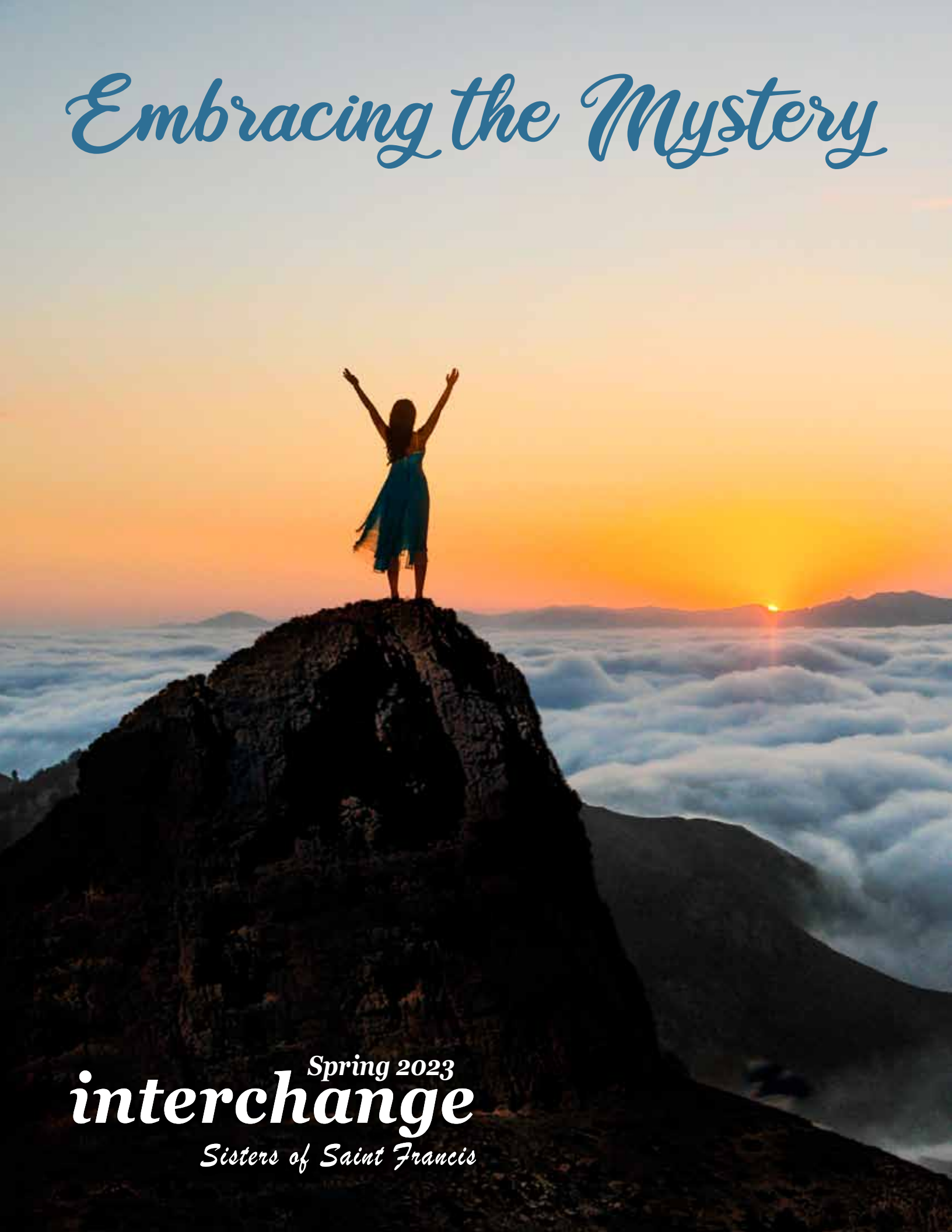
Embracing the Mystery



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Sisters of Saint Francis

Focus: Embracing the Mystery

interchange

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Letter from the President

Sister Tierney Trueman

Dear Friends,

Starkness... soul penetrating starkness frames the messages and images in this issue of *Interchange*. "Much of our earth groans from the gaping, human-induced wounds... signs of collapse are everywhere... newspapers *engorged* with stories of gun violence."

We are, each and every one of us, wounded, weary, depressed, longing "to be part of the mystery of change, and the making of the new paradigm birthed in darkness and exchanged in the shadows of dusk and dawning of day."

A favorite Easter hymn sings a new melody in our hearts that reminds us that *"This is a day of new beginnings, for by the **life** and **death** of Jesus, loves mighty Spirit, now as then, can make for us a world of difference, as **faith and hope** are born again."*

In his Easter Sunday homily at Saint Pius Church in Rochester, Father Russ Scepaniak challenged us to live in, and draw life from the Paschal Mystery – in its fullness. "You have to enter into the tomb" – into all that is darkness, violence, searing pain – "in order to emerge from that darkness into the new, resurrected life which is the LIGHT of the presence of our risen Lord."

- Listen to the cardinal and all our winged creatures who joyfully awaken us to a new day as they sing their morning prayer!
- Find that quiet, alone space in the heart of Mother Nature and allow her to re-awaken your love for all that is life!
- Allow the calming darkness at the end of each day to open your heart to all the ways we need healing and forgiveness.
- Enjoy the myriad expressions of colorful blooms that are bursting out to enrich our lives in this magnetic moment of springtime!
- Humbly remind yourself that, in spite of all your weakness and sinfulness, you are one of God's most precious creatures – a gift from God to be given to enrich the lives of others!

In the midst of it all, take care, and be good to yourself!

Joyfully,

Sister Tierney Trueman
President / Congregational Minister

Embracing the Mystery of Breath

Image by GeorgeB2 courtesy of Pixabay

As I awaken on these early mornings when it is still dark, the cardinal's call outside my window invites me to embrace the mystery of whatever the day might hold. I am reminded of the Indian poet, Tagore, who says, "Faith is the bird that sings to the dawn when it is still dark." Or, in our Judaic Christian scriptures from Hebrews 11: 1-2, "Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for and conviction about things we do not see."

More than ever during this turbulent time, we need that assurance and conviction that there is *Light* in the midst of darkness, *Hope* for those who are despairing, *Faith* for those filled with doubt, and *Love* where there is so much division and hatred. Almost every night, the national news covers mental illness, drug addictions, anxiety, stress and despair in our young peoples' lives.

A therapy that is used for our youth (as well as all of us) is attentiveness to the breath. Many studies prove the efficacy of breath as a medicine for the soul. Awareness of the breath can generate inner calm, hope, belief in self and a sense of direction and purpose. Breath, in all cultures, is that essence of the Divine, Higher Power, God, and/or True Self. Breath has different names such as Chi, Prana or Ruhah, and is known as Spiritus in our Christian belief. Breath is always with us and doesn't cost a penny! It helps us to embrace the mystery of all that is known and unknown in our lives. Our breath self regulates and grounds us in trusting that "I am okay." Peace within can help us navigate the outer turbulence, anxieties, and stresses in our lives.

Another great mystic, St. Therese of Lisieux, born in France in 1873, encourages us to Practice the Little Way, stating "May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you're meant to be." Can I trust in my journey of life that I am exactly where I am meant to be? Again, from the Buddhist tradition of the Loving Kindness, meditation says, "May I be at peace, may my heart remain open, may I be freed from suffering."

My invitation to you is to connect with our breath, the life force of God that is always available to us. Allow the breath to help us find a place of peace and well-being in the midst of embracing the mystery of the unknown. May this prayer be helpful.

by Sister Linda Wieser

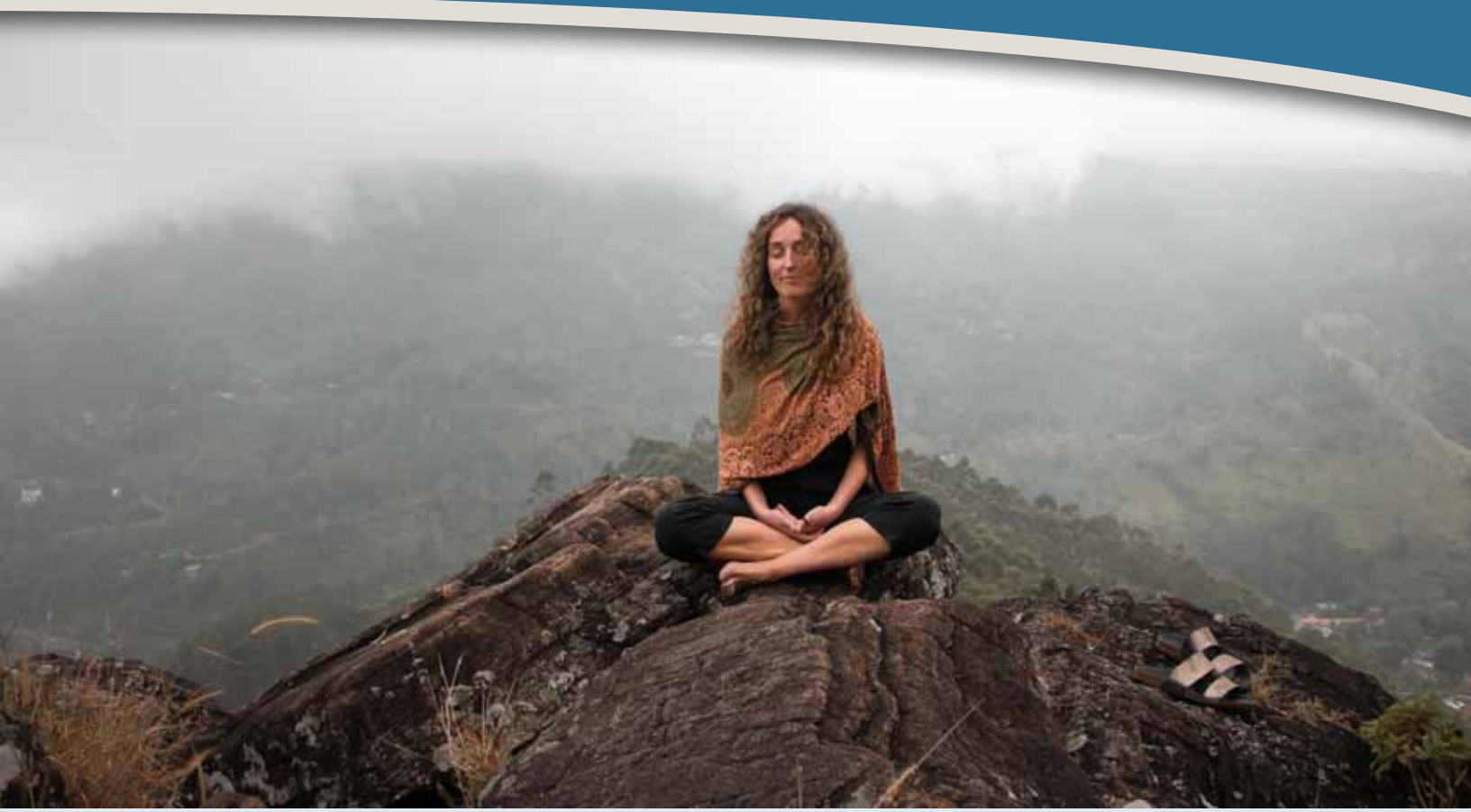

Image by vined mind courtesy of Pixabay

Breathe in Me, O Spirit

(In Breath through the nose): Breathe in me, O Spirit

(Exhale with longer Breath through mouth): That my thoughts may all be holy.

(In Breath): Act in me, O Spirit,

(Out Breath): That my work, too, may be holy.

(In Breath): Draw my heart, O Spirit,

(Out Breath): So that I love only what is holy.

(In Breath): Strengthen me, O Spirit,

(Out Breath): To defend all that is holy.

(In Breath): Guard me, then, O Spirit,

(Out Breath): That I always may be whole/ holy. Amen

- Words by Saint Augustine (354-430) Adapted by Linda Wieser, OSF

The Mystery of Change – Revealed in Darkness

Image by WikiImages courtesy of Pixabay

As numerous planetary pilgrims suffer terribly in a myriad of ways, and much of our earth groans from gaping human-induced wounds, our government, other governments, and many people of adequate means, seem to hardly care. It is what Pope Francis calls the "globalization of indifference."

The signs of collapse are already in view. Democracy teeters on the brink of failure, politics are fractured, free press is vanishing, family systems are detached, the earth is crying out, human beings are being objectified, the Church is split, and religious life is diminishing. We are the ones who want to show the world how to be a democracy. And now, our own is slipping away. Politics and ethics, politics and morality, politics and spiritual life... are all dying in debate.

Today we are drifting. Much is or has fallen apart. We have become lukewarm in our passion. Are we trolling in the dark with the game of indifference? Or are we afraid of the dark – in church, in government, and in religious life – so that we have a globalized paralysis?

Bigger appears to be better. Corporate decisions sprawl across peoples in community. At times, they cut communities into fragments, and force decisions without widespread discussion, pave over dreams, memories and traditions. Leaders sometimes draw concrete lines between 'them' and 'us' – isolating us. Stepping across dividing lines is where paradoxes of life and wholeness, discord and dissent, make their home.

Change is needed to avoid collapse. The mysterious gift about 'change' is that it strips us of who we think we are. What is urgently needed is a creative new paradigm – a life-tending, life-giving, and life-enhancing model to guide us out of the selfish, violent darkness of isolationism, nationalism, militarism, racism, materialism, consumerism, secularism and religious intolerance. It is said that we will need 12% support within an organization to bring about a change. Go 12%!

Change incubates in the dark.
Darkness presides.
Darkness... *is where the broken-hearted cry.*
Darkness... *is where rival stories are exposed.*
Darkness... *is where fear and power retreat.*

What could conjure up hope to bolster communities, courts and churches in this chaotic anguished darkness? How can darkness and hope marry? We have some evidence that hope swells during the day, but it seems to disappear at night – when we are most vulnerable – with nothing to absorb the pain. We think we are more rational with our God during solar

by Sister Marlys Jax

Image by FelixMittermeier courtesy of Pixabay

hours, but lunar spirituality waxes and wanes with opportunities. The soul stirs at night. Night is the time of transition. For example, we Christians find a lure in the mystery of darkness at Christmas' Midnight Mass and Easter Vigil. Change happens!

Darkness persists! Losses prompt a wisdom that holds resonance, resistances and resolves. Resistances spark our DNA to do something. They come alive and light the spark! Resistances require hutzpah to grow collegially. It is essential to reset the table and find a seat for everyone and be welcomed in discussion. Consulting the fringes ignites the stories of heartbreak and cultivates genuine exchange of views. Change is always 'in season'! The season of mystery is not about skill building, but learning. The learning occurs between dusk and dawn in the middle space we call night.

Darkness is contemplative.
Darkness... *is where broken and whole come home.*
Darkness... *is where diversity and polarities merge.*
Darkness... *is where peace and justice meld and change surfaces.*
Darkness... *coaxes us to see beyond the expanse of our own reality.*
Darkness... *broadens inclusively.*
Darkness... *expands options and opportunities.*
Darkness... *promotes visioning, fosters creativity, boosts adaptability, nurtures vitality.*

Darkness... *does not hide mystery, rather It holds it!*
Because Darkness... *is the soul of the Spirit made present in change!*

We long to be part of the mystery of change and the making of the new paradigm birthed in darkness and exchanged in the shadows of dusk and the dawning of day. It was the essence of resistance that birthed the resolution. Change lies brewing in the hearts of the fringe. Herein lies the mystery of change.

I do not know what these shadows ask of you,
What they might hold that means you good or ill.
It is not for me to reckon whether you should linger or you should leave.

But this is what I ask of you:
That in darkness there be a blessing.
That in the shadows there be a welcome.
That in the night you be encompassed
by the Love that knows your name.

- "A Blessing for Traveling in the Dark" © Jan Richardson
from Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons.
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Resistances, Fringe and Darkness have all been nominated in the Category of Change.
And the OSCAR goes to: *Darkness!*

Embracing the Mystery from the Human Side: From Frustration to Forgiveness

Image by Gerd Altmann courtesy of Pixabay

In recent months, we've lived with extraordinary stresses of COVID isolation, the Ukrainian war, rising grocery prices, growing visibility of a "climate emergency," and more. Beyond that, we Rochester Franciscan Sisters are confronting headlong the realities of diminished numbers and capacities as our "new normal." These times require all of us to find and sustain a new level of healthy emotional equilibrium in daily living.

Our best selves direct us to gentleness and patience, yet rarely at any given moment are all of us equally able to sustain a steady state of trust in God's goodness and generosity to carry us through. Despite our desired gentle Franciscan spirit, at times, we find ourselves speaking sharp words, *failing* to inquire about another's well-being before *judging* their behavior, or *assuming* another's intentions.

But most injurious is – when a sister/brother expressing anxiety or frustration, finds her/himself being misread, misjudged, and discounted by others who have not first asked her/him about her/his concerns. *Assuming* and *presuming*, rather than respectfully, gently, and patiently asking about the source of our sister/brother's angst, lacks compassion at best. Worse yet is, when having failed to inquire, we first and *erroneously assume* her/his words threaten physical injury, rather than simply express deep hurts, fears, and frustration. Acting thus, we've missed an opportunity to console and help heal her/his aching spirit! Tragically, fear meeting fear merely results in failure to live out our desired gentle Franciscan charism.

Change in any form risks human insecurity at various levels. Confronting major changes can induce fear of the unknown and the frustration of one's inability to be heard within the community or group, to know how to act, how to understand, or how to adjust to the needed changes. Whenever one is the person acting out of fear and frustration, or the person on the receiving end of such behavior – hurt and harm is involved – and, as Christians, we need to attend to one of the deepest mysteries of the life of faith: HEALING AND FORGIVENESS.

<u>Our Example: When Jesus got Angry</u>

Rarely do we think of Jesus as an angry sort. Yet, we see him in just that state of mind in Mk 3:5: *"Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand.""* Now granted – the biblical context is a bit different than our own. Yet, it is noteworthy that Mark addresses both *anger* and *emotional* hurt as Jesus'

Image by Alexey Hulsov courtesy of Pixabay

response to the uncaring and unjust behavior of the Pharisees. *Injustice* results from the lack of a caring, listening heart. The Pharisees were unable to hear the hurting cry of the man with the withered hand. Clearly, without really knowing much about the man, the Pharisees imposed their legalistic moral judgment upon him, refused to act to help him heal, and thus, they denied him the fullness of life. Jesus was *hurt* by their cold insensitivity, *frustrated* at their refusal of the honor the mercy and compassion of the God of Moses, and *angered* by their unjust imposition of the Law of Moses. At the *root* of Jesus' expression of *anger* was *the frustration* at the Pharisees' obstruction of God's *mercy.* By his own *angry actions*, Jesus brought new life to the man and glory to God. The Spiritual Work of "Forgiving All Injuries." [i]

Forgiveness is a most profound mystery of the Christian spiritual and moral life. Unfortunately, Catholics commonly understand "forgiveness" as the formal – though rarely practiced – "Sacrament of Confession," defined in the Rabbinic-law-oriented Gospel of St. Matthew 16: 18-19. However, as ethicist Margaret A. Farley notes, we get a far more profound offer of "forgiveness" in the "Franciscan Gospel," John 20:19-23. Post-resurrection, Jesus met with his disciples, greeted them in peace, gave them his Spirit, and sent them forth with this charge: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Farley notes the authoritative judgmental tone of this text. However, she suggests:

> But what if there is another meaning to the text in John? What if its primary meaning is... that the disciples of Jesus, and the Church, are... to free people, and if they do not do so, the word of God is left silent? "If you forgive them, they are forgiven and freed; but if you do not forgive them, they remain bound. So then, forgive them, because if you do not, they will remain bound and unfree. And if you do not forgive them, *who* will?" [ii]

St. John's Jesus shows the disciples his hands, feet and side and gives them the mission of forgiveness. It is the decisive gift of the Holy Spirit that makes possible a "new heart," and we must ask for it every day: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."

<u>To Forgive is to Re-member</u>

Farley asserts: "To forgive is to "let go" of something *within us*, in order to *accept* someone who has harmed us."[iii] But we need to keep our sense of justice and our own dignity as a person in the process. What we

Embracing the Mystery from the Human Side: From Frustration to Forgiveness... *continued*

Image by SnapwireSnaps courtesy of Pixabay

let go of (at least partially) is something *in* ourselves – perhaps anger, resentment, building blocks of stored up pain. And what we let go of (at least partially) is our self-protectedness, making ourselves vulnerable, and desiring renewed self-statement in the face of misjudgment or exploitation by another. Farley advises: "To fathom our experiences of forgiving – whether by gaining insight into our reasons to forgive or into the elements in the experience itself – it is useful to recall our experiences of being forgiven." [iv]

Being forgiven, we experience new acceptance, despite ourselves, and restoring relationship for a renewed future with sisters/brothers, friends, colleagues, or family. Jesus points to the depths of the mystery of a "forgiven love," (Luke 7:41-41). Between and among humans, the need for forgiveness is commonplace.

Sadly, sometimes the injuring party is *unwilling* nor unable to engage in a process of mutual reconciliation, and *injury is ongoing*. In such cases, Farley recommends that the injured party invoke *"anticipatory forgiveness."* Extending *"anticipatory forgiveness"* means being ready to accept the injurer *(the perpetrator)*, yearning that they turn in sorrow to whoever has been injured; it means waiting until the time that the enemy may yet become the friend. It is "anticipatory" not because there is, as yet no disposition for acceptance and love, but because *it cannot be fulfilled until the perpetrator* (who is to be forgiven) *acknowledges the injury* and becomes able to recognize and accept the injured one's forgiving embrace.

In this Easter Season, let us renew our commitment to one another by *Embracing the Mystery from the Human Side:*

"If discord caused by word or deed should occur among them, they should immediately and humbly ask for forgiveness of one another."

- The Third Order Rule, Ch.7, #24

"... We acknowledge our human limitations... our continued need for... forgiveness and trust. Aware of our need for healing, we strive to accept one another... "

- Constitutions, Article #28

[i] I draw from Margaret A. Farley, RSM, "Forgiveness: A Work of Mercy Newly Relevant In The Twenty-First Century," https://www.mercyworld.org/_uploads/_ckpg/files/mirc/papers/farleyA4.pdf.
[ii] Ibid., 3.
[iii] Ibid.
[iv] Ibid.

Awe and Reverence, Tears and Laughter

by Eileen Lundy, Cojourner

Image by Federico Maderno courtesy of Pixabay

I sit here on our deck in Austin, Texas, looking up into the luminous blue around and beyond the golden tassels of the Spanish oaks. I am looking out into the depth of the universe, knowing we are in the midst of its greatness, tiny creatures among its mysteries, and here we are as the wonder of spring returns after ice storms have broken limbs, beaten bushes to the ground, toppled trees. Science tells us we are the stuff of stars, that so much is known by some but so much lies yet beyond our knowing. Theology and cosmology join to lead us in wonder to coming greatness, to The Mystery.

Richard Rohr reminds us that the desert Fathers and Mothers may not have known how to read or write, but they knew, as Jesus did, to tell us much in stories. So, I turn now to a story that often recurs in my memory, that says much to me about embracing *The Mystery.*

Ed and I had just returned from six weeks in Mexico, pulled our bags into the house, turned on the kitchen light and there, on the breakfast table, was a huge bouquet of long-stemmed red roses, with a note attached: "Welcome home. These roses are not for you; they are for me. Please wait up for me. I have something to tell you." And the note was signed, "Pan."

Pan was our dear friend who often stayed with us, used our computer, house-sat while we went off to Mexico or other places. She had left a lucrative job in a bank to become a full-time writer while studying theology at the local Episcopal seminary. She had recently completed a master's degree there, loving the studies, her fellow students, the faculty—and being loved by all of them. She was beginning to be published but still lived on a meager income, renting one room in the home of a former colleague.

So, we waited up for her and I held her gift we had brought: silver earrings from Taxco, Mexico. We heard her drive up, park, and open the back door, so we went to welcome her with hugs and the gift. But she was unusually serious, taking our gift and holding it in her hand without looking at it.

"Come over to the sofa," she said. "Those roses, they were from the friend I've been working with in the St. Vincent de Paul group. He took me to dinner and gave me the flowers." She stopped for a moment and then went on. "He did that because I was diagnosed today with 4th stage melanoma. I can't believe it," she said. "I feel fine, just as well as I felt yesterday and last week, before I knew."

Awe and Reverence, Tears and Laughter... *continued*

Image by ASSY courtesy of Pixabay

We held her hands, the silence among us feeling as if we were all holding our breaths. Then I said, "Pan, your apartment is upstairs. Beginning today, now, live with us, let us be with you through your chemo and whatever else comes."

And, so she did. That was August 12. Then came four months of gradual physical decline, nausea from the chemo, seizures as the cancer metastasized to her brain. She had begun writing a Stations of the Cross, based upon the carrying of their crosses by refugees and the poor. She wanted to finish them, but she said one day, "I hate this. I hate this nausea. All I can think about is myself."

Four months later, on a Saturday afternoon, I contacted the hospice nurse. "The tips of Pan's fingers and the tip of her nose are a bit blue. But her feet are warm." The nurse decided she needed oxygen, so she brought out the necessary equipment and started Pan on oxygen. By that time, the oncologist attending Pan had her on a morphine cocktail that left her pretty well out of it most of the time. She had stopped speaking and had become restless when she was awake.

The next day, Sunday, December 12, four months to the day of her diagnosis, Ed and I and Pan's best friend, Virginia, were all in her room. I was sitting on the bed, holding Pan's hand. Ed was seeing to the oxygen tank. Virginia was working on the plan Pan had dictated for her own funeral. And then it happened. The moment I will never forget.

Pan sat up, opened her eyes, looked over my shoulder at something and spoke, for the first time in days. "I am going to the altar of God," she said. I said to the other two who had come closer to the bed, "Did you hear what Pan said?" And we all answered together, "to God who gives joy to my youth." The opening words of the Mass as we remembered them from our childhoods. Pan then lay back, closed her eyes, breathed a long breath and made her way to the altar of God.

The tears gather as I write this, the memory still as vivid as the moment it happened, her spirit as clear and dear as ever. We felt then, and feel again in memory, the privilege of being with Pan as she embraced *The Mystery.*

Image by StockSnap courtesy of Pixabay

My story may have brought to your mind stories of your own. Those of us who have worked with hospices have seen other wonders as patients faced and embraced or slept into *The Mystery.* I remember one patient, the elderly grandmother of a large, extended Mexican-American family. It was close to Christmas and Senora said, "Oh, I miss the Posada. How I loved that each year. Could we possibly have one here?" So, we did. We found a light blue blanket for her to drape over her beautiful white hair and over her shoulders, so she became Mary. The chaplain did what he could to look like Joseph and down the hall he pushed her in her wheelchair, knocking on each patient's door and asking for shelter. They had all been warned ahead of time and all who were able agreed to participate. Many knew of the Posada reenactment, others soon heard about the tradition. We had made little packets of cookies and nuts so that, even though Mary and Joseph were turned away from each room – no room in the inn – they left a bag of goodies there. This was a slight change from breaking a piñata at the end of the journey, but we took a bit of poetic license on that. Senora went back to her room, full of the warmth and love of her family and of the other patients and families who had played along. She made her way to the altar of God smiling.

Another patient, I'll call her Helen, invited in her closest friends and family members and had snacks and drinks for all. She then told them she was ready for what was coming soon, not merely accepting, but looking forward to it as an adventure. She had a gift for each one there, items that had meant something special in her life. And they partied. Fortunately, they were in a corner room at the end of the hall as their laughter, interspersed with tears, but mainly laughter, could be heard in the hallway.

All of these wonderful people – Pan, the Senora, Helen – all came to the moments they were ready for, bolstered by love, community, delight in living, a sense of play, awe and reverence for life, ready because of these supports to embrace *The Mystery.* And as they did, they leave us with smiles, greater understanding and hope for whatever lies ahead.

Embracing the Mystery of Change

Image by mycan – licensed from iStockphoto.com

Change... climate change... changing rooms... changing clothes... changing attitudes... changing diets... changing... changing...

A "Whirling Dervish" is twirling inside me and all around me when I remind myself to pause and slowly breathe in and breathe out.

Change can be scary, especially leading me into an unknown place, whether as simple as rearranging my eating habits to healthy ones, especially when I want to lose weight (commitment change). I'm in that mode right now. I enjoy snacking on salty foods. My doctor says, "You've got to change that behavior."

Anticipating change can be exciting and energizing when I'm preparing for a visit from my adult children and grandchildren. The house has changed from a lived-in look to a polished and gleaming appearance, a lovely change.

On a more serious topic, the newspaper is engorged with stories of gun violence in Phoenix and throughout the *Valley of the Sun.* Children bringing guns to school, with kids shooting other kids. I pray, *"What is my part in working to end the violence and the means of weapons available to children, teens, and adults?"* How can we, as a community, change this?

An Arizona Valley town, Tempe, has focused on new names for two city roads and three of its parks, whose original names were members of the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s – a powerful change for integrity and a challenge to citizens' remembering new street names and accepting the change.

I write and speak out against violence. I challenge myself and others to seek healthy means to explore our parts in creating change, transforming violent forms into peaceful ways of communicating with one another. I know my behavior and responses blend with the energies around me. Kindness, love, and respect form leavening that grows and expands like freshly kneaded bread dough.

As Francis danced in his joy, he welcomed Jesus' invitation to move within the spiral of changing growth as Christ's followers. Francis was delighted to say "yes" to Christ's call to change.

I pray for the grace to be open and willing to evolve as the Spirit invites me to grow.

by Fran Weidner, Cojourner

Image by Almeida courtesy of Pixabay

‘Tis the gift to be simple, ‘tis the gift to be free,
‘Tis the gift to come down where I ought to be;
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
‘Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan’t be ashamed;
to turn, turn, will be my delight.
Till by turning, turning we come round right.

- Source: https://hymnary.org/hymn/RS2016/856

Jubilarians 60 *sixty* years

Sister Bernadette Novack
Sister Claudia Laliberte
Sister Katarina Schuth
Sister Therese Jilk

Seated: Sister Bernadette Novack

Standing: Sisters Claudia Laliberte, Katarina Schuth, and Therese Jilk

Jubilarians 75 *seventy-five* years

Sister Judine Klein
Sister Louise Romero
Sister Gladys Meindl

Sister Louise Romero

Sisters Judine Klein and Gladys Meindl

From the Archives: A Change of Habit

by Sister Marisa McDonald

Have you ever wondered about those clothes worn many years ago by your Catholic grade school teachers or your co-workers at the hospital, or when you see the habits worn by Sisters in movies or on TV? Let's consider the habits that the Rochester Franciscans have worn. There have been a few versions; however, none of us currently alive remember the first few examples, as the final version was instituted in 1926.

Persons entering religious life had to learn new terminology, or new meaning for common words when they began wearing the habit.

Before founding the Rochester Franciscans, Mother Alfred had belonged to the Franciscan Sisters of Joliet, Illinois. It is not known how long it was before her new Community in Minnesota had their own habit, but she and the other 24 founding Sisters began this Congregation wearing the Joliet Franciscan habit. (Some of the Founding Sisters from Joliet wore all versions of the habit over their years in the Community.)

First habit:

• Earliest version (before 1894) had a white piece of material that visibly lined the veil, a white cord with tassels on the end.

• Sisters Isadore and Nazarius Coughlin (left photo) are posing for the camera, and the close up shot of Sister deChantal Fahey shows the headdress details.

The next version of the habit was worn between 1894 and 1926:

• The white lining on the veil has disappeared

• The cord is still a white color, and at some point, the tassels on the end disappeared.

• Four Sisters in Portsmouth, Ohio, are looking intently at the camera shown (clockwise at right): Sisters Rafael Ebben, Philomena Rieger, Isabella Heim, Caroline Jungels. Sisters Rudolph and Alexia Meyer are posing with a book.

* The **Habit** or **tunic**: the primary piece of lightweight material worn from the neck to the ankle (if additional warmth is needed, the habit could be lined, or there was an option of a heavier serge material for winter).

* The Headdress consisted of a **Coif** (a cotton cap), a **Collar** (neckband), a **Crown** (muslin piece that helps keep the crown and veil in place), and a **Veil**. The veil, pinned over the coif, was black or brown depending on the era, or white for the novices, or as part of the nursing habits.

* The **Scapular** was worn over the tunic, hanging on both the front and back.

* The **Cord** wrapped around the waist, and dropped down a few inches on one side, with three knots of five coils each (to symbolize the vows of poverty, celibacy, obedience).

* The **Franciscan Rosary** (7 decades, made of cocoa beads) was looped and hung from the cord.

* A silver **Crucifix** was given at the time of Profession.

* A plain gold **Ring** with the Franciscan coat of arms is given at the time of Final Profession, and is still worn to this day by all Rochester Franciscans.

* Additional pieces included **sleeves** and **undersleeves**, a **mantle** (cloak), and **aprons**.

The final version of the habit:

Sister Ingrid Peterson, in her Congregational history, *Keeping The Memory Green* (p. 46), writes: *"Under Mother Leo's impetus, in 1926 the Congregation adopted a more simplified religious habit... Modifications included a smaller collar, cleaner lines, increased ease of movement and better practicality. The brown Franciscan habit was preserved, but a separate, full length scapular was added to create a less cumbersome appearance... "*

When Mother Callista was giving a tour to novices in 1979, she commented that *"we didn't have the scapular until later years and that was why they wanted this big round collar to cover the yoke of the habit to which the plaited body of the habit was attached, and Mother Leo believed in simplification in all areas... The habit material became a much lighter weight, and the scapular was introduced at that time so as to give a more feminine note to the garb."*

The habits for those who worked in housekeeping, the kitchen, or in health care were adapted to fit their responsibilities. The nursing Sisters, especially those in the operating rooms, had to be especially careful for sanitary and working purposes. Note that the cord in the 1926 version is either white or brown to match the habit.

Some examples of the "new" habit shown on page 17: Sisters Clara Tressel and Felicitas Corey in 1930; Sister Raymunda (later known as Sister Loretta) Klinkhammer in her white nurses' habit; Sister Generose Gervais in the brown habit. Sisters Barnabas Schroeder and Crispina Heidt (below) are preparing something delicious while wearing their white habits.

Sisters Barnabas Schroeder and Crispina Heidt

Sister Raymunda Klinkhammer

Sisters Clara Tressel and Felicitas Corey

Sister Generose Gervais

Sister Ingrid continues about the 1926 habit: It *"remained as the standard dress... until changes were implemented as a result of the Second Vatican Council."*

The changes included experimentations with a modified habit. Shown at right are five Sisters assigned to Ironton, Ohio in 1967 – Sisters Terence Gilbert, Cheryl Fritz, Juniper Bickel, Nancy Kinsley and Ramona Miller – modeling how the material of the habit could be re-made into another fashion. (Sister Ramona had just arrived and had not yet had time to adapt her habit!)

Wearing the full habit after that time became optional; many Sisters continued wearing it until their deaths. (The last Sister who chose to wear the full habit died in 2008.)

While Rochester Franciscans no longer wear the habit, we follow the directives of our 1982 Constitutions: "Our religious dress, expressive of our consecration, tradition, and poverty, is appropriate to our ministry and culture. A ring marked with the Franciscan coat of arms also identifies us as members with life vows."

Sisters Terence Gilbert, Cheryl Fritz, Juniper Bickel, Nancy Kinsley and Ramona Miller

In Memoriam

Sister Catherine Zimmerman (January 3, 1931 - October 20, 2022)

Agnes "Aggie" Catherine Zimmerman was one of eight children raised on the family farm east of Waseca, Minnesota. She was an active and athletic young person who enjoyed the outdoors. Her father valued education for girls and sent his daughters to the College of Saint Teresa, where Aggie decided in her sophomore year to join the Sisters of Saint Francis, and was given the religious name, Sister Bruce. She began her teaching career with intermediate grades, but was soon sent to the College to prepare to teach high school. In 1972, she left teaching to earn a master's degree in social work. During this time, her new professional identity coincided with a name change, Sister Kate. From 1974–1979, Kate served the Congregation as a mental health counselor, improving the self-concept of many Sisters and their interpersonal relations. Through the years, her love of and commitment to the Congregation were evident in the "yes" she responded to when asked to be on numerous boards and committees, including the Executive Council and Academy Board. Kate's five years as a psychotherapist in Virginia, Minnesota, gave her great opportunities to enjoy northern Minnesota. She then returned to Rochester to be on staff at Zumbro Valley Health Center. The impact of Kate's clinical social work was recognized with the distinguished Career Award from the Community Mental Health Workers. Kate's empathy with suffering persons came from a defining moment; her sister-in-law and six children had been killed when a train crashed into their car. At the age of 65, Kate desired to move to northern Minnesota or Wisconsin and initiated a search for a place in an area with a shortage of priests. At the Wisconsin dwelling on Nancy Lake, Kate's years of experience and considerable skills enabled her to volunteer as a mental health counselor, facilitator of parish groups, and serve on boards and committees related to the environment. Her close friend, Sister Ingrid Peterson, joined her from 1998-2013, after which time they moved to Rochester. Sister Kate expressed her appreciation of family and friends at her 1977 Silver Jubilee: "And you, my special friends, without whom life would lack so much pizazz – each of you a special gift of love to me in your own unique persons – I thank you, and only ask that you remember me as loving you."

Sister Marcella Klein (August 18, 1924 - October 17, 2022)

There were many challenging circumstances in Sister Marcella's life – from her childhood until her last days – but she was able to face those challenges with hard work, determination and a dependence on her God. Sister Marcella was born in Watertown, South Dakota – the oldest of four children. Sadly, her mother died when Marcella was just 13 years old, and she became the primary caretaker of her three younger siblings. But she had learned about hard work and domestic chores, like cooking and canning, from her mother, so she was able to help her father on the family farm in Waverly, South Dakota. Sister Marcella's rural upbringing instilled a love of being close to the earth, which followed her throughout her life – especially in her retirement years, when she had more opportunities to plant flowers and vegetables and watch them grow. Many Sisters and visitors were grateful recipients of the flowers that she gifted to them, especially the Sisters residing on the 2nd and 3rd health care floors, who would receive little bouquets from her. Because of family commitments, Sister Marcella entered the Congregation at age 30, and thus was older than many of her classmates. Always a lifelong learner, she pursued degrees in Education and in Guidance/Counseling, as well as certificates in Special Education and Administration. She was an avid reader who would read newspapers and magazines from front to back, and developed strong opinions about various topics; and she was not shy about sharing those opinions with others. After Sister Marcella's many years of elementary school teaching across the upper Midwest and in Chicago (where she was known as Sister Benilde), she served for ten years as the Director of the Kinship Program of the Boys and Girls Club in Watertown. There she developed and implemented training and support programs for volunteers. After her retirement from that position, she was able to stay in Watertown for several more years, volunteering with organizations such as Right to Life, before retiring to Assisi Heights.

Sister Mary Lynch (June 19, 1931 - November 2, 2022)

One theme song for Sister Mary Lynch's life would be "On the Road Again." She was born in Jamestown, North Dakota, and was raised in Center, North Dakota, until her family moved to Austin, Minnesota, where she lived from the age of 10 until she graduated from high school. After graduating, Mary moved to Rochester and worked as a nurse aide at Saint Marys Hospital. After two years, Mary and her friend moved to Minneapolis. Mary worked in a bank and then in the mailroom at Reinhart Brothers Auto Electric. During this time, Mary enrolled in a psychiatric nursing program offered at Glenwood Hills in Golden Valley. After graduating from the program, she worked at Homewood Hospital. But the seed had been planted to become a Rochester Franciscan when she had worked at Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester, and now the call was received. Mary entered the Rochester Franciscan Congregation and was given the name 'Sister Mary Mercy Lynch.' MERCY… truly, it was her personal quality. She had a marvelous kind way of speaking with psychiatric patients. Her nursing career led her from Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester; to Mercy Hospital in Portsmouth, Ohio; to Bogotá, Colombia, where she lived for 10 years, serving as a nurse and teaching health classes. In 1983, following Mary's knee surgery, Sister Kateri encouraged Sister Mary to move from psychiatric nursing to intensive care nursing. Sister Mary attended a CPE class at Seattle University, and while there, she also became a hospital chaplain and ministered to the Spanish-speaking patients. Mary's final trip was from Saint Marys Hospital Convent to Assisi Heights. Wherever Sister Mary went, she knew God was there with mercy, caring for ordinary people.

Sister Seton Slater (January 10, 1928 - November 18, 2022)

Vivian Laura Slater was born slightly ahead of her beloved "Womb-Mate," Vincent Hubert, on January 10, 1928. The twins were the 4th and 5th of seven children. Two months later, when an aunt died giving birth to her only child, that newborn cousin, Victor, came to live with the family. The "Three V's" occupied the same crib and usually were referred to as "The Triplets." The Slater children were taught in grade and high school by the Rochester Franciscans and were very imbued with the spirit of the Missions. As a young woman, Vivian's desire was to be a missionary serving in a foreign country. She frequently read about and even communicated with various missionary Congregations. The Lord, however, led her to the Rochester Franciscans, where she already had many acquaintances, including two aunts. Making Vows in 1949, Sister Seton spent the first 24 years of her ministry in elementary education; mainly teaching students in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th grades throughout Minnesota and Portsmouth, Ohio. She then transitioned into a variety of ministries: Activity Director at Assisi Heights and with the Presentation Sisters in Aberdeen, South Dakota; as a Unit Assistant at St. Marys Hospital for six years; serving the elderly as a Home Health Aide in Worthington, Minnesota, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and as a Sacristan in Lourdes Chapel at Assisi Heights. After those "formal" jobs, she enjoyed being available for small tasks here and there at Assisi Heights. She delighted in being able to say "Yes" to a request. Her first love and passions were to work with and companion elderly persons. When complimented about her ability to be comfortable with the elderly, she quickly responded that she was indeed gifted by the very ones she served. She treasured her time with them at the Heights and in-home care settings. Sister Seton said, "I know, without a doubt, that I am more attuned to the sacred, more reverent toward life, more appreciative of blessings, big and small. In a word, I think I live more fully in a stance of awe and gratitude." Sister Seton embraced the holy mystery with gratitude for experiences that deepened her humility and the impulse to do more, be more, give more, and love more.

2023 Assisi Heights Retreats

Sisters of Saint Francis - Rochester, MN

Mystical Path to a Joyful Life

Thursday, June 1 (6:30pm) –
Wednesday, June 7, 2023 (12:00pm)

Presented by:

Carl McColman

Part 1: Thursday, June 1 at 6:30 pm thru Sunday, June 4 at Noon
Theme: Gifts of the heart leads us to deeper mystery of God.

Part 2: Sunday, June 4 at 6:30 pm thru Wednesday, June 7 at Noon
Theme: The heart of the beatitudes nurtures the mystical path to joyful life.

The Mystical Path to a Joyful life

In the words of Teilhard de Chardin, joy is an "infallible sign of the presence of God." How do we nurture joy in our lives? Where does it come from? How can it make a difference in the ordinary rhythms of each day? Our retreat will consider joy — a fruit of the Holy Spirit — as a gift given to us through divine grace. Indeed, joy is one of many gifts the Spirit gives us — in our hearts. By considering the "gifts of the heart" as invitations into prayer, we will reflect on how joy is given to us, and how we can most graciously receive this life-affirming gift.

Carl McColman is a spiritual director, retreat leader, and popular speaker and teacher on mystical spirituality and contemplative living. He is the author of many books, including: The Big Book of Christian Mysticism, Eternal Heart: The Mystical Path to a Joyful Life, and Unteachable Lessons: Why Wisdom Can't Be Taught and Why That's Okay. He is one of the co-hosts of the Encountering Silence podcast, and blogs regularly at Patheos, Medium, and his own website, www.anamchara.com. Carl is a Lay Cistercian (a lay associate of the Trappist monks of Conyers, Georgia) and a commissioned Centering Prayer presenter.

To Register: www.rochesterfranciscan.org/events/. Questions? 507-280-2195 or ahsc@rochesterfranciscan.org. Presenters will be at Assisi Heights hosting two conferences per day, livestreamed via Zoom, at 9:00am & 3:30pm, with Liturgy at 11:00am. Full schedule will be sent with registration confirmation.

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, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

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All the Sisters of St. Francis
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Sister Francine Balster
Batista Family
Sister Pat Beck
Tracey Bennett
Sister Geneva Berns
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Kari Bunkers
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Sister Marilyn Geiger
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Sisters who taught in Winona
Sisters who worked at Saint Marys Hospital
Sisters who taught at St. Francis and Lourdes schools
Sister Mary Pat Smith
Sister Mary Ann Snyder
Sister Ruth Snyder
Sister Carmen Sonnek
Martha Speltz Demetriou's 80th birthday
Sister Joyce Stemper
Sister Lorraine Stenger's 90th birthday
Ellen Strunk Hennessy
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Annual Report

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, 2021 through September 30, 2022.

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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!

Did You Know?

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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

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

As I read over the *in honor of* and *in memory of* names listed in this issue of the *Spring Interchange*, I am enlightened to the mystery of why.

These loved ones are proof that they were called to be a light to those around them.

I imagine they offered encouragement, kindness, compassion, hope, wisdom or guidance to those lives they touched. Their light, prompted you to give your gift in honor of and in memory of them. By doing so, you were able to let your own light shine through with your generosity to the Sisters of Saint Francis.

In turn, your kindness has influenced and impacted so many others.

Thank you.

Donations are often accompanied with a prayer request. Please know that all prayers received are shared with the Sisters at Assisi Heights and included during daily Mass.

May your light continue to shine bright for all to see.

June Howard

Sisters of Saint Francis
Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes

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