Sharing Our Charism

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interchange

Sisters of Saint Francis

Focus: Sharing Our Charism

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Letter from the President

Sister Ramona Miller

Dear Friends and Family,

When I think of someone with charisma, the person has a special energy that invites one to listen and pay attention to what they are about. The charisma of Francis of Assisi in the thirteenth century attracted many followers because of his love of Jesus. His authentic witness of living the Gospel was unencumbered with rules and regulations. His joyful spirit and strong proclamation that God loves everyone, that all persons are good—created in the image and likeness of God—began a movement that has endured through the centuries. Francis' special spirit given by God is *charism*. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that there are different spiritual gifts, charisms, given to individuals (1 Cor. 12:4) for the purpose of building the Christian community, the Body of Christ. The charism becomes permanent as a community continues the initial charism through history. As noted on the cover, this stained glass window represents our Community's healing ministry at Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester, located at the entrance to the Chapel. The Rochester Franciscans have carried the Franciscan charism through the years to many places beyond Rochester. One resident of Bogotá, Colombia, wrote "I give infinite thanks to God... for what you have represented in my life; spirituality, commitment, leadership and a thousand other values!"

Many of the stories in this issue of *Interchange* reflect the spark of the Franciscan charism that ignited an individual's loving response to live consciously the values, the charism of the Sisters: *"the radical peacefulness and expressed joy of Jesus, Francis and Clare...," "Francis' embrace of the leper," "the joyfulness and the everyday commonness that seemed to be present in the Sisters I met."* One significant aspect of the Franciscan charism manifests itself in our enjoyment of the beauty of creation and our sensitivity for the care of creation. This stance toward all that God created finds its origin in Saint Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*. Sister Joan Brown reflects on how we "grew out of or fermented from the universe" while she asks us to consider living into the evolution of humans.

Sister Marlys describes charism "as a powerful energy that permeates the heart of the person in a way in which they accomplish their ministries." Just as light is refracted through a prism to provide a cascade of colors, so does the light of Christ get refracted through each individual to provide a display of illustrious gifts for the benefit of the whole human family and our Common Home. The Jubilarians of the past three years, honored on April 29 at Assisi Heights, display the diversity of God's gifts while having in common the calling to live out the Franciscan charism through their individual talents. We give God thanks and praise for the fullness of the Franciscan charism that has captured our hearts.

Sister Ramona Miller

Sister Ramona Miller, OSF
Congregational Minister

Introduction to Charism

What is Charism?

- Charisms are **gifts of the Holy Spirit.**
- Charism is **by its nature a special grace.**
- Charisms are **gifts given for the common good; or for the service of others.**

For religious orders: charism is having a unique founding spirit.

What is the charism of the Rochester Franciscan Sisters?

I asked a few Sisters to share:

1. What is the unique founding spirit? What was it in the charism of the Sisters of Saint Francis that drew you to join the Rochester Franciscan Community?

2. How have you shared your charism with those outside of the Rochester Franciscan Community?

As expected, there were many different interpretations and the answers varied greatly. Each individual Sister lives out the charism in her own unique way. And yet, in some ways they all blend together to help identify that "unique founding spirit!" It's as if these reflections and stories weave together to form a beautiful tapestry... each is a different hue in an intricate stained-glass composition of the whole Congregation.

Sisters Reflections on Charism:

Sister Christine Stanoch:

Charism from our Rule: A spirituality of the Third Order has an emphasis of turning to be and being conformed to Christ. It is not accomplished once and forever, but is ongoing. It is important to be faithful to the Gospel and to be open to conversion which flows into contemplation, poverty and minority.

by Kathy Gatliff, Director of Communications

Image by Kohji Asakawa courtesy of Pixabay

I heard charism described in this creative way – a story by Sister Barbara Mullen, CSJ:

"Imagine a person standing at a field filled with a variety of flowers, many different ones. Persons are asked to walk through the field and pick their favorite flower. When they reached the other side, a phenomenal thing happened. They were amazed to find a common bond with the persons who picked the same flower that they did. Shortly thereafter, those with the same flower choice formed their own group. What surprised them is that they were instinctively drawn to each other. A charism is like finding others that are drawn in a similar way and they live from the same motivation or heart."

My reflection on charism: Sister Constantias read the *Life of St. Francis* to my seventh-grade class at St. Juliana School in Chicago. She read about his conversion of kissing the leper. That story or experience has been a huge part of my understanding of being Franciscan. There is an awareness in me that my life will always include a call to conversion. I will serve in a way that will break my heart for the poor and humble, as well as give my heart away through ministry. I will always be grateful for the beauty of creation in our world and in others.

Sister Briana McCarthy:

Entering the Rochester Franciscans over sixty years ago, I knew nothing about the word, "Charism," and I don't recall hearing the word in my early years in Franciscan Formation. The word did surface for me in the administration of Sister Gretchen Berg. That being said, I was drawn to becoming a Franciscan first by the grace of God. Secondly, by reading a book on the life of St. Francis, and I had a sense that Franciscans were less monastic than, for instance, the Benedictines, and freer to express their desires for peace, joy, and love.

Today, I believe that our charism is a generational gift and legacy we inherited from two saints: Francis and Clare of Assisi. They encouraged future generations to

Introduction to Charism... *continued*

love God, to walk the Gospel Way, and to journey into the Triune God with great joy and love.

Sister M. Severina Caron:

Charism! When I came to the convent, I never heard the word. The bishop received us, gave us a name and a card with the name of our patron saint and a special virtue we were to practice. Mine was fidelity. With the help of God's grace, I could be faithful to my baptismal promises and my rule and constitutions, which included our vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. It meant not just the vows, but also the virtue of the vows, especially the virtue of obedience.

Many years later, I was visiting with Sister Emmanuel Collins and she said, "They are saying that the charism of Saint Francis was poverty. It's not poverty, it's obedience." To me that meant with the help of the Holy Spirit, I was to be faithful, not only to the vows, but also to the virtue of each vow. This would involve gifts of the Holy Spirit, a special grace not only for me, but also to contribute to the common good, including service to others.

Mother Alfred Moes came to the United States for that purpose. We were practicing the charism of obedience even though we had not heard the word. When I visited the Sisters at Alverna Hall (at the College of Saint Teresa), I was conscious of something present which I wanted for my life, even though I couldn't put a name on it. I am grateful that God supplied the grace to answer the call.

Sisters Valerie Usher, Carolina Pardo Jaramillo and Clara Inés Ordóñez:

What is the "unique founding spirit" of the Rochester Franciscans as experienced in Bogotá, Colombia? From the arrival on the scene, back in the Fall of 1962 all the way to the present, fifty Rochester Franciscans have left their mark on the people of Bogotá in profound and varied ways. From the corridors of St. Ignacio Hospital and the Nursing Department of the Jesuit Javeriana University, to the students, staff and families of our two Colegios (Santa Francisca Romana and San Francisco de Asís – and two of our present Sisters are alumnae of Santa Francisca Romana!) to the Parish of the Child Mary (la Niña María) in the south of the city, to several day-care centers to CINDA, a center serving deaf children of scarce resources and in other educational and healthcare services as well, the Rochester Franciscan presence has been both tangible and impactful.

Families, alumnae, coworkers and church officials speak with singularity of the influence of the Sisters through their leadership and organizational ability, their warm human presence, their broad and well-developed skill sets, their passion for justice and care for the disenfranchised, the JOY, faith and purposeful commitment which they exemplify and inspire in others, and the countless ways in which they have touched the personal lives of so many. Plus they have "sown the seed" of the Franciscan spirit in ways that others have embraced and put into practice in their own daily circumstances and surroundings! So the Franciscan charism is "alive and well" in the settings served by our Sisters throughout these past nearly 60 years in Colombia! As a friend and coworker wrote to the local community on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, "I give infinite thanks to God for who you are as a Community and for what you have represented in my life: spirituality, commitment, leadership and a thousand other values!"

L to R: Sisters Clara Inés Ordóñez, Valerie Usher and Carolina Pardo Jaramillo

Cojourners: Drawn to the Charism of the Rochester Franciscans

Margo Kroshus:
Charism was the theme of a recent monthly Zoom meeting of Cojourners and Sisters. The question presented was: What attracted you to becoming a Cojourner with the Rochester Franciscans? Before signing off, Marty Cormack put together a word cloud, shown above, with the words given by the group regarding charism. They included such things as compassion, courage, wisdom, justice, gift, hopeful, challenge, faith, spontaneous, etc...

Mary Huettl:
I will answer with words that I think sum it up: openness... welcoming... peace... holiness... spirituality... joy.

Arne Graff:
The charism that drew me to this Community is acceptance. Who you are or how you identify yourself (race, gender, faith, other) does not identify you as "different"— rather you are a wonderful additional energy to be shared within all of the Community.

Stacy Haatvedt:
I think it was the radical peacefulness and expressed joy of Jesus, Francis and Clare that drew me to the charism. Each had great love and courage and a heart for justice. Mother Alfred also showed great love, faith, and determination. Each Sister and Cojourner adds their own unique ingredient to our charism. It is God's gift to us that we share with the world.

Rosine Hermodson-Olsen:
The charism that drew me to the Rochester Franciscans is that the Holy Celebrations were full of joy in the midst of the realities of this world that can bring us to tears. Within the desert, they are able to find the oasis. They express openness to how the Spirit moves in each of us, recognizing our uniqueness, even as the Spirit lives wholly and completely as the same gift of the Spirit from one God who is God of us all. I like the freedom of expression of prayer forms. And, even as there is a structure, there is also freedom for spontaneity in our expressions. I admire how the Sisters love and care for each other, even if there are frustrations. There is a beautiful recognition that it takes all types. Their love and welcoming presence, or maybe better said, the acceptance of the uniqueness of an individual as a celebration of who they are, is a contrast to what this world would say. They offer a Holy welcome of where a child of God is on their journey. There is a joyfulness and a playfulness that has been a part of this Community even in the midst of the struggles that are always with us during changes, transitions and deep questions. And truly, the outpouring and compassion for the poor, which calls us to live with the knowledge that there is no peace without justice, challenges us to live the radical gospel set forth by Jesus.

Joy, peace, justice, compassion, care, loving, welcoming, intellectually challenging, are words I would use when thinking of the charism of this Community.

Coming in Touch with Charism

by Sister Patricia Jean Schlosser

Sister Patricia Jean at age 10 with her brother.

Staff where Sister Patricia worked, one of the nation's first re-entry centers for women exiting prison.

I never heard of the word "Charism," let alone knew its meaning, when I was 10 years old, and yet, that is the moment I came in touch with what I would say is a significant part of the charism of the Rochester Franciscans, and what became my own charism. That was the age I met Francis for the first time. I read a book about him, and what was so impactful and memorable, was his "embrace of the leper." That became my guide for the next 78 years.

The meaning of that encounter has taken different forms for me and evolved in different ways throughout my life. In grade school and high school, it meant reaching out to and befriending the lonely, the ignored. In college it meant being guided to the profession of Social Work. In post college, it meant joining the Rochester Franciscans. In seven years of teaching high school, it meant finding ways for those with low self-esteem to achieve and find success. In graduate school for Social Work in Washington, D.C., in the 1960s, it meant an awakening to the larger picture... seeing how "isms" and systems were creating the marginalized, the outcasts, the "lepers."

While teaching Social Work at the College of Saint Teresa in Winona, Minnesota, 1968-70, it meant integrating this awakening into the social work curriculum; culminating in a cross-country Senior Social Work trip. To expand the horizons of the students, we traveled to Appalachia, to the Lower East Side of New York City, and then to Washington, D.C., to meet with policy social workers. Within this awakening, was my yearning for simple living and living with "the people," those most marginalized by race, culture, and economics.

In 1970, I was able to fulfill this yearning, by moving to Uptown Chicago, one of the most diverse and marginalized neighborhoods in the city. I lived in a small Franciscan community intent upon simple living and being neighbors to people who were economically poor. Living simply (another aspect of the Franciscan charism for us) took on new meaning as we became vegetarian, simplified our needs, and lived in solidarity with our neighbors. We chose only ministries that were non-profit, and whose goal was the betterment of the oppressed and marginalized, "the leper" in society. That choice took me from working with homeless and nearly homeless people, to providing daycare in a housing project, to working with women in jail and prison.

We were enriched, challenged, and stretched by these experiences, and were led to couple our personal ministries with working for change in the systems that were oppressing those for whom we worked. This led to collaboration with many organizations; protests of policies and perpetrators; meetings with government and corporate officials; and consciousness raising in all forms. Systemic change was the goal, and is to this day!

The call of living out this charism has taken me on an eventful and wondrous journey, from my discovery of Francis and the Leper at age ten, to this moment in time.

Understanding Our Charism

by Sister Anne Walch

Sister Anne (standing second from left) with her family of origin.

Sisters Romana (standing), Cabrini and Anne.

I came from a large family where the charism of our Franciscan Community was already alive and well and present during my formative years. With several relatives in religious life, I would say I was just a "smooth evolver" into religious life. I was able to transfer the family values we shared of rootedness in faith, hospitality, caring for the earth, concern for one's neighbors, experiencing shared responsibility for one another, along with the goodness that is a part of the sharing of good and tough times together.

When I joined the Franciscans, I knew little about the Franciscan charism, but was attracted by the joyfulness and the everyday commonness that seemed to be present in the Sisters I met. I also noted from observing my aunt, Sister Romana, and my cousin, Sister Cabrini, a sense of purpose and authenticity that I admired. They were unafraid to stand up for what they felt was significant, especially regarding encouraging education as an important element in reaching out to those who were underserved.

After joining the Community, and more formally learning about our history, I discovered that our foundress, Mother Alfred, had also been a person who was unafraid to stand up for what she believed in. She trusted in God's presence during some very difficult times; especially when it seemed the things she had hoped for would not become a reality. When the Bishops were sometimes threatened by her spiritual and leadership strength, she stated her 'truth' and then let go, listened to God's lead, and moved on as needed. This is the charism to which I was originally attracted and continue to strive to live.

Guided by our unique charism as followers of the Gospel, we Franciscan Sisters continue to use our gifts, within in a multitude of ministries, in an effort to compassionately respond to the needs of God's people. This undertaking has involved outreach through many forms of presence. A few examples of include work in the fields of education, healing, pastoral care, environmental and societal concerns and change, as well as a host of other possibilities. There is a place for everyone to share their unique contribution within our Community. We have also challenged the systems within our Church and our society by becoming committed to working for a more just world. Though most of us have served in U.S. locations, our mission also has called our Sisters to outreach within other countries such as Peru, Colombia, and Cambodia.

As a grateful member of our Community, committed to God and all creation within the Franciscan charism, I have found a life of authenticity and joy. Over the years, my original family charism has morphed into an ever more expansive and challenging inclusion of all God's creation within my vocation as a Rochester Franciscan.

Charism: The Rochester Franciscan Community and Beyond

Charism = gift or grace feely given.

Several years ago, between Christmas and New Year's, I prayed into a nine day novena. My time of reflection focused daily upon a quart mason jar into which I placed 1 cup of water and 1 cup of flour. I welcomed this mixture to capture wild yeast from the air. Each day I took some of the fermenting mixture out and added more flour and water to feed the growing wild yeast.

On day nine, I was able to bake bread with my mature sourdough starter filled with, invisible to my eye, wild yeast. One third of the food on planet Earth, in some form, is fermented. There is a lot of wild yeast around, even in our stomachs. I like to think that wild yeast like wild grace, it is as numerous as the stars.

Sometimes I dream of wild yeast and fermentation. I check the sourdough starter to see if it is ready to make bread. I smell the salted cabbage becoming sauerkraut in the large mason jars on my kitchen cabinet. I gaze at apricots foaming with sugars becoming brandy in a dark closet. In the flow with fermentation, I was thrilled to read Pierre Teilhard De Chardin explore fermentation in a short passage in *Human Energy*. He explains that the universe is a vast psychic (soul) experience out of which the human is a point of emergence in the sacred evolutionary process. He reflects that the human "is the flame of general fermentation of the universe which breaks out suddenly on earth."

After billions of years, all that had been infused with Sacred Fire and Holy Presence burst forth as human beings. We grew out of or fermented from the universe. Such a long process, so much wild grace to ferment us. We are beauty, walking in beauty, all around us walking in beauty.

The Greek word for 'the beautiful' is *kalon* and is related to the word *kalein*, which carries the sense of call. All humans are called into beauty and to co-create beauty. The Navajo people say it is walking the beauty way.

Groups of people may feel attracted to certain expressions of beauty more than another. It is like wild yeasts attracted to certain sugars or food to create different fermented foods like sharp cheddar or blue cheese; or sourdough bread; or white wine or red wine.

I do not like to eat bread alone and have discovered that cheese goes well with bread. Some French and Italian folks say wine with bread and cheese is the perfect community of foods. Eating the diversely fermented foods together sounds like a feast, a communion.

by Sister Joan Brown

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In our current times of struggle and chaos, we long for such communion and community where we can rest in beauty in order to serve and love as we live into the Anthropocene Era. This is a geological period, a time in which human activities have so impacted our environment that we have created a geologic and climactic change. The change affects everything: the climate, biodiversity, extinction crisis and every social concern. The Anthropocene Era invites us to reflect upon our identity and charism not as religious communities, or even as single religious traditions — but as human beings.

In religious communities, we spend much time going back to the source or invite renewal from the source. In the *Hymn of the Universe,* Teilhard reflects, "The grandeur of the river is revealed not at its source but at its estuary."* Have we looked around and explored our estuary?

In the estuary we live with the water, cattails, microbes, flocks of birds and great diversity. We cannot forget the source of water, the one drop at the beginning of the mountain flow. But, we do not dwell on the one drop in isolation of the estuary.

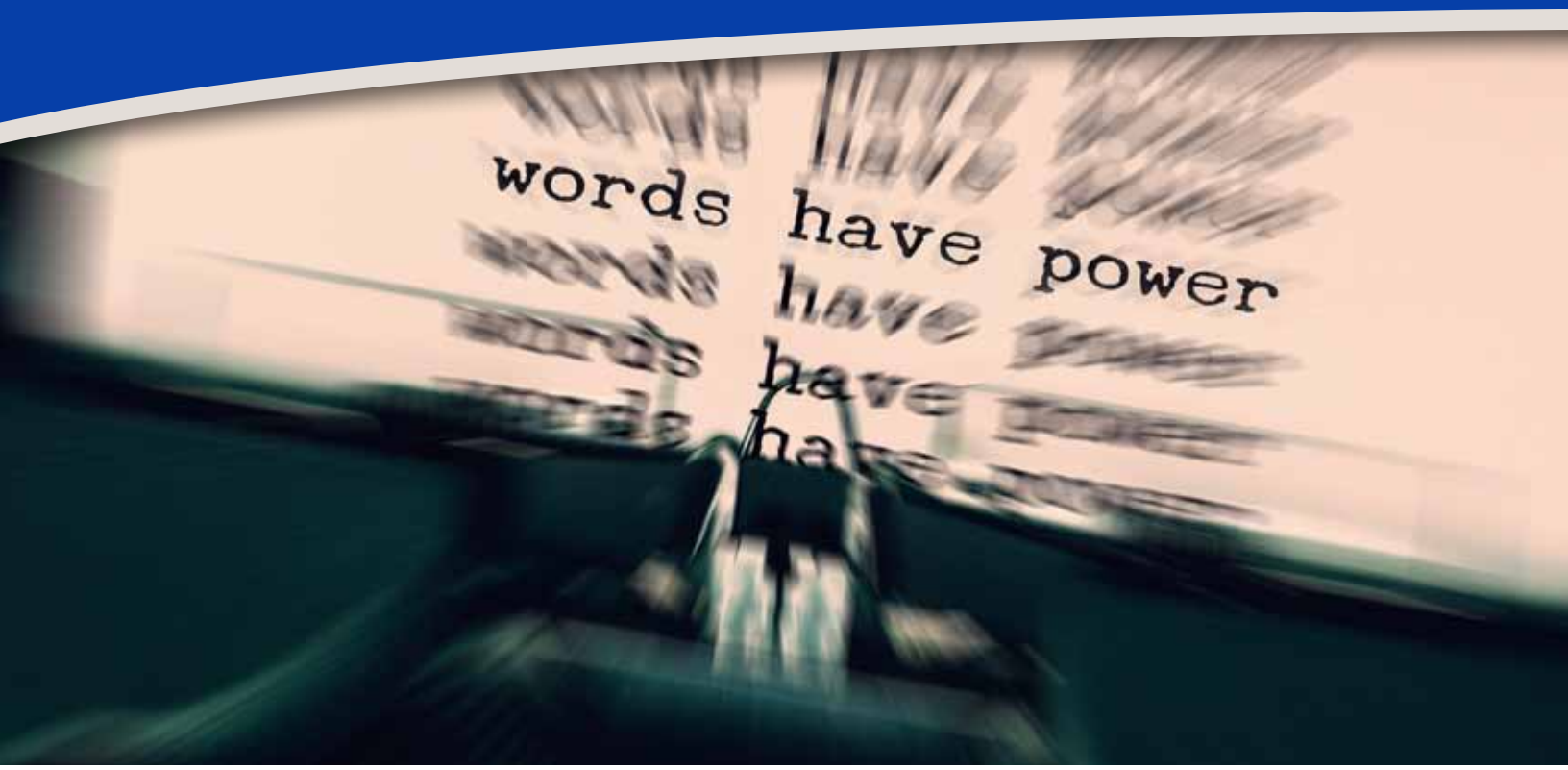
Maybe we need to really experience the estuaries of our day, whether that is culture at large, the human species, or expressions of the spiritual in our world. Maybe we need to look around and be awed by the diversity and beauty. Maybe we need to look around and be saddened by what is dying in the estuaries in order for something else to emerge. Maybe we need to grieve what we are losing because of our short sightedness. Maybe we need to listen around the edges in the muck and chaos for new messages and charisms/grace.

I do not believe we fermented from Earth to destroy Our Common Home. I believe that we are given unprecedented gifts, especially through the years of COVID, social, racial and economic unrest and now a world conflict. Perhaps charisms of the past are too small. We are always evolving in the world, so, too, the world of soul evolves, diversifies and complexifies. What is the charism of being human at this moment? How can we live into the evolution of humans in a challenging Anthropocene Era?

We are to be bearers of *Love*, making sense of struggle and sorrow through the alchemy of creating beauty anew out of our ordinary realities. We stand at a new threshold facing a famished world with hands and paws outstretched waiting for fermented bread, cheese and wine with ever new wild yeast and wild grace.

* *A body of water where the freshwater river meets the salty sea.*

Charism Calling – Calling as Charism



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Led by the Spirit of God,
We desire "transformation of mind and heart as demanded by the Gospel."
Constitutions – Sisters of St. Francis § 63

The Gospel is the charism! We have been given what we desire! We share the gifts of the Spirit, charisms, given to us for the common good of the People of God and the world. Those gifts brought each of us to a shared calling as a Franciscan Sister. Our *Constitutions* are preceded by the passage, *Ephesians 1:3-14*. It speaks of a shared Christian faith, but it also elicits a vocational response from all who are open to hear it.

Personally, some 45 years after I first set foot on Assisi Heights, as a recent CST graduate and "Interested Person," I cannot hear that text without being deeply moved, and often, to tears of joy. Speaking of "charism" – it's *all* there: "every spiritual blessing"! (v. 3) Chosenness "in Christ!" (vv. 4, 11) "Love" and being "beloved!" (vv. 4-6) "Grace" – "lavished upon us!" (vv. 7-8) Our purposes are: "the praise of the glory" of Divine grace, and "so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ." (vv. 6, 12)

Our *Constitutions* continue: "We believe that in Christ we have been claimed as God's own" and "this relationship with Jesus calls us to love, to hope, and to work" for the reign of God on earth. St. Francis' primary focus was the person of Jesus, who moved him to kiss a leper and sing about his mutual relations with everything in God's creation. He rebuilt the Church, brought the mercy of Jesus to outlaws and strangers, and more. Then, "Mother Alfred, tireless doer of the Gospel" combined the ideals of Francis with practical action and brought to them "her gentility, keen intellect, and feminine gifts."

As we seek common ground in these challenging days, I invite us to take time to hear the "deep story" of one another. What drew us here in our youth? What has kept us here? We need to hear, "out loud," each other's testimonies about how our unique gifts of the Spirit have empowered us to proclaim the Gospel with our lives. And then, when contemplating our future, we can stand on the solid ground of shared deep wisdom, common foundational experiences, only to know them, anew.

by Sister Dawn Nothwehr

Some things are best expressed in poetry.
Here begins my story. I hope it helps you recall yours.

Retreat Prior to Profession of Life Vows, 1985

My whole being overflows with deep Joy and Mystery –
a Searing Fireball that warms but does not harm.
Alluring inward to the Fountain of All Love –
to become what is in those realms, Undefinable and Indescribable.
So, You, my Love, jealously summoned me with the sweet longing to become One-with-You.

Great at times the temptation to turn back... But my heart cried – No!
Then with the sweet pain of desire, I open my arms to Your embrace.
Yet, in Your approaching presence, I see all that I am not,
and my heart aches with its lack of wholeness.
My arms pull back to cover and soothe the pain –
to block the Fiery-Pierce-of-Light exposing my own darkness.
Oh, how much I am not, before I AM WHO AM!

But Your words are in my memory –
"How can I forget you?... I have carved you on the palm of my hand"
Then... like bubbles surfacing in water... my "YES, FOREVER!"
joins the "YES" of Mary, St. Clare, Mother Alfred.
The Word they carried is within me as well!

Words awkwardly form the blows that painfully –
yet so sweetly – break a way into my heart.
Tears of deep joy wash clean this earthen vessel's crumbled cracks,
to find inside that Love desires most –
an empty spot with nothing there, so Love could fill it in!

In this dark earthen cave, appears a Fireball-Flame that warms and lights the night.
Proof of Love comes clear –
Wounded hands and feet and side, and fill that empty place of fear.
Again, my arms reach out to touch and know that this is real!
Again, my being fills – with deep Joy and Mystery.
I hear the Voice say, "Come now my Love…"
I say – "Here I am, send me!"

- Sister Dawn Nothwehr

Image by Dmitri Posudin courtesy of Pixabay

Veiled "Tongues of Fire"

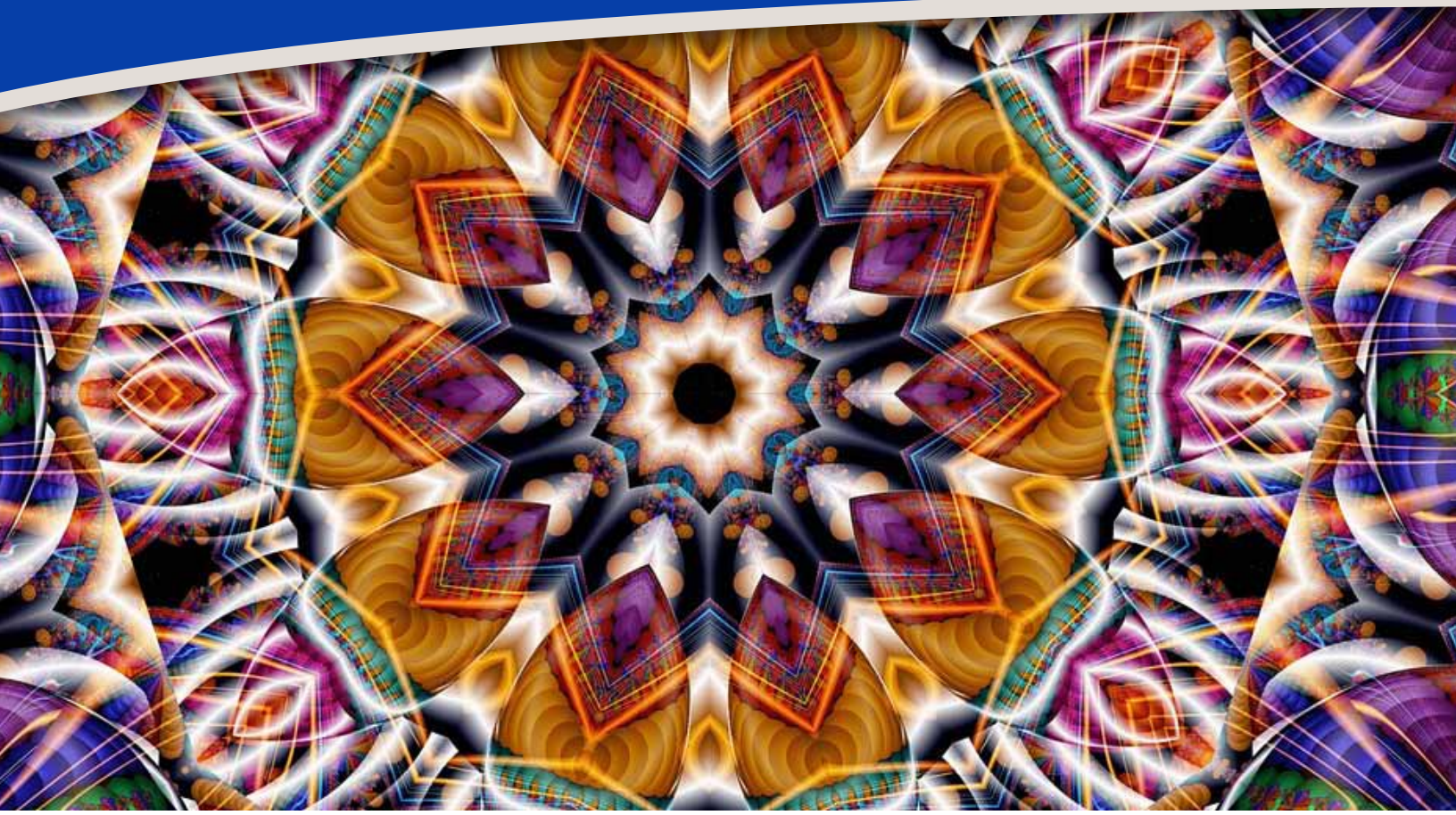


Image by Dmitri Posudin courtesy of Pixabay

Nothing takes the edge off charism like realizing, as I am waking up, that I am called to be a mirror of God! Shifting my focus to the vistas and views, I know everything is a mirror of the Creator! Every particle of nature, yes, even ourselves, is saturated in God. I don't need to fully understand the hypostatic union. I just need to turn my gratitude to whomever came up with a coral reef or a redwood tree.

Charisms are gifts to be given away, spent and/or shared. They are not static, "churchy," nor a measure of holiness. Rather, they are dynamic, unfolding, constantly re-discovered and re-expressed for the good of a better world. They are freely appropriated to a person of any rank, which allows the person to accomplish activities suited for the whole community's good. Cesar Chavez captured charism succinctly when he said, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about the prosperity of the community."

The most dramatic story of charism is in Acts 2:1-6 at the first Pentecost. The apostles gathered in the upper room when a strong driving wind surprised them. Then there appeared "tongues of fire," which came to rest on each one of them. They were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit empowered them.

In recent years, I have not seen any heads adorned with tongues of fire, or clues in the clouds. But charism is also a powerful energy that permeates the heart of the person in a way in which they accomplish their ministries. It does not define what they do, rather *why* and *how* they do it. Signs of the times guide their works.

Some defining elements of charism include having a faith vision, sensitivity or perception of a real human need, coupled with charity and a kind of supernatural dynamism that impels action. Some individuals embody characteristics including nurturing skills that transform lives, or being attentive to structural needs and an ability to creatively renew life at its source.

Historically, we have been witness to some of these beautiful moments of grace in Gandhi, Thomas Merton, Desmond Tutu, Caesar Chavez, Dorothy Day,

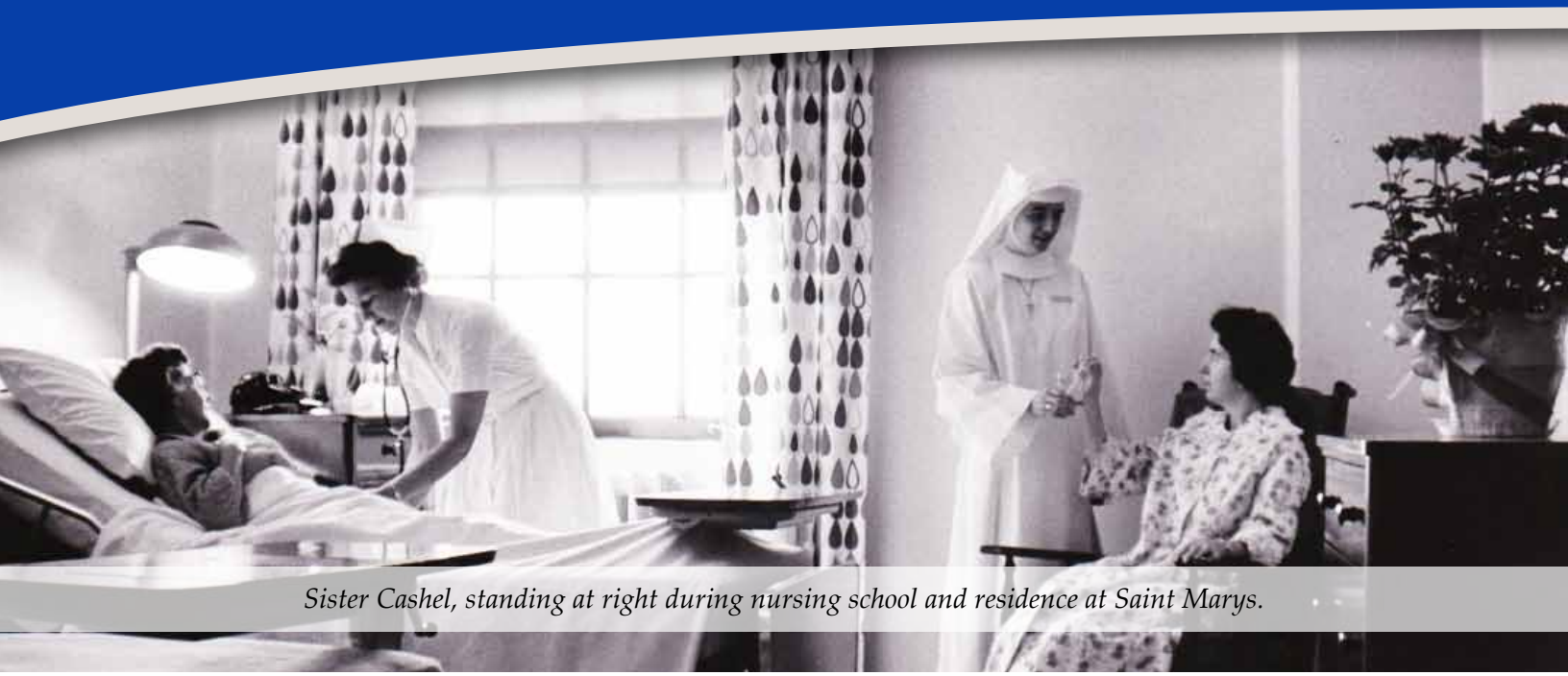
Image by Dmitri Posudin courtesy of Pixabay

Maya Angelou, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Mother Teresa, Amanda Gorman, and Greta Thunberg. They each had a distinct human talent. They coupled it with supernatural gifts for the good of others and for the sake of others.

In the city of Rochester, Minnesota, we count these three examples, among many others. Pasquale Presa's ministry of generously feeding the hungry on the front lines; Phil Wheeler's passion for the incarcerated ICE immigrants; and Jeff Urban, providing homes for the hard to house populations. The charismatic "fire" for the Rochester Franciscan's legacy has been and is transmitted through the chutzpah of Mother Alfred Moes. As her "daughters," we carry her genes of initiative and magnetism.

In our Congregation, we count many who exemplify this charism. A few stand out that need to be acknowledged. They include those who have gone to God: *Dean Aloysius Malloy* – women's education; *Sister Julie Erne* – expanded nursing education; *Sister Maigread Conway* – support of the culturally poor; *Sister Emanuel Collins* – expressing wisdom; *Sister Jean Schulte* – development of health services in remote world communities; *Sister Mira Radatz* – sharing discernment; *Sister Gretchen Berg* – offering contemplative leadership; *Sister Ralph Jahner* – creating surprises from the ordinary; *Sister Kay Rundquist* – gifts of healing touch; *Sister Clairvaux McFarland* – sharing theology through art; *Sister Adele O'Neil* – astute financial acumen; *Sister Helen Hayes* – offering spiritual accompaniment; *Sisters Joseen Vogt* and *Florence Zweber* – sacrificing for the advancement of others; *Sister Mary O'Hara* – long standing voiceless gratitude; *Sister Alice Ann Campion* – liturgical expression through music; *Sister Edmund Sullivan* – believing that everyone counts; *Sister Margaret Pirkl* – foresight in environmental spirituality long before it was popular; *Sister Doreen Van Uden* – expressing abiding joy; *Sister Annella Rohde* – dust reformer with common sense; and *Sister Delphine Klein* – a welcoming hospitality. This is only a partial list! I invite you to add other colors to this kaleidoscope of those who embodied the charism of the Rochester Franciscans.

Experiencing Our Charism



Sister Cashel, standing at right during nursing school and residence at Saint Marys.

Having spent too long looking for a good description for a charism has led me back to the realization that a charism is a gift from the Holy Spirit, and by its nature, is a special grace. My perception of a charism is that it provides an outcome greater than the sum of its parts which makes it synergistic by God's influence.

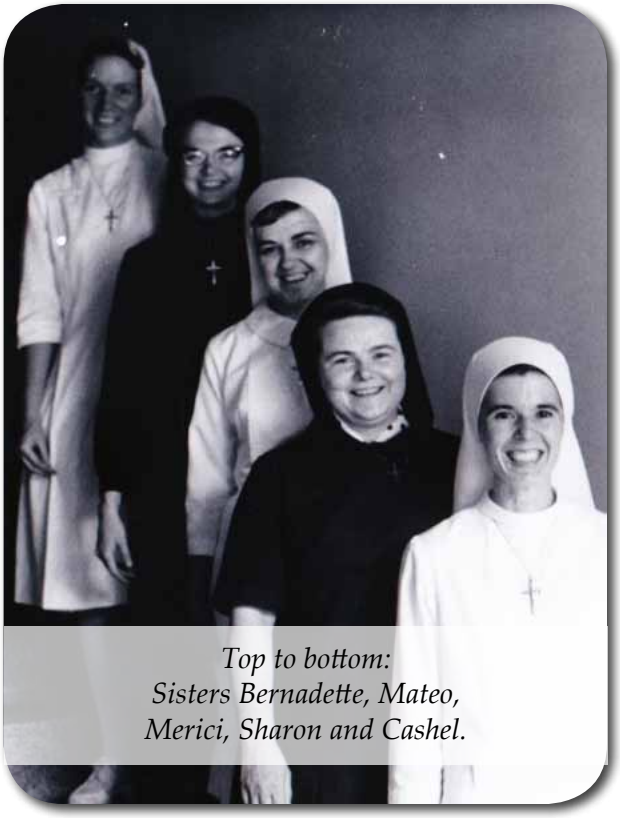
From life experiences as a teenager, to an older adult dedicated to the gift of healing, it makes it difficult to distill one's charism succinctly. As a result, my sharing will comprise two instances out of thousands. I begin at my first Christmas as a student nurse away from home. The unspoken rule of the student body was that the senior student nurses could travel home first. That meant that the rest of us students filled in to cover vacancies. My vocation to religious life started out of the notion that we were serving God by serving patients for God.

My assignment this first Christmas was to work on the Rehabilitation Ward where there were patients recovering from polio. Most would never recover, or so we were told, as that was the science at that time. These individuals lived in iron lungs and would die without them. My two patients were on rocking beds. The head of the bed went up and down incessantly so the diaphragm could go up and down to help the patient breathe. This could end in death if the patient were removed from the bed.

On Christmas Eve, at about four-thirty in the afternoon, one of my patients in a rocking bed had a visit from her family. These families had no advanced warning of what they would encounter. Suddenly, the mother of this family was afflicted with polio overnight never to return to the family again. The husband had dressed their five children, all under the age of twelve, with red stocking caps. Entering the room, they began singing Christmas Carols. At this, the mom started to cry, but even the rocking bed infringed upon the way she could cry. The bed had to be a certain cycle to allow crying. One of the children asked, "When will you be home, Mom?" The dad answered, "Not for a while." As they left the room one little girl squeezed her eyes shut despite the tears and said, "I love you Mommy." When the bed was in the right position her mom said in a breathy voice, "I love you too honey."

And that was when the decision was made! I knew I couldn't change this situation, but I could make it better for patients and families. I decided to enter the convent to devote my life to the care of the sick. At that moment my charism became known to me long before the knowledge of the Franciscan Sisters' charism amalgamated with my own. My lifetime journey of healing began, and I never looked back.

The second instance happened in November of this past year, but it started many years ago. A patient, Bryan, was seven years old when we first met. He was post-op from Cardiac Surgery for having one ventricle



Top to bottom:
Sisters Bernadette, Mateo,
Merici, Sharon and Cashel.

in the bottom of the heart instead of being divided in two parts. After this surgery, he had come to Rochester a minimum of twice a year and, at one time, stayed six weeks. I always spent time with Bryan and his family when they were here in Rochester.

Three weeks before November 17th, Bryan's mother texted a heart-wrenching message. Bryan had been admitted to the hospital for sepsis in his left leg. His kidneys and liver had shut down as a result. The doctors diagnosed him as *dying*. They did not expect him to make it through the night. I was totally shocked because he had been doing so well. He had married and had two children, ages 8 and 5. He spent several days up and down, as serious illnesses tend to go.

One night, a week after his admission, he was not responding to antibiotics, so the doctors felt they needed to do a left leg amputation. He was too ill to go to surgery, so he had an amputation (with a left hip disarticulation) in the ICU. Bryan was aware of everything that was happening to him, aside from surgery, even though he was on a respirator for two weeks.

At almost the end of his third week in the hospital, his mother called, just as I was starting to eat lunch. Bryan had told his mother that he could not fight anymore. He wanted her to call a priest and then to call me because he wanted me to pray for him before he died. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance my decision was to forget lunch and pray. When the phone was put to his ear it was difficult to hold back my tears. My first thing was asking God to help me pray the words that would be helpful for Bryan. At the conclusion of my prayers my last message was the following, "Bryan, I love you and will always carry you in my heart. We will meet again, and you will be running in the meadows of the Promised Land."

Bryan's mother called me to tell me that after my prayer, Bryan closed his eyes and died within thirty seconds. Because it was her phone, she had heard the end and told everyone that the last words he heard before his death were that he was loved and would always be carried in my heart. A day after his death, Bryan was to turn 42, while Erin, his wife, turned 39 the day before Thanksgiving. It is in times like this that make me feel the Word of God being made flesh in my presence.

Looking back, it seems I never had a day where my weariness trumped my effort. If a double shift was needed for patient safety, the Holy Spirit provided me with a second wind. When something is God ordained and embraced with all one's heart almost anything can happen, even the superhuman. Whereas others in their gifts embraced those living in marginalized situations – my charism took me to the ICU's and the Emergency Room, where patients lay between the margins of life and death.

When one is gifted to walk patients to life or death, one is aware that God oversees physical life and death, not us. God does not take a patient to eternity against his wisdom and knowledge. Doctors and nurses do not give and take life. As the Hippocratic oath says, "I shall do no harm!" We offer our minds, hearts and hands for God to use on earth.

"And now these three remain Faith, Hope and Love, and the greatest of these is Love."

From the Archives

Saint James Hospital, September 1955.

One extension of the meaning of charism is that it refers to gifts from God given for the common good.

Another one of the health care institutions run by the Rochester Franciscans was the Saint James Hospital and Home for the Aged. For almost 40 years (1922-1962), the Sisters of Saint Francis worked in health care ministry in Saint James, Minnesota. (The Sisters also taught at Saint James School from 1898 until 1972, and several years later, some worked in parish or other ministries.)

But let's go back to the beginning, over 100 years ago. The four-story structure that housed the hospital was originally the Park Hotel, a luxury establishment which accommodated many travelers in this bustling railroad town. The hotel was located within a block of the railway station and it also contained a bank, a dining room. and a barber shop with baths and showers. (What was the bank later became the Chapel, and the vaults were still in the building!) Financial problems developed for the owner after several years and, in 1910, the building was sold to local philanthropists who turned it into a hospital, but it struggled to be a paying proposition. And so maintenance was deferred and upkeep neglected. When the Sisters purchased the building in September 1922, the roof leaked, plumbing was out of order, radiators were pulled from the wall and furniture had been destroyed by patients with mental health issues.

After the purchase, the Sisters took out some loans, and invested monies into updating and renovating the facility: improving the heating plant, new laundry equipment, refrigerating plant, and water softener, a garage, a bakery and two verandas. They also tiled the walls and floors of the surgery, and upgraded the operating and surgical sterilization areas.

The first four Sisters to staff the hospital arrived by October 1, 1922 and the first patient arrived October 5.

There were twenty-five hospital beds and, according to a 1923 brochure, it was also a "pleasant home living for persons of both sexes who wished to have a comfortable place of residence with excellent meals at moderate cost."

By the mid-1950s, there were good hospital facilities nearby and the Saint James Hospital was facing the challenges of supporting and staffing a small hospital. Also, at this time, the congregation was building Mercy Hospital in Portsmouth, Ohio, and, in Rochester, they were expanding Saint Marys Hospital and building Assisi Heights. And so it was decided to focus solely on being a facility to care for the elderly, and, in 1954, its name was changed to the Saint James Nursing Home. For a period of time some of the chronically ill Sisters who had been at Saint Marys Hospital moved to Saint James as their section had to make way for the new building project in Rochester.

But the next few years brought new developments to the saga in Saint James. The building was needing additional maintenance to remain a safe environment for staff and residents, and the Congregation was planning a new home for the aged in Winona, Minnesota (Saint Anne Hospice). It was determined that the best decision was to close the facility.

On the 28th of February, 1962, the last group of Sisters left Saint James Home and, within a few days, the demolition of the building began. A few of the residents had moved with the Sisters to the new facility in Winona, others stayed in the Saint James area.

Sister Celestine and helpers in the kitchen in the 1950s

When the Sisters left, the loss of this large private enterprise in the city was felt, as it not only provided convenient and excellent health care, but also contributed to the local economy. An article in the Saint James newspaper stated that the home had served 566 patients, several of whom were residents for over 15 years. Earlier, the hospital had served almost 15,000 medical and surgical patients. A quote from the Watonwan County Plaindealer (February 22, 1962) captures the sentiment of the contribution made to the people of the Saint James area by the Sisters who worked there:

> *"When this home is gone, a personification of Charity in its loftiest form is leaving St. James. Surely, the personnel of any such institution – without regard for mode of life or denomination – are living examples of Charity in its noblest form."*

Over its forty-year existence, 116 Sisters were missioned to Saint James Hospital and Home for the Aged.

Note: A few years after the razing of the hospital site, a large facility for low income housing was constructed. In 1976, a plaque was erected on the site that acknowledges the existence of the Park Hotel, and the contribution of the Sisters of Saint Francis (shown above).

Celebrating Jubilees: Individual Threads, One Tapestry of God's Love

Jubilarians 25
twenty-five years (2021)

Sister Carolina Pardo

Jubilarians 50
fifty years (2020)

Sister Kathleen Warren
Sister Marlene Pinzka

Jubilarians 60
sixty years

(2020)

Sister Avis Schons
Sister Bernadine Jax
Sister Joyce Stemper
Sister Rosemary Zemler

(2021)

Sister Briana McCarthy
Sister Cashel Weiler
Sister Dolore Rockers
Sister Dominique Pisciotta
Sister Mary Beth Burns
Sister Mary Pat Smith
Sister Nancy Kinsley
Sister Ramona Miller

(2022)

Sister Ann Redig
Sister Anne Walch
Sister Chabanel Hayunga
Sister Geneva Berns
Sister Joan Hrabe
Sister Lois Knipp
Sister Lorraine Loecher
Sister Mary Carroll
Sister Nancy Casey
Sister Phyllis Sellner
Sister Theresa Hoffmann

Jubilarians 75
seventy-five years

(2020)

Sister Francine Balster
Sister Jeanette Klein
Sister Mary Kathryn Esch
Sister Ronan Degnan

(2021)

Sister Agnes Malone

(2022)

Sister Edith Zamboni
Sister Seton Slater

Sister Kenric Ruppert (November 13, 1935-October 31, 2021)

Born into a family with seven siblings on a farm near Currie, Minnesota, Sister Kenric knew herself as loved and cherished. From early on, she was creative, generous, funny, unflappable, uncomplicated, and authentic. The theme song of her life became "she loved them, they loved her." Initially it was her 58 first graders at St. Francis School in Rochester. She loved them, they loved her. She was an extraordinarily successful principal. Personifying her father's hard work ethic, she gave it her all. She was renowned for phenomenal musical productions, vibrant art shows, and always challenging students and teachers alike to "give it their all." She loved them, they loved her. It was the era of the "Boat People" when she was teaching religious education in St. James, Minnesota. The school had closed, and the convent had 12 bedrooms. Lutheran Social Services was working in resettlement for some of the Vietnamese, and asked if the empty convent could offer shelter. Without blinking an eye, her immediate response was an unqualified "yes." Years later, one family who had moved to California, made a "pilgrimage" back to see her, just to express their profound gratitude for her overwhelming hospitality to them at such a difficult time of their lives. She loved them, they loved her. In New Ulm, working in religious education, she took a position as Job Developer at Enterprise North DAC. Her service was in support of developmentally delayed adults. She responded to them where they were in their lives – laughed with them, cried with them, enjoyed them. She was tireless in finding them jobs that complimented their reality. She loved them, they loved her. In the words of St. Clare, "She embodied what it means to nurture life in the other, becoming what one loves, and allowing who we are to shape what we become."

Sister Lorraine Landkammer (April 21, 1924 - November 8, 2021)

Lorraine was born to Alfred and Theresa Landkammer on a farm in Springfield, Minnesota, and lived a long beautiful life. She had a deep love for her family: her brothers, Wilfred (Willie) and his 12 children, and Robert (Bob) and his 8 children, and her sister, Helen, with her 14 children. With her remarkable memory, she kept track and corresponded with so many of them. Early on, her parents decided that it wasn't necessary for her to go to high school, since her brothers had not done so. Only after two years of begging and explaining that it was a requirement to enter the convent was she allowed to attend high school, where she was an honor student. She entered the Rochester Franciscans in 1944 and was given the name Sister Gracia – a very fitting name since she was a grace to all with whom she lived. She was a skilled teacher and that is where she spent her early years as a professed Sister. She had studied Spanish for seven years and hence, she was a wise choice when Sisters were being asked to consider ministering in Colombia. While there, she worked in different ministries for a total of seven years, returning in 1973, where she continued teaching and serving in pastoral work. In La Joya, Texas, she served in religious education in five different missions for five years. New Mexico was her next destination. While on her sabbatical, she had been given massages and two years later she obtained her certificate in massage therapy at the age of 63. After living a few years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, she and Sister Janel Crumb founded a home as a retirement place for Sisters in Bernalillo, New Mexico. Community was always very important to Lorraine, and she says that the best Community sharing she experienced were those years in New Mexico. When asked what she would like to be remembered for she said "being prayerful."

In Memoriam

Sister Ramona Kruse (August 4, 1925 – October 12, 2021)

Born Jeanette Ione, to Raymond and Elsie Kruse, she was the first grandchild on both sides of her family. Later, she shared her life with ten siblings. She enjoyed listening to stories and poetry read to her by her mother, while her father shared his love of nature. This early encounter with reading and nature seemed to permeate Sister Ramona's whole life, she was always an excellent student. During her junior year in high school, Jeanette met the Franciscans from the College of Saint Teresa who were canvassing for students, and she fell in love with them. A year later, she packed up and went to Rochester, Minnesota, to join the Rochester Franciscans. Sister Ramona received her B.S. degree from the College of Saint Teresa in Winona, Minnesota, followed by an M.S. degree from the University of Minnesota—Mankato, specializing in Reading Diagnosis and Remediation, which led to teaching the Title I Reading Program set up by the government. In 1972, she was invited to teach at the College of Saint Teresa (CST). She returned to the University of Minnesota—Mankato to receive a specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction so the Education Department would be ready to introduce the Early Childhood Program to their prospective teachers. Sister Ramona was very involved in the academic life at the College of Saint Teresa: she taught in the English and Education departments; was Director of the Learning Lab and College Archives; Foreign Student Advisor/program facilitator; and was responsible for writing/publishing books/manuals for teachers, young adults and children. She was a speaker/presenter of several papers, both statewide and internationally. From 1983-85, she taught at Immaculate Heart College in Kagoshima, Japan, and returned there in 1989–1990. Sister Ramona enjoyed all the different cultures and the learning experiences provided through her extensive travel with educators in many countries, visiting schools in France, Switzerland, Ireland, Japan, Australia and Africa. She wrote several books of poetry and received numerous awards in the fine arts for her Haiku Poetry. In May of 1990, Sister Ramona came to Rochester to care for and distribute CST transcripts and credential files for former CST students. After a heart attack in 2004, she worked part-time and spent her free time collecting U.S. stamps, writing poetry and enjoying reading.

May God Bless You and Keep You

May God bless you and keep you,
Smiling graciously on you,
Granting mercy and peace; Granting mercy and peace.
May God bless you and keep you,
May you see the face of God,
Granting mercy and peace, granting mercy and peace. Amen, Amen, Amen.

- Cathy Tisel Nelson

We are grateful for gifts given in honor of a Sister or loved one who has been a vital part of your life.

We remember those who have gone before us, and you, our generous benefactors, through the daily prayers of our Sisters.

Gifts received October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

In Honor of:

All the Sisters of St. Francis
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Sister Francine Balster
Sister Joy Barth
Sister Pat Beck
Sister Geneva Berns
Sister Margaret Boler
Jaci Brunn
John N. Brunn
Clare L. Brunn
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Sister Shirley Schmitz
Tilda Schneider
Sister Avis Schons
Sister Katarina Schuth
Sister Delores Simon
Sisters and Cojourners who make the world a better place
Sisters at Saint Marys Convent
Sisters from Sacred Heart School in Adams, MN
Sisters serving in Austin, MN
Sisters who taught at Queen of Angels and Pacelli in Austin
Sisters who taught at St. Juliana School, Chicago
Sisters who taught in Winona
Sister Mary Pat Smith
Sister Mary Ann Snyder
Sister Ruth Snyder
Sister Carmen Sonnek
Katie Steele
Sister Joyce Stemper
Sister Lorraine Stenger
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Sister Linda Wieser
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Nancy Young
Sister Edith Zamboni
Jean Zamboni
Sister Kate Zimmerman

Committing ourselves to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, while striving for justice and reverence for all creation, is possible because of our generous benefactors.

Gifts received October 1, 2020 through September 30, 2021.

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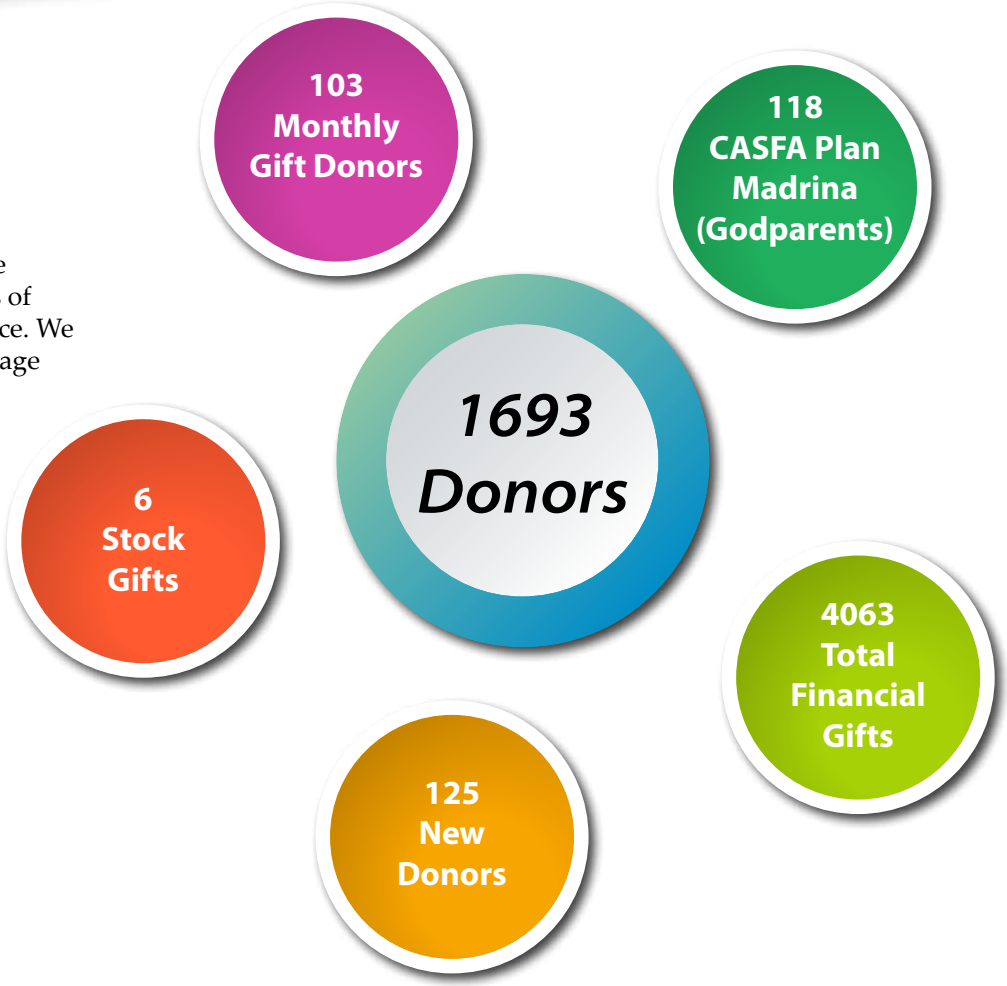
Thankful for Our Donors

With the support of our benefactors, Sisters are able to continue their ministries of service, prayer and influence. We continue to share our message through Facebook and our newly updated website, as well as through our traditional media such as the *Interchange*. We are truly blessed by each one of you!



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Automatic withdrawal from your checking account is a worry-free way to make your monthly gift. There are no fees associated, and it is as easy as letting us know your routing number, account number, and the name on the account along with providing us with a voided check. On the 15th of each month, your designated dollar amount will be withdrawn and allocated to the fund of your choice at Assisi Heights.

Did You Know?

You can use your credit card to support the mission and ministry of the Sisters of Saint Francis. To make a secure, on line donation, click on the homepage "Donate Now" button at www.rochesterfranciscan.org. Visa, MasterCard, and Discover cards are accepted.

Contact Information

Please feel free to email or call the Office of Mission Advancement at 507.529.3536 with any questions.

June Howard, Director | june.howard@rochesterfranciscan.org

Robin Stearns, Assistant | mission.assistant@rochesterfranciscan.org

From the Office of Mission Advancement *by June Howard, Director*

We invite you to join the Mother Alfred Legacy Society.

Named after the Foundress of the Sisters of Saint Francis, the Mother Alfred Legacy Society honors those individuals and families who value the mission of the Sisters of Saint Francis and their continuance into the future by remembering the Sisters in their wills or estate plans.

Your legacy gift is a most important type of gift for the Sisters of Saint Francis. Gifts to the Mother Alfred Legacy Society are acts of hope for the future. Through God's grace and your generosity, the Sisters of Saint Francis will be equipped to be a compassionate presence in our world for years to come.

Why a legacy gift? Estate planning is important for everyone. Legacy gifts offer the following benefits:

- Simplicity. Just a few sentences in your will or trust are all that is needed.
- Flexibility. Because you are not actually making a gift until after your lifetime, you can change your mind at any time.
- Versatility. You can structure the bequest to leave a specific item or amount of money, make the gift contingent on certain events, or leave a percentage of your estate to the Sisters.
- Tax Relief. If your estate is subject to estate tax, your gift may be entitled to a charitable deduction for the gift's full value.
- We understand. Your circumstances may change and you can change your gift at any time. When planning a future gift, it is sometimes difficult to determine what size donation will make sense. Emergencies happen, and you need to make sure your family is financially taken care of first. Including a bequest of a percentage of your estate ensures that your gift will remain proportionate no matter how your estate's value fluctuates over the years.

Make a Gift Today. You can become a member of the Mother Alfred Legacy Society simply by notifying us that you have named the Sisters of Saint Francis a beneficiary in your will or estate plan.

Contact the Sisters of Saint Francis Office of Mission Advancement for gift planning information and resources at 507-529-3536 or by emailing June Howard, Director, at june.howard@rochesterfranciscan.org.

You, the family and friends of the Sisters, share in the positive impact the Sisters have made in the world.

Thank you,

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Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes

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