Step 2. Tying the filled bottles together to build the platform.

Step 3. Eliana and Stephany work on the grotto arch

Stephany's father was a great help!

Step 4. The grotto coming together nicely!

Step 5. A little mud and cement and it's finished!

the birth of Tierney, our black sheep; Marilyn, our goat; and a yet-to-be named baby sheep. With these, we completed the namesakes for our Mother Generals and Congregational Ministers/ Presidents in the Community! We have struggled with our bees this year. As it is true in the United States, fumigation in the area for potato plantations and the flower industry killed almost half of our hives. We will nurture and tend our bees to see them come back. We will continue to raise our crops of healing herbs and those healing plants currently being threatened, like Yacon, excellent for patients with diabetes, the Amaranto, and the Quinoa, rich in protein of high nutritional value.

So you can see, after all, the grotto project was built on solid ground.

Willkapampa's newest lamb.

[1] http://www.connect-green.com/tag/andreas-froese/

Franciscan Values Flourish in the Desert

by Pam Captain, Cojourner Coordinator

in an interview with Cojourner Fran Weidner

Desert Drought Busters – Urb and Fran Weidner

Fran's front yard before the Xeriscape was installed

After the Xeriscape was installed.

Recently, I spoke to Cojourner Fran Weidner of Scottsdale, Arizona, about the drought in the southwestern area of the United States.

One of the big problems is that the state of Arizona doesn't have "absolute rules" regarding use of water. People are on the honor system, or as Fran calls it, "free will," and water usage is being abused. Some of her neighbors have large, lush, green lawns. In Arizona, they use the drip system of irrigation and no governmental agency is required to monitor the systems that need repair. Consequently, the water leaks and just flows down the street and into the gullies. Golf course spokespersons say they use "reclaimed" water for wetting the grasses. However, some businesses and homeowners still don't turn off their sprinkler systems when it rains.

Fran and her husband have converted to low water usage appliances, toilets, and faucets. They have a self-imposed restrictive use of drip irrigation to water their plants. They replaced their grass lawn with a desert landscape called Xeriscape, but have kept a small patch of grass for the preschool grandchildren, especially the toddlers, to play on when they visit. That will be converted to desert landscape when the little ones are older. But, as kids will, they have more fun using chalk on the sidewalk that surrounds the house! Fran says they continue striving to educate their grandchildren on the use of water and have stressed its respectful use. This respect was fostered during their time living in Minnesota on the Lake Superior shoreline. Urb, Fran's husband, is an active member of the Sierra Club which works to raise consciousness through knowledgeable speakers and awareness programs.

The canal system that feeds Arizona diverts water directly from the Colorado River which is a main water source in the Southwest. The snowpack melt from the mountains in northern Arizona helps, but it is not enough. Of particular concern is the amount of water that finally flows down to Mexico. By the time it gets to Mexico, it is nothing more than a near trickle, compared to what is claimed by United States. Southwestern states are working with Mexico, and recently agreed to increase the water flow, but it is still not enough.

Another concern is the increased incidence of forest fires. They have seriously depleted the trees and regrowth is slow because of the lack of water and the loss of topsoil. There is little to hold the soil, since trees are not naturally replenishing. Fran was reading that California, Arizona, and New Mexico are currently conducting experiments by shooting pellets into the clouds to cause them to change moisture into snow. She will follow up on that later.

But the biggest question that will take much responsible thought and collaboration is, when and how will all this end?

If interested in further discussion or if you have questions, Fran can be reached at franwriter@cox.net.

An Invitation

by Sister Joy Barth

As springtime approaches, we become more and more attuned to God's presence and goodness. During this season, I like to plug into a quote of Terri Guillemet's, "my favorite weather is bird-chirping weather."

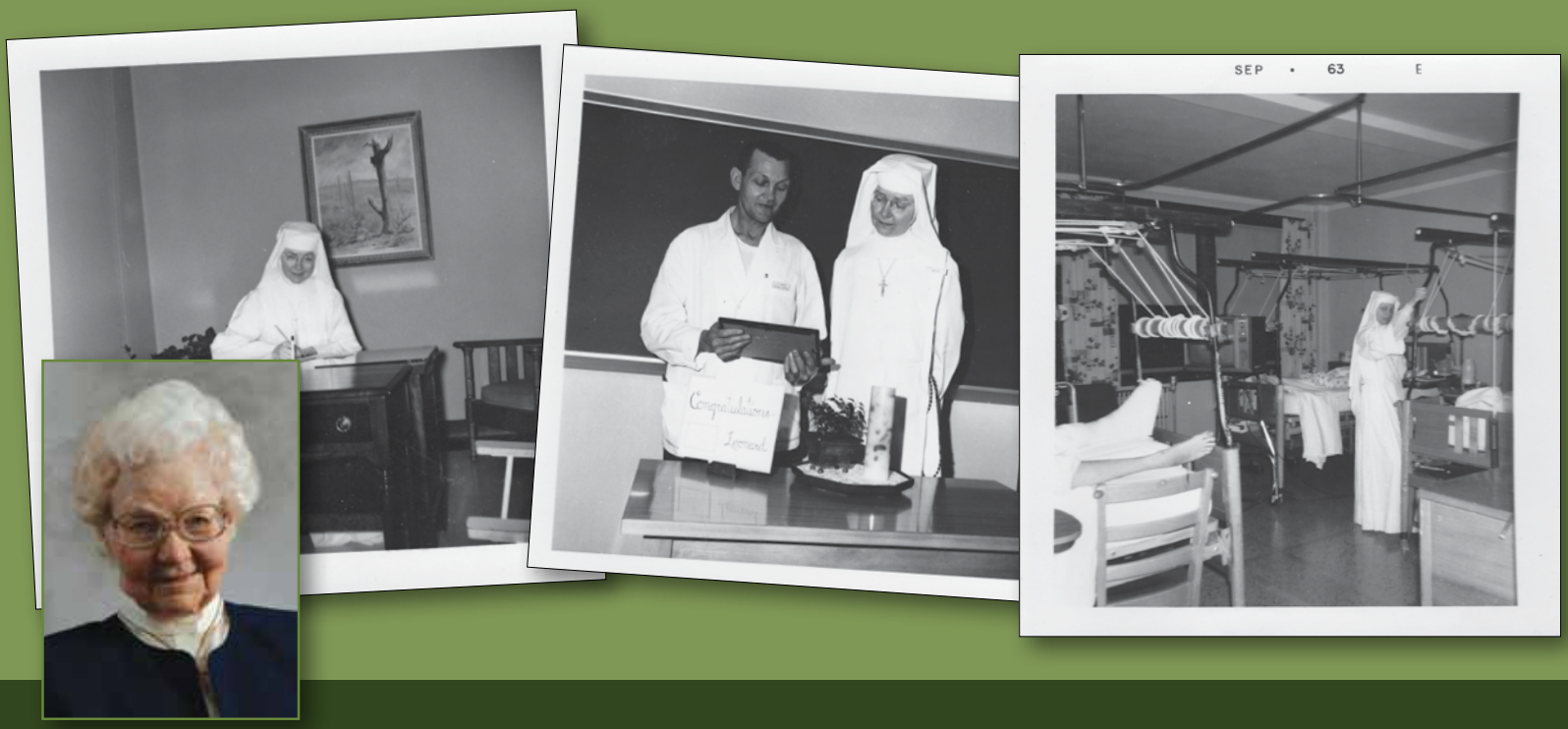
All creation sings praise to God in various ways. Certainly we, as baptized children of God with gifts of eyes, ears and talented minds, can speak, dance, and sing our praises to God without end. To substantiate my remarks, the following is a verse from the hymn, *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You:*

> *All your works with joy surround you,*
> *Earth and heav'n reflect your rays,*
> *Stars and angels sing around you,*
> *Center of unbroken praise;*
> *Field and forest, vale and mountain,*
> *Flowery meadow, flashing sea,*
> *Chanting bird and flowing fountain,*
> *Praising you eternally!*

You've heard the comment, "she/he is an early bird." If you are really intent on hearing bird songs, you're guaranteed to get the best results if you are an early bird. The birds sing especially loud at dawn. In the early morning you will hear most birds singing with more energy and variety than at other times of the day. I refer to it as an orchestra warm-up. This chorus, especially robins in early spring and summer, actually begins an hour before dawn, with a much more excited version of their daytime song. Chirping sparrows also sing at a frenetic pace, while many other birds chime in with an exceptional vitality!

If you listen carefully, you will soon become acquainted with our bird friends and their unique songs. They invite you to join them in giving praise and thanksgiving to our Creator.

If you wish to learn more about how to identify birds by their song, join Sister Joy at Assisi Heights on May 17, from 9-11am for the program "Birding by Ear." To reserve your seat, go to www.rochesterfranciscan.org or call Angie Grimm at 507-280-2195.



Preserving Nature in Living the Life of Francis

by John Murphy, Communications Advisory Council

St. Francis was a great lover of God's creation, before it was in fashion. He exemplified many of the best attributes of what it means to be a good steward of the earth. In 1979, Pope John Paul II named St. Francis the patron saint "of those who promote ecology and environmentalism."

His example pointed to a spiritual vision of preserving all of God's creation and was an inspiration to the Sisters of Saint Francis as they guided Saint Marys Hospital.

Sister Antoine Murphy has lived and worked at the hospital for over 70 years and she has seen many changes. "We currently live in a throw-a-way age," says Sister Antoine. "I cringe when I see waste."

In the early years, I would advise my fellow Sisters and nurses in training, "Take the time to think about what you are using. Everything that enters the patients' room can't be reused, so take the time to plan ahead and think about if you are really going to use it. This saves the patients' money and is easier on the environment."

Here are some simple actions from Sister Antoine that they used in the early days of Saint Marys:

- Turn off lights when you leave a room. "This small action has a big impact."
- Be more careful of your use of linens. "The piles of laundry today add to use of water, detergent and time. In the early days we would change the bed clothes every other day when the patient was having a bath and even then we used the top sheet as the new bottom sheet, cutting linen use in half."
- Serve food portions according the patient need. "An 80 pound woman can't eat as much as 200 pound man. We served smaller portions, put on the tray by the nurse. It's healthier and doesn't waste food. Its more appetizing and the patient can ask for more."

Sister Antoine isn't recommending the recycling of surgical gauze as in the past. "All surgical gauze was sent to the laundry to be washed and sterilized and then brought to the Sisters who stretched it on a board with nails, so it could be reused for hot compresses. Now that's recycling!"

As Sister Antoine reflects, "We have so much today and live in a world of plenty. It's easy to not think of waste, but it's as important today as in the time of St. Francis. Our Franciscan value of stewardship calls us to wisely mange our natural and material resources. It's who we are."

Sister Antoine celebrated her 100th birthday in January 2014!

Artwork by Barb Agerter, Cojourner

Golden Jubilarians

1964-2014

fifty years

S. Judi Angst
S. Mary Goergen
S. JoAnn Haney
S. Jan Halbach
S. Marlys Jax
S. Janet Sieve
S. Christine Stanoch
✝ S. Judith Simon (1990)

The Golden Jubilee Day is August 2, the Feast of Portiuncula. The design for the Golden Jubilee contains three symbols. The San Damiano Cross signifies the cross that spoke God's call to Francis. The outline of the heart signifies the heart of Francis and our hearts which responded to the call. The Portiuncula, or "little portion" church, is the place where the Franciscan Order began.

Diamond Jubilarians

1954-2014

sixty years

S. Rogene Fox
S. Jutta Gleichauf
S. Helen Haag
S. Darleen Maloney
S. Martha Ann McGinnis
S. Una O'Meara
S. Wanda Scherer

1939-2014

seventy-five years

S. Gretchen Berg
S. Generose Gervais

The Diamond Jubilarians will celebrate with their Sisters in May at Assisi Heights.

In Memoriam

Sister Bernadette Svatos | January 5, 1932-October 3, 2013

Sister Bernadette Svatos spent her entire life serving the Catholic Church. The first half of her career was spent teaching elementary and junior high school students, while the second half of her career was spent serving Catholic dioceses and institutions of higher education. She served as head of the Offices for Religious Education for the Dioceses of Pueblo, Colorado and Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 1989, Sister Bernadette taught English at Immaculate Heart College in Kagoshima, Japan. Then, in 1993, she went to her home in Litomysl to help her family care for her aging mother. After her mother's death, she returned Assisi Heights offering pastoral care to our Sisters in health care. In 1995, Sister Bernadette received a Master's degree in Franciscan Studies at St. Bonaventure University, with honors. As a result, she was invited to serve as a missionary to Africa by the Little Sisters of Saint Francis at Nakuru and Kasarani, Kenya, to establish both a Novitiate and Scholasticate there. Upon her return to the United States, she ministered for six years as Faith Formation Coordinator for the Diocese of Charlotte, North Carolina; followed by three years as volunteer in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She retired to Assisi Heights in 2008, and continued to contribute to the welfare of the entire community.

Sister Jane Frances Gregoire | October 31, 1939-October 18, 2013

Professing first vows on August 18, 1960, with the Stella Niagara Franciscans, Sister Jane Frances entered the world of an elementary teacher. 1971 brought a new career change…Director of Services at the Motherhouse. She earned her boilers license in 1981 and spent the next 20 years caring for the buildings and grounds at the Motherhouse in Stella Niagara, New York. While participating in local environmental circles, she met Sister Margeen Hoffman. When Sister Margeen moved to Rochester to fill a temporary position at The Gift of Life Transplant House, Sister Jane came to visit, and the rest is pretty much history! Beginning as Executive Housekeeper at Assisi Heights in 1992, she realized St. Francis and Mother Alfred were tugging at her heart strings. She made her final commitment on June 22, 1997. During this time, Sister Jane became the Facilities Manager at the Gift of Life Transplant House using knowledge of caring for the grounds, as well as maintaining the upkeep of the house itself. When Sister Margeen became ill, Sister Jane Frances stepped into the role of Executive Manager, and was instrumental in overseeing the construction of a new building. In October of 2011, hoping to escape the harsh Minnesota winters, she retired and moved to Jacksonville, Florida, where she continued to volunteer until God called her home.

Sister Marguerite Cahill | November 13, 1921-December 29, 2013

Sister Marguerite (Peg) Cahill was born after her two brothers and a sister were already in their 20's and away from home. When she was nine years of age, both parents died. She enrolled at the College of Saint Teresa, graduating in 1944 with a B.S. in Business and Social Studies. After six years of teaching in the public school system in Wisconsin, Marguerite joined the Rochester Franciscans. She received the name Sister M. Moninna. Sister Marguerite began her Franciscan ministry as a secondary teacher in Waseca, Minnesota. She also taught in Austin, Minnesota, in Portsmouth, Ohio. In 1963, she earned an MBA in Business Education from Denver University and returned to Waseca to serve as principal. After the Second Vatican Council, Sister Marguerite desired to teach religion, and, in 1971, she responded to an invitation to serve as a director of Religious Education and Adult Education at Queen of Angels Parish in Port Angeles, Washington. She later served as Director of Religious Education and Adult Faith Formation in parishes in Bothell, Washington, and in Minnesota, at Shakopee, Red Wing, and St. Bonifacius. Sister Marguerite retired from parish ministry and moved to Assisi Heights in 1990, where she was delighted to have the role as sacristan for four years because she longed for solitude to pray, which that role provided.

Sister Frances McManimon | November 22, 1921-March 1, 2014

Sister Frances was a Franciscan who daily blessed this world with kindness, optimism and a spirit that never tired of serving others. She attended the College of Saint Teresa and received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Social Work degree in 1943 and shortly after, answered the call to become a Sister of Saint Francis. She entered in 1943, and was assigned to Saint Marys Hospital. She was soon asked to assume leadership positions, including day supervisor, assistant director of the Saint Marys School of Nursing, instructor in pediatrics, and night supervisor. In 1962, she received a Masters degree in Medical and Surgical Nursing, later serving as the Associate Professor in Nursing Department at the College of Saint Teresa from 1972-1978. Sister Frances then worked for the Freeborn County Nursing Services in Albert Lea, Minnesota, before returning to Assisi Heights as the Congregational Health Care Coordinator from 1982-1988. After receiving a chaplaincy degree in Clinical Pastoral Education in 1989, she served as a chaplain. Sister Frances was honored with the prestigious Karis Award recognizing her expert, constant and generous service to the patients and staff at Saint Marys Hospital. She continued to serve as a volunteer in Pastoral Care at Assisi Heights from 1996-2005. She returned to volunteer at Saint Marys Hospital until 2008, when she retired to Assisi Heights. During this time she gave attention to many of the social concerns addressed by the Rochester Franciscans.

Sister Marcianne Budnick | June 22, 1913-February 11, 2014

Sister Marcianne Budnick was born on a farm near Owatonna, the second oldest of five in an all-girl family. She wanted to be a missionary, but having met the Sisters of Saint Francis at St. Mary's Academy, she chose their congregation. Sister Marcianne's first year in the community was spent helping Sister Annella at the motherhouse. Then began her career serving in the congregational ministry of teaching secondary education business courses in Ohio and Minnesota for 27 years. After her father's death, she cared for her mother for some years. Her final teaching assignment was in Columbus, Ohio. She later worked as an administrative assistant at the College of Saint Teresa, the Treasurer's Office of the Congregation in Rochester, as well as an administrative assistant at the Tau Center and St. Anne Hospice in Winona. In 2009, upon reviewing 96 years of life, Marcianne counted some things as most vital: devotion to the Sacred Heart; the Sisters, especially Sisters Angela Deming, Conchessa Gardner, Colman Coleman. When asked what experiences stood out in her life, she replied that, besides the Assisi pilgrimage and a trip to Gethsemane Abbey, the summer of 1966 in Charleston on the first leg of Project SAIL, was the most rewarding, as she felt fulfilled teaching business skills to adults as well as students.

Sister Renata Walch | June 18, 1929-March 6, 2014

Sister Renata was born in Minneiska, Minnesota, the fifth child of Ed and Olivia Walch. The Walch farm was over on Oak Ridge, the farm with the round barn next to Immaculate Conception Parish Church. She joined her sister, Sister Michael, and became a Rochester Franciscan in 1949. As a primary teacher for 32 years, Sister Renata taught in various Catholic Schools in Chicago and throughout Minnesota, Ohio, South Dakota and Montana. As a great "People Person," she taught the children and also visited their families. She had a great time!

In June of 1994, she had a terrible car accident while driving from Missoula, Montana to Minnesota. That accident took the "zing" out of her for awhile, but it was the reason she came to live here at Assisi Heights these last 19 years. Sister Renata enjoyed playing cards of all varieties; nothing like a good 3 no trump bid in Bridge. She had a heck-of-a-good-time in the card shop, at a game of Scrabble, leading the rosary, organizing the Community Food Response Volunteers, and doing little things that anyone needed from time to time. Sister Renata has been called colorful, generous, a woman of surprise, welcoming, faithful, missed and Ms. Hospitality. As Sister Renata would say, "Live it Up!"

Update on the Solar Power System

by Don DeCramer, Consultant

It has been over four months since the installation of the solar power (photovoltaic) system was completed at Assisi Heights. Those working and/or living at Assisi Heights may remember we rang the bells on December 13, 2013, to signal the start of electrical production. So, how has the system been performing? It has performed very well, especially considering the long, cold, gloomy and snowy winter that was experienced here in Minnesota.

Each solar panel and each inverter is connected to the internet and monitored by Solar Edge, the manufacturer of the inverters. This allows us to gather statistics on the system's performance on a regular basis. Here are some statistics that we have been able to gather from the monitoring system:

As of Thursday, March 20, 2014, the first day of spring, the solar system has produced 32,450,000 Kilowatt-hours of electricity. Every bit of that electrical energy was used instantly at Assisi Heights. 32,450,000 Kilowatt-hours is enough electricity to illuminate 98,315 light bulbs for a day!

From an environmental perspective, the energy produced by the solar system in the first four months, has saved 49,277 pounds of CO2 emissions, which is equivalent to planting 1,265 trees!

We all remember those short daylight hours of December, January and February. As one might expect, December and February were the lowest energy producing months with 4,680,000 Kilowatt-hours and 4,580,000 Kilowatt-hours respectively. But, in January, we had enough sunlight to produce 7,140,000 Kilowatt-hours. And as a sign of spring, on Thursday, March 20th, with all that nice warm sunlight, we hit a single day high of 1,117,000 Kilowatt-hours.

Don DeCramer is a retired engineer from Mayo Clinic and serves as a consultant on the solar panel project at Assisi Heights.

The Heart of Franciscan Spirituality

by Barb DeCramer, Office of Development

When Sister Therese Jilk processes Medicare forms for Sisters at Assisi Heights, she finds that there is always one page at the end of the packet of papers that is blank on one side. Since the printed side of that sheet does not contain any confidential data, Sister Therese saves that last page in a neat stack at her workstation and shares this supply with us for use as scratch paper in our offices.

Sister Marguerite Gaasch has a crafty, clever side that presents itself in her ongoing project – "Mag's Bags." Mag's Bags are darling purses that are made out of recycled candy and potato chip bags that Sister Marguerite collects, washes, cuts into strips and then braids together to create the bags.

Every day that you spend at Assisi Heights reminds you that the Sisters of Saint Francis are the original practitioners of reduce/reuse/recycle. Thoughtful consideration is given to any issue big or small – from making sure both sides of the piece of paper have been used before putting it into the recycling bin – to leading the way with the most productive solar energy field in southeastern Minnesota. At a time in their lives when some might be tempted to enjoy a well-deserved retirement, the Sisters of Saint Francis instead are always looking for new ways to offset their carbon footprint.

Truly, this is at the heart of Franciscan spirituality, which directs us to be responsible caretakers of our building and grounds. In that sense of stewardship, this summer the Sisters will commission a project that will responsibly care for Lourdes Chapel at Assisi Heights. Lourdes Chapel was built in the mid-1950s and is a place of peace and spirituality. At the time of previous renovation work in the chapel, there were not funds available to paint the ceiling of this large space. Parts of the ceiling of the chapel, in fact, have never been painted, and it is quite evident when one views the ceiling that the areas that were painted are in need of restoration. Stay tuned for information on this important project.

Permeable pavers in the parking lot, careful use of chemicals on our grounds so as not to disturb the bees, taking proper care of our facilities, making sure that lights are turned off when you leave the room – it all adds up.

And, by the way, Mag's Bags are available for sale in the Assisi Heights Gift Shop, open daily from 12:15-1:15 pm.

Sisters of Saint Francis
Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes

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