

Spring 2016
interchange
mercy

Sisters of Saint Francis



Exploring values common to you and today's Rochester Franciscans

Focus: mercy

interchange

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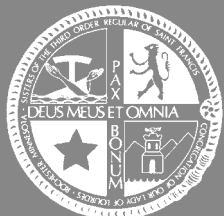
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Lumen Award



From the National Catholic Development Conference

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Dear Friends and Family,



In his opening statements for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis called us to always put mercy before judgment. I have come to appreciate the difference this can make while serving as the Congregational Minister. There are endless opportunities for me to discover the depth of the mercy of God, who welcomes all, when I reach out to other persons. These are graced moments.

I have been told that the *mercy and understanding I show to others is the degree of mercy, the kind of understanding, I will get when I need it most*. For me, mercy is an honest awareness of my own humanity. It enables me to be the best I can be with the gifts I have received, knowing the mercy of God will prevail in all of my best efforts.

To be merciful is to be kind, to be open, to be trusting, and to be a friend. It opens our heart to strangers and shows our hospitality, which is a hallmark of the Franciscans. Being merciful can indeed be one of our many challenges... and, as Sister Tierney reminds us on the next page, our challenges are our blessings.

As you read this issue of *Interchange*, you will discover the diversity of experiences, works, and words of mercy brought forth in the lives of countless people, and reflected in the experience of those who toil with all God's people. As we come to understand how God is merciful, we become God's merciful face when we immerse ourselves in the lives of others. For some, this may be the only experience of God's mercy that they encounter.

Thank you for your many kindnesses, your support and your prayers. We pray that, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, we will reflect God's mercy to all whom we encounter.

Sister Marilyn Geiger, OSF

Sister Marilyn Geiger
Congregational Minister

"Wake up the World" was a call from Pope Francis that initiated the Year of Consecrated Life. It was an invitation to recognize and celebrate the gift of religious life in our Church, and the hundredfold that has come to the Church through the dedicated lives of the innumerable men and women, who throughout the centuries, heard God's call to a religious life of unconditional love and service, and responded "yes." The form of that life changed as history - ever vibrant and changing - changed the lives of people everywhere. The breakdown of the feudal system and the emerging growth of towns created needs of the people, especially the poor, that were no longer adequately served by monastic religious life. Francis of Assisi understood the paradigm shift that was happening and knew that he and his brothers and sisters were called to a new form of religious life - go out into the streets and find/serve Christ in his people. Chesterton beautifully captures this moment. "While it was yet twilight, a figure appeared silently and suddenly on a little hill above the city, dark against the fading darkness. For it was the end of a long and stern night, a night of vigil, not unvisited by stars. He stood with his hands lifted, as in so many statues and pictures, and about him was a burst of birds singing; and behind him was the break of a new day."¹

The following centuries saw great development and change in the economic growth of towns and cities. Land-based economies became industrialized, which spawned unmitigated poverty in ever-growing numbers - a tragic reality that continues to describe the world in which we live today, where the gap between the wealthy and poor increases at an exponential rate. Innumerable congregations of religious emerged to respond to these critical needs.

Is it a coincidence that the call to celebrate a Year of Consecrated Life is followed by Pope Francis' call to celebrate a Year of Mercy? Is he possibly reminding religious men and women everywhere of the call we heard in our lives, and to which we said "yes?" The

Leadership Conference of Women Religious has a striking invitation to its members: "Your moment is holy; your call is gift, and your challenges are your blessings." Pope Francis challenges us to "enter into the great stream of JOY in the faces of the poor." Saint Francis was a herald, a minstrel, a man who loved and celebrated life. He was a herald of the great King, and heard his call to "go and rebuild my house, for it is falling into ruin." While he initially responded literally, gathering stones to rebuild a church in ruins, he came to know his call to rebuild God's Church, the people of God. Is it a coincidence that Pope Francis chose the name Francis of Assisi, and emphatically challenges us to live in the same spirit: finding Christ in our poor brothers and sisters?



His priority is clear - his desire to make the Church "a field hospital for injured souls, where the wounded are welcomed and loved, not judged... I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security... More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which made us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us, 'Give them something to eat.' If it proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people, or a self-absorbed cluster made up of a chosen few."

Frederick Buechner defines vocation as "the place where our deep gladness meets the world's deep need." As a religious woman today, my vocation is still alive at that critical intersection, and I find that I have entered into the "great stream of JOY in the faces of the poor."

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¹ G.K. Chesterton, Saint Francis of Assisi (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1924).

"Find the thing that stirs your heart and make room for it."
- Joan Chittister

As I reflected on the daily Advent themes from the booklet "Call to Mercy" and with the recognition of our own Assisi Heights door to Lourdes Chapel being designated and blessed for this Jubilee year of Mercy, my heart again was stirred by the relationship I had experienced with a sister parish in Esteli, Nicaragua, located in the north-central mountain region of the country.

I served as Pastoral Minister at Immaculate Conception Church in Northeast Minneapolis for six and a half years in the 1990's. One of my duties was staff liaison to our designated sister parish, which at the time was nearly two years in the making. Set before me was the task of growing the communication, thus the relationship with El Calvario Parroquia and their Pastor, Padre Frutos Valle. I soon realized there was a great amount of awareness building to be done in our parish in order to achieve a sense of relationship and to make the sister parish commitment come alive. Information giving and familiarity grew as delegations of three or four parishioners traveled to Nicaragua every other year. At first, money raising efforts was the focus of our attention. That seemed to be a concrete measurable sign of our contribution to El Calvario.

As the sister parish relationship evolved, spaces in my heart were tugging in hope of being part of the next delegation to journey to Nicaragua. I was looking forward to greeting Padre Frutos and other parishioners with whom I had been corresponding for five years.

In preparation, I was determined to grasp Nicaragua's complicated history – the ten year civil war, their government's contribution to the detriment of their own

citizens, what the current issues for the people were, and how the involvement of my own government affected the history of Nicaragua. My spirit was being called. Could I make a difference? From previous delegations to Nicaragua, I was aware the people would welcome us as individuals separate from our government.

I was privileged to be among a delegation of four to travel to Nicaragua in February, 1996. There were many activities and events arranged for us during our two-week stay. During one experience after another, I felt a living scripture being professed by the people with whom we were sharing time. I heard it in my heart. It didn't take long to realize the gift I could give them was my presence wrapped with a spirit of care and compassion. It seemed our choice to travel to meet them, in their country, was a tiny spark of hope for the El Calvario Parish in Esteli and its 26 rural based Christian Communities. Of course, they were also grateful for the mutually agreed upon causes where we could offer financial support.

continued...

Sister Wanda (kneeling) and Nicaraguan delegation visit a family farm.



Journey to Nicaragua *continued...*

Santa Cruz was one of the largest base communities we visited. It was located in a high mountainous area. We went there to meet the people and celebrate Liturgy with them. Our destination was the home of an elderly couple in the base community. Approximately 65 men, women and children were present. I observed only one horse, and the only vehicle was Father's jeep in which we had arrived. The view from our location stretched for miles. From there, other homes were at great distances and barely visible. I realized these good people had walked for hours to receive Eucharist and to welcome us Americans. When this Christian Community came together it was a celebration of their deep faith, joyful hope – all gift from God to them expressed through lively music and dance. How could my heart not be stirred by their witness of faith, community celebration and the warm welcome we received? Would my faith lead me to sacrifice as generously for a neighbor as what was experienced from the Santa Cruz community?

As I look back on what began as a 'ministry duty' with the sister parish, as Pastoral Minister on the staff at Immaculate Conception, the movement to compassion and caring had taken residence in my heart for the people of El Calvario in Nicaragua. This past January, as the Rochester Franciscans continued awareness-building and education for both ourselves and the



▲ above - Jorge Louis with his notebook

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public on various aspects of Human Trafficking, my thoughts again turned to my Nicaraguan experience. Some of our financial support to the parish in Nicaragua was to build a multipurpose center for youth in the Linda Vista barrio. Teens facilitated the food program for children, used the space for their own youth sharing, gathered children who were left alone during the day while their mothers went to work, at least for those who could find work in Esteli. In many of these families, the mother was the only

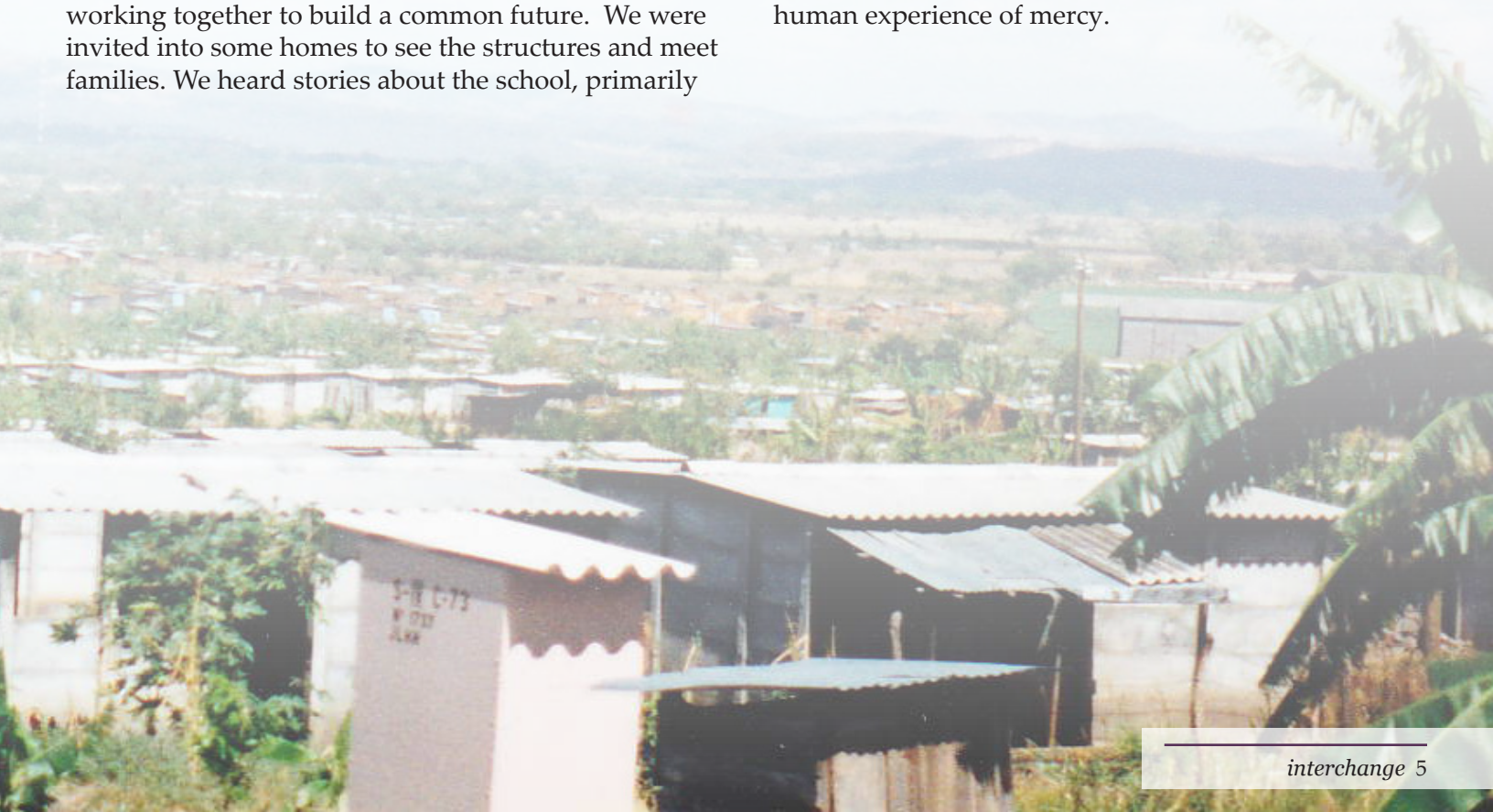


parent in the household. Fathers were killed in the civil war or just didn't return home. I particularly remember Jorge Louis. My favorite picture is Jorge with his notebook, showing us with pride how he is learning to write through the literacy program. You could see the effects of malnourishment in his body. Jorge had the stature of a 5-year-old although he was 8 years of age. Shortly after we returned from our visit to Nicaragua in 1996, we learned that children were disappearing from the Linda Vista Barrio. The trafficking for human organs was identified as the reason for the children's disappearances. I could only hope and pray that Jorge was not one of those children, and that he continued his writing at the youth center.

It is said, mercy works miracles. I had the privilege and graced experience to witness God's compassionate love being birthed in the lives and hearts of residents settling into a new living area, a barrio named Villa Esperanza. It was also known as the "reconciliation project." This area was developed by the government after the revolution for demobilized army (Sandinistas) and resistance forces (Contras). These groups who had fought against each other were now working together to build a common future. We were invited into some homes to see the structures and meet families. We heard stories about the school, primarily

from men who were leaders in the community whose hope was for the future of their children. A chapel was built. The development of buildings and utility services also served as a source of income for the men. If you worked, you were paid. If you did not contribute to the community development there was no compensation.

As we finished our visit and were leaving the barrio, two gentlemen along the road side motioned for Padre Frutos to stop. They had missed us in our tour of their community and wanted to meet us and thank us for coming. There were not words to express the depth of the whole experience of observing former enemies collaborating to build a new community (barrio) together. A lesson for me was that sometimes the greatest gift we Americans could share was from our limitations, not the building projects we could finance, which was also stretching our abilities. The experience at the "reconciliation project" was a priceless gift of God's living presence. In response to the men wanting to greet us, all I could do was get out of the jeep, with tears in my eyes, not a word being exchanged, and give each man a hug, hoping they would hear the language of my heart and know a bridge joined our human experience of mercy.



Whenever I gaze upon the statue of Saint Francis and the Lamb in the garden in front of Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel at Assisi Heights, the word 'merciful' comes to mind. Could the lamb represent Jesus, the Lamb of God, a symbol of God's mercy on us? Looking at the expression shown on the face of Saint Francis, and his tender approach to the lamb, we see how merciful and caring he was toward all of God's creation. Intrigued by this sculpture, I decided to find out the story behind this wonderful depiction in bronze.



“... For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned.”

- Excerpt from the Prayer of St. Francis

According to the Archives department at Assisi Heights, there are two stories about the statue of Saint Francis and the pecorrella (lamb) as shown on the cover, in front of Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel. The story is found in Saint Bonaventure's life of Saint Francis. Saint Francis had the habit of bringing lambs to church with him. Some of the brothers objected to this and complained to the bishop. Saint Francis spoke to the peccorella and told him not to come to church anymore. From then on, the peccorella went to church and during the services he would kneel, and during the consecration he would bow his head very reverently. This so edified all the brothers that they no longer objected to the lambs in the church.

The other story connected with this statue happened after Saint Francis' death. It was a custom of the Franciscan brothers to go up to Mount Alverna in Italy to pray on the anniversary of the death of Saint Francis. One year, on the morning of the anniversary of St. Francis' death, it was cold and snowy and the superior decided it was too inclement to make the journey to Mount Alverna. One of the brothers decided to go anyway, feeling that it was his duty, and that Saint Francis would want him to go. On the way up the mountain he saw a trail as if made

by animals. When he arrived at the top of the mountain there were birds, sheep and all kinds of animals seemingly giving praise to God. One-by-one, the brothers went to the mountain top, each feeling the same responsibility, and when they arrived, they realized the animals which Francis had loved were faithful. This is commemorated in all the small birds and animals found around the base and hidden in the leaves of the statue.

The original statue stands in the Rose Garden adjoining the church of Saint Mary of the Angels in Assisi. The artist, V. Rosignoli, had died at the time the College of Saint Teresa

chapel was being erected, 1925-26. Mother Leo wanted to do something in commemoration of the anniversary of the death of Saint Francis in 1226, just 700 years before the chapel was built. She wanted a copy of this certain statue. The man at the head of the marble works in Winona was going to Europe, so Mother Leo had asked him to see Madam Rosignoli and request if a duplicate could be made. He assured her it would be well placed and well taken care of. Madam Rosignoli consented and the first copy was poured. This statue is the first cast made from the original statue and every effort was made to make it as perfect as possible. This statue was formerly located at the College of St. Teresa in Winona, in the courtyard in front of in Alverna Hall).



I walk with her sometimes. She lives a life of mercy. She waits and walks with Sisters when she feels there is a need. Prayer is her delight. Walking into the Chapel to pray, she moves into this sacred place with dignity in her heart and soul. God, alone, is present to her in this moment.

This Sister joined long before the second Vatican Council which ushered in many changes. Yet, she thrives on change. In recent years, she welcomed the changes to the Liturgy with a grateful heart. Sister embodies the values of righteousness, mercy and

▲ Above - Sister Claren with Sister Sean Clinch
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purity. At the age of 90+, she lives obediently and searches out better ways to do things. (I wish I was more like her!)

As I live in community, I want to feel near this Sister. She can feel love, knows poverty, and lets the vow of obedience take care of her. She allows the spirit of Jesus to be creative in her life. Who is the Sister I write about? It is our own Sister Sean Clinch.

Sheltering the Homeless



The Rochester Post Bulletin headlines flashed, “Family of 10 left without home” on June 4, 2015. Ariak Mawien, a single mother, lost all her material things in an electrical fire that burned their mobile home in southeast Rochester in less than an hour. Thankfully, no one was hurt during the early morning fire. What now? Sister Lalonde Ryan reached out as an advocate for the family; taking immediate steps to bring help. Lalonde first met with her friend, Ariak, and came up with a collaborative action plan with two local churches, the Red Cross, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Lalonde has a tender compassionate heart so she began gathering food supplies (from our home and other Franciscan homes) and went to Aldi’s, Savers, and the Dollar Store to buy clothes for the children. She worked with Jeff Urban, an outreach pastor from Bear Creek Christian Church, along with the Red Cross to find hotel rooms for the family. During the weeks that followed, Lalonde sought various organizations to

raise funds, and involved others, including the Ryan Clan, to help this local poor and needy family.

As Lalonde focused on the needs of this family, she heard comments like, “Why so many children? Let the Sudanese community help them!” and references that “this person or that person could help.” She quickly discovered that there is a revolving door and a systemic passing of the buck when tragedy hits a local poor family. Lalonde knew about Ariak’s journey to the United States. Here is her amazing story...

Ariak was raised in Sudan while the wars were raging. This was the cause of the deaths of her father, two brothers, and two stepbrothers. The family suffered and moved around. Ariak left home and married. As the children came, more and more troubles occurred. Finally, Ariak arrived in the United States with a new husband who soon after left her and all the children. An attractive, bright, and resourceful woman, she has always found ways to support and care for her

children. While Ariak works two jobs at Global Home Health Care as a housekeeper, she makes sure the family is fed, attends Mass on the weekends, and encourages her children to do well in school. They all go to local schools in Rochester except the two youngest boys, Peter and Benjamin. Lalonde is their Godmother, and takes this role very seriously. The boys were baptized at St. John's Parish.

Lalonde has embodied the words of our Chapter Statement of 2011 by being a Gospel woman, steeped in contemplation, attentive to our Franciscan values, and by being in a relationship with the Mawien family.

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◀ Left - Sister Lalonde with Ariak and Peter

▼ Below - Sister Lalonde holds Benjamin

By her actions, Lalonde has reached out to the poor within Rochester, especially to marginalized women from Sudan, and befriended the family. She has "walked the talk." Last Christmas, the children had numerous gifts around their tree. Lalonde's efforts to gather the gifts, wrap them beautifully, and deliver the gifts and baskets of food on December 23, 2014 delighted all! Now all these gifts were lost to the fire.

Lalonde continues to be busy with the rebuilding effort. The latest news is the Mawien family has a four bedroom home in a nice neighborhood. Eight beds arrived from the goodness of others. Rebuilding is happening and Lalonde continues to be their advocate. Echoed in Lalonde's favorite lyrics of praise to God, Ariak and her family are now experiencing that "Everlasting is God's love."



Rochester Franciscan Sisters:

SHARING THEIR CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

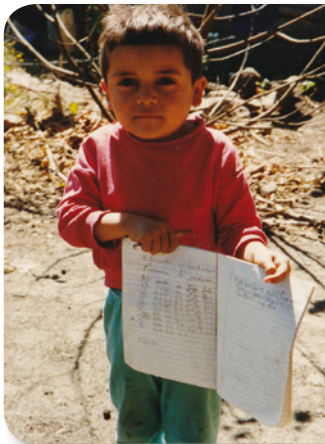
The Corporal Works of Mercy are found in the teachings of Jesus, giving us a model for how we should treat others, seeing Christ in their eyes. The seven Corporal Works of Mercy are listed below and represented by stories in this issue.

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GIVE ALMS TO THE POOR

Many organizations provide support and services for those in need. Sister Tierney Trueman shares her hope for religious men and women, and all of us, to “be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures that give us a false sense of security...while at our door people are starving...” Read more on page 2.



FEED THE HUNGRY

There are many people in this world who go without food. At least one malnourished child is now faring better because of the merciful acts of a parish which provided support to a community that needed to be rebuilt after the war in Nicaragua between the Sandinistas and the Contras. Sister Wanda shares this story on page 3.



GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

Many brothers and sisters do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity. There are also other forms of thirst, and often we must quench a spiritual thirst or need. Our Sister Sean Clinch lives a prayerful life devoted to supporting those suffering and in spiritual need. Read her story on page 7.

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

There are many circumstances that could lead someone to becoming homeless. We are encouraged to meet those without homes, affirming their worth and helping them seek a resolution to this challenge. Sister Lalonde Ryan has played an instrumental role in rebuilding the lives of the Malwein family of ten, who lost their mobile home to a fire in June 2015. Read her story on page 8.



VISIT THE SICK

Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. In spite of their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them. Sister Marga Ernster spent her Sunday afternoons, for many years, visiting parishioners who were ill or disabled. Read about her tender nature on page 16.



BURY THE DEAD

Funerals give us the opportunity to grieve and show others support during difficult times. Sister Margaret Kiefer shares a poignant story of helping a family in Peru prepare for the funeral of their disabled child, allowing them time to grieve and later, to share happier memories of Carmelo. Read about this journey on page 17.



VISIT THE IMPRISONED

People in prison are still people, made in the image and likeness of God. They deserve the opportunity to hear the Word of God and find the Truth of the message of Christ. Sister JoAnn Chevalier, who recently professed her first vows, shared time in ministry with Sisters Mary Kay Mahowald and Arnold Ritchey as they serve displaced and undocumented persons on the border and in detention centers in El Paso, Texas. Read about her novitiate experiences on page 20.



Gifts in Memory

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

We remember you through the daily prayers of our Sisters.

Gifts received October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015.

In Memory of:

Sister Ancina Adams
Sister Thomas A'Kempis
Sister Humbeline Aulik
Robert Balcer
Elizabeth Barrett
Warren and Catherine Barry
Ann Becker
Nicole Baly Birmingham
Sister Juniper Bickel
Hazel Tobin Bill
Sister Alphonse Billian
Sister Faber Bird
Sister Gemella Bishop
Sister Joan Blank
Lou Blatz
Mary Beth Blee
Sister Mary Clare Bofenkamp
Stanley and Julia Boland
Sister Mariana Boltz
Sister Camille Bowe
Sister Zoa Brauwarth
Sister Pauline Brick
Phillip Brieske
John Frederick Brix
Donald Brown
Robert Burroughs
Sister Regina Buskowiak
Bernadine Butler
Sister Michaela Byron
Sister Anicetus Cacka
Sister Alice Ann Campion
Bill Canfield
Sister Donata Caron
Victoria Schaus Carter
Sister Georgianna Cashman
Sister Honore Cashman
Chase Family
Sister Lucas Chavez
Marqueena Cleaver
Winifred Clemons

Sister Emmanuel Collins
Sister Joan Connors
Sister Maigread Conway
Andrew Cormack
Cortez Family
Virginia Cortez
John Costello
Dick Creators
Deceased members of the Crow
Tribe
Cassie Critz Cullen
Gloria Cummins
Jeff Daood
Patrice Degnan
Sister Elsbeth Dejon
Sister Mary Inez Delaney
Sister Petrine DeSplinter
Irene DeVos
Eileen Dietz
Sister Bede Donelan
Levon Driftwood
Father Thomas Duffy
Sister Antoinette Ebbers
Donald Erpelding
Sister Joan Erpenbach
Sister Helen Eynon
Sister Jacqueline Farrell
Sister Ethelreda Fisch
Clyde Fish
Mary Fisher
Robert and Catherine Fitzgerald
Sister Meigan Fogarty
Del Freund
Sister Elaine Fritz
Gabriel Family
Ray and Louise Gaffney
Rosemarie (Kaiser) Gaines
Sister Lydia Gaspard
Thomas Gehlen
Willem Gehlen
Giangiulio Family
Thomas E Gibson

Nora Graboski
Sister Olga Graf
Griffin Family
Sister Florita Grose
Sister Allan Halbur
Sister Mary Ruth Hart
Sister Lucy Hass
Hassett Family
Sister Eileen Haugh
Sister Helen Hayes (Immaculata)
Sue Heldt
Sister Mary Lorna Helter
William H. Hempy III
Ambrose and Mildred Hennes
Margaret Hennes
Hannah Hindt
Sister Mabel Hodges
Sister Gertrude Hoffmann
Sister Gloria Hoffmann
Thomas Hoffmann
Ida Mae Holley
Sister Victorine Honermann
Sister Mary Elizabeth Honsa
Juanita Hoppe
Sister Elise Horihan
Sister Julitta Hosch
Sister Climacus Hund
Eleanor Jahner
Sister Ralph Jahner
Doris Johnson
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Sister Sarah Keenan
Alvena Keiner
George C. Keller
Mary Larene Keller
Sister Conor Kelly
Sister Mary Carol Kelly
Dr. Charles Kennedy
Dr. Joseph M. Kiely
Georganne Kilbane
Kilbane Family
Agnes Killen

Sister Amadeus Klein
 Sister May Klein
 Sister Gildas Klinkhammer
 Sister Loretta Klinkhammer
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 Sister Patricia McGinty
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 Anna McNamara
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 Ruth and Charles Miller
 Thomas Mischke
 Sister Theophane Nalezny
 Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Nix
 Sister Margaret Modde
 Sally McCormick Morin
 Sister Bona Mueller
 Daniel Murphy
 Gordon Murphy
 Deceased Native Americans
 Alicia Neal
 James Nervig
 Kirstie North
 Sister Mary O'Hara
 James O'Laughlin
 Rosella Pageler
 Sister Gabriella Palzer
 Rosemary Dolan Palzer
 Joann and Richard Peterson
 Sister Liam Pettit
 Pauline Pinzka

Sister Tressa Piper
 Pauline Pisarik
 Sister Ricarda Raab
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 Ralph and Marcelleen Rath
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 Bill VanMeter
 Sister Harriet Vaske
 Dan Vaughan
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 Sister Joseen Vogt
 Sister Joachim VonArx
 Red and Rita Vondrashek
 Frances Wagner
 Sister Elissa Warmka
 Francis A. Wagner Weber
 Gene Wentz
 Theresa Wicka
 Sister Elaine Wicks
 Wieser Family
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 Winner Family
 Mr. and Mrs. Jack Wisdorf
 Silvy I. Zamboni Family
 Ted Zelewsky
 Donald Sellweger
 Sister Audrey Zenner
 Virginia Zimmer
 James E. Zimmerman

Gifts in Honor

Many gifts were given in honor of a Sister or loved one who had 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, 2014 through September 30, 2015.

In Honor of:

2015 Jubilarians
Sister Judi Angst
Fred J. Araas MD
Sister Joy Barth
Sister Gretchen Berg
Sister Geneva Berns
Pat Ann Williamson Biggs
Sister Marilyn Blesius
Mary Jane Brix
Sister Mary Beth Burns
Sister Colleen Byron
Sister Jesse Capparelli
Caron Family
Sister M. Severina Caron
College of Saint Teresa Class of 1953
College of Saint Teresa Class of 1955
College of Saint Teresa Class of 1960
Marguerite L. Coughlin
Sister Mary Eliot Crowley
Sister Janel Crumb
Sister Mary Margaret Dapporn
Sister Ronan Degnan
Mary DeVito
Marilyn Doris
Ann and Bill Ellis
Sister Yvonne Elskamp
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Sister Joanne Loecher
Sister Kathleen Lonergan
Sister Andrenee Lynch
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Sister Shirley Schmitz
Sister Avis Schons
Sister Clara Marie Schotzko
Sister Bernadette Servaty
Bill Shuh
Sisters who taught at College of
Saint Teresa
Sisters who taught at St. Juliana
School in Chicago, IL
Sisters who taught at St. Mary's
School in Sleepy Eye, MN
Sisters who taught in Winona, MN
Sister Mary Pat Smith
Sister Ruth Snyder
St. Marys School of Nursing Class
of 1950
Sister Christine Stanoch
Sister Margaret Clare Style
Taylor Family
Sister Moira Tighe
Sister Alice Thraen
Sister Tierney Trueman
Evelyn Turner
Sister Doreen VanUden
Bob Wagner
Sister Kay Wagner
Sister Kathy Warren
Sister Cashel Weiler
Sister Lauren Weinandt
Sister Linda Wieser
Jeanette Wisdorf-Manning
Sister Edith Zamboni
Jean Zamboni

It is with a grateful heart that we report to you on our 2014-2015 fiscal year. During this past year, 1,721 generous benefactors gifted the Sisters of Saint Francis with financial support. Of these donors, 570 made their first gift ever to the Sisters. Just as you have your special connection to the Sisters of Saint Francis, in turn you are truly a blessing to the Sisters.

Through your support, you affirmed your belief in the work and legacy of the Sisters who continue their ministries of educating, healing, beautifying our land and most importantly, praying for you each day. Because of you, the Rochester Franciscan Sisters continue to ensure that our retired Sisters who have served so many through their lifetimes are living out their retirement years in safety and with good quality of life.

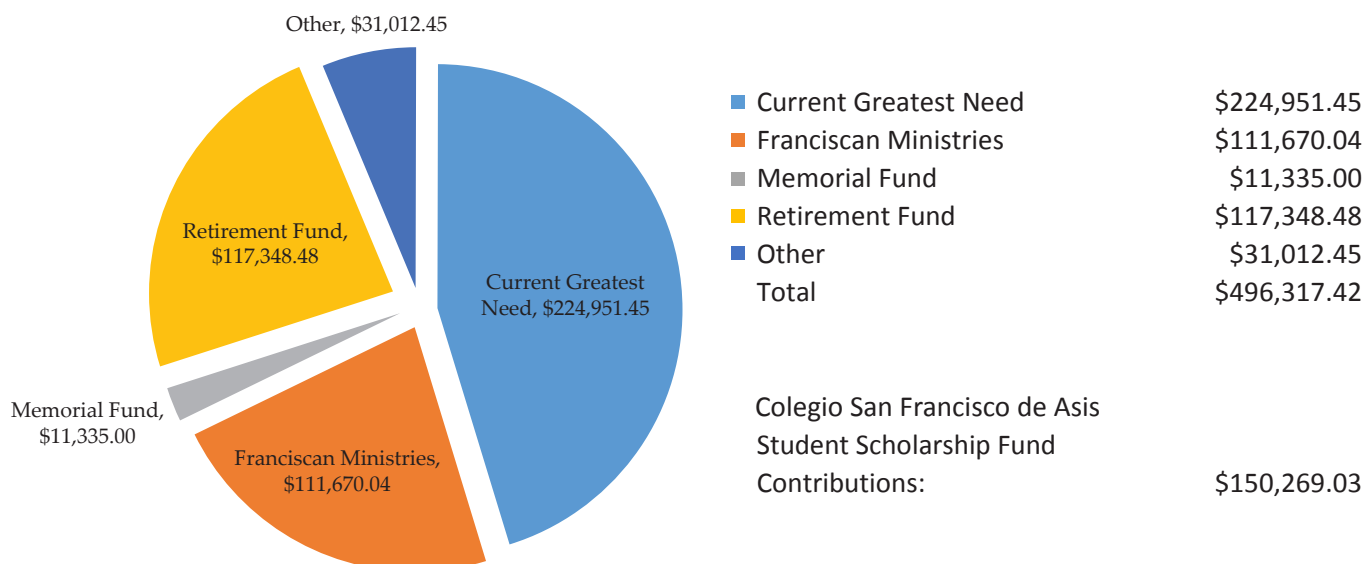
As Franciscans, we are careful stewards of our surroundings. Your gifts allow the necessary updates and repairs to keep Assisi Heights in good repair. Thanks to your help, the Stained Glass Restoration Project in Lourdes Chapel has begun. Four of the eleven panels of windows have undergone repairs.

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

Peace and all good,

Barb DeCramer
Director of Development

Sisters of Saint Francis Development Office - Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Report





Sister Lorraine with Sister Marga Ernster

As I settled into my life at Crucifixion Convent, working in the parish elementary school across the street in 1997, I came to know and appreciate Sister Marga Ernster. Before that, I hardly knew her, even though she was a Senior Novice at Assisi Heights the summer I came from St. Teresa's College as a postulant. Sister Marga worked in the computer room. If a class came in with too much talk or other noise she just sent them back to the hall to enter quietly. After leaving, the students tended to be well behaved for their next class also. The little children especially came to know her tenderness and love, although she was a little tough with the older students. It seemed that each student held her in high esteem. Being in charge of the computer room, Marga took responsibility for fixing a computer which was not working. Sometimes she had to contact one of her students' fathers, who was a computer whiz, for help.

We were the only two from our congregation living in the convent in this small town. Before I had always lived with a number of Sisters, so I wasn't at all sure how this would work out. It worked beautifully. The Holy Spirit was certainly with us. Sister Marga was great at praying. Every time there was not a Liturgy celebrated at Crucifixion Church, we traveled three miles to the Cathedral of St. Joseph the Worker in La Crosse, WI. Sister Marga was a model for me. I

attempted to imitate her in many ways. Most Sunday afternoons we walked, or in real cold weather, rode to visit parishioners who were ill or disabled. She always seemed to know the right thing to say to the person and listened well. We said a prayer with each person before we left. Before Monsignor Donald Grubish said he would retire, we made up our minds to also leave the parish when he did. I think it was soon after he turned 80 in January, 2008, that he announced he would retire in June. So, before the next school year, we, too, had left LaCrescent. I do believe I am a much more compassionate person because of living with Sister Marga all those years and witnessing her life now at Assisi Heights as well.



Sister Lorraine and Sister Marga attend the Crucifixion Gala - September 2002

One day when Bishop Daniel Turley came out to visit us in Sondor, Peru, he took time to visit the lad Carmelo who had been prepared for his first confession and communion in 1992. His mother had carried this 14-year polio victim in the same fashion as Jesus, the Good Shepherd is depicted with a lamb around his neck and shoulders. They had come down the hill and mom gently took him off her neck and set him on the floor of the church where the Bishop came and heard his confession.

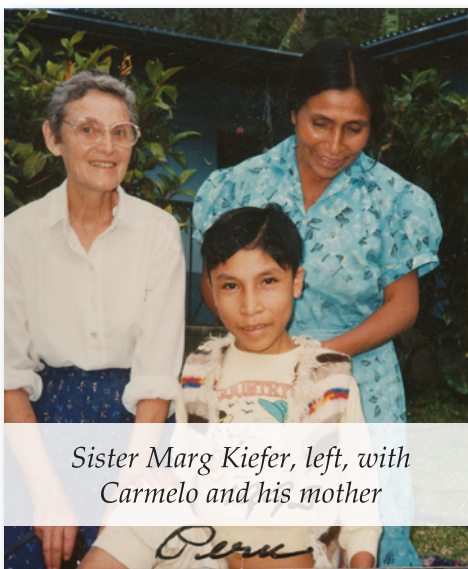
Carmelo, his mom and sometimes his sister, lived in a thatched house. The mother supported the family by sweeping streets for \$16 a month. As I walked there to visit them, I would be singing his favorite song: "Jesu Cristo, Jesu Cristo, yo estoy aqui." ("Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, I'm here!") Soon, I could see him sitting with his back straight up and his legs extended on a homemade woven blanket on the ground. Three years later, he was shrunken and frail, still had a happy spirit, but was no longer able to sit outside and enjoy nature.

One night, his mother, who always put the fire out that had been used for cooking, was quite surprised to hear this fragile son calling to her in a loud voice: "Fuego! Fuego!" ("Fire!! Fire!!!") in the night. She immediately knew that the wind had come up and was blowing hot ashes into the thatch. She hustled down the hill to the stream below to fill buckets with water, and ran back as quickly as she could to pitch the water onto the sizzling thatch. Soon all was well. Carmelo had saved all by calling out. Thank you, God!

On December 22nd, young Carmelo sent his mother down to our village and she came rushing with the message: "Carmelo has taken a turn for the worse!" I decided to look for medical help. To accompany me, I met the mother on the way and let her know that I would be delayed in coming. At the same time, a young couple, with a medical background, came with the intent to take flowers to the grave of their 9-month-old baby girl who had died three weeks prior. I went with them, wanting to convince one of them to go

with me and, wanting, too, to be with them in their sadness. The young wife decided to go up with me. Thank God! She was a very sensitive woman. Twenty minutes later, as we got closer to the house, I started singing softly as was my custom, "Dear Carmelito, what can I bring you?" And then, we were at his side. His mother weeping and wailing, SHOUTING at God! We asked her to allow us to go closer. Carmelo said, "I'm really sick... I want to confess..." To which I replied, "Ahhhhh... Carmelo recently you confessed to Bishop Daniel... and God loves you so much and pardons always. You are so loved!" At that he said, "Move me!" And, with that, his mother sped in,

jumped onto the "bed" and with the nurse she turned him onto his side, facing me. Then, he said, "I can't take any more." This was his second day with bronchitis without strength to cough or expectorate. He was drowning from liquids in his lungs. Narda, the nurse, had his right wrist and, I, his left, as he slowly drew last breaths. I spoke quietly, "Carmelo, Jesus is here to embrace you. You are entering into eternal light... ahhh, Carmelo, pray for your mother, brothers and sisters, guide them, help them, protect them. Goodbye, Carmelo, to your eternal rest." In 10 minutes he had breathed his last on a quick journey to God.

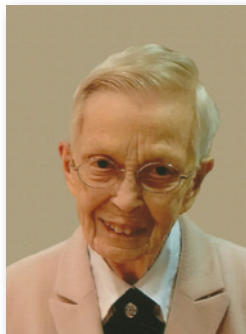


Sister Marg Kiefer, left, with Carmelo and his mother

I had watched his eyes, mostly closed, but at one point, open wide as in surprise. Narda and I cried with him and his mother, partly out of sadness for her and the family, and partly out of relief for him. I closed his eyes. Free to go, we went on down to the village to find some clothes for him to wear in the casket. On the day of his funeral, he and I had on new white blouses.

There was a poignant moment on the way to church. His mother had no shoes and it seemed that folks along the way were aware of her lack, sending out some things for her. Before entering church, she had something on her feet. What a privilege for me to be part of all this pathos. I went up to the house a couple of times to give support and to elicit stories of happy moments for and with Carmelo. Remembering is so important.

Sister Gavin Hagan (February 22, 1925 - February 25, 2016)



These are a few of Sister Gavin's favorite things: Notre Dame University; mashed potatoes; cranberry juice; flowers from Thomas and Alberta (her brother and sister-in-law); classical music; Pax Christi Parish; clothing from Land's End; breakfast at Panera's; liturgical services according to the book; playing bridge; her home state of Montana; Flapdoodles ice cream; impeccable use of the English language; reruns of MASH; being in-the-know about the latest Congregational buzz; cheering raucously while watching professional football; and her beloved Irish ancestry.

Born in Glendive, Montana, Sister Gavin, entered the Sisters of St. Francis in 1945, and graduated in 1946 with a bachelor's degree in history from the College of Saint Teresa. Ten years later, she earned a master's degree in education from the University of Minnesota. She also studied at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota; Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and the University of Portland, Oregon, where her brother, Father Barry, spent his lifetime teaching American History. In 1966, she was awarded a Fulbright Grant in Middle Eastern Studies through the American University in Beirut, Lebanon. A compulsive reader, Sister Gavin spent nearly four decades passing on her wealth of historical knowledge as an educator and administrator. She taught at Cathedral and Cotter High Schools in Winona, Notre Dame High School in Portsmouth, Ohio, and served as a teacher and administrator of the newly founded Wehrle High School in Columbus, Ohio. Her notoriety as a tough teacher was established during her tenure in the summer programs at the College of Saint Teresa. For most of us, Gavin was a complex mixture of thorny grace, startling brilliance, enviable memory, selfless generosity, Irish charm, quick wit, bottomless knowledge and interests, all blended with humor and color.

Sister Margaret PirkI (July 7, 1928 - March 19, 2016)



Jeanette Margaret PirkI, formerly Sister Cortona, was born in Summit Township, Steele County, Minnesota. Her love of the earth, the birds, animals, and the magnificent night sky undoubtedly started in her early formation on the family farm near Litomysl, Minnesota. A loyal friend who could nudge one forward to "tap into the imagination of life," she was a spiritual guide who modeled a mystical spirit as a real possibility for anyone, and a wisdom woman who mentored so many while humbly owning her own self-doubts. She was kind to all, subtly humorous, focused on global social justice causes, loved classical music, listened with quiet respect to others, but could and would clearly voice her own beliefs when invited, and was a stargazer who gave all of us a love for the night sky and the unfathomable universe.

Jeanette Margaret made first vows in the Rochester Franciscan Congregation in 1949 and perpetual vows in 1952. Her formal education came from the College of Saint Teresa (BS in math and physics) and Michigan State University in Lansing, Michigan (MA in teaching earth sciences, particularly astronomy). More importantly, Sister Margaret was "self-taught" in many things such as learning to run the equipment in the new planetarium at the College of Saint Teresa, where she designed and presented fascinating star journeys for students and the public. For 29 years, her classes in physical and earth science energized students. Her educational style was integrative and masterful, as is evident in the widely acclaimed "Choice Makers" curriculum which she helped design. She was a fabulous and favorite teacher.

Sister Margaret studied Franciscan documents and spirituality and eventually collaborated with other Franciscan scholars to write a series of Franciscan monographs. These helped promote the Franciscan intellectual tradition, which brought deep respect and awe from her colleagues, thus earned Sister Margaret a unique place in Franciscan history.

Sister Brian Taylor (February 15, 1922 - March 15, 2016)



Many children in southern Minnesota began their schooling with the short smiling teacher, Sister Brian, who taught for over 50 years in the Winona diocese. Sister's expertise for primary school children manifested itself in her introduction of a kindergarten in Luverne at the Religious Education Center and then at Queen of Angels School in Austin in 1975. Other teachers desiring to improve their teaching of that level would go to Sister Brian to learn from her how to set up the environment, the learning centers, tools for a rhythm band, and so much more. But the real heart of the matter for Sister Brian's successful teaching was her infectious smile, soft voice, and love of the children that put them at ease and engaged them in various learning activities that elicited wonder of God's creation: watching plants grow from seeds, cocoons emerging as butterflies, flowers bursting from buds and so much more.

Jane Taylor grew up on a farm near Adrian, Minnesota, the only sister to nine brothers. It could be said of her that she was spoiled with great affection from her family, and was very lonesome during the novitiate missing their attention. She had developed many domestic skills from assisting her mother with laundry and gardening, as well as participation in 4H. When she chose to enter the Franciscans, she delayed her entrance to October in order to complete state fair projects. Her organizing skills and attention to detail were her hallmarks. When Sister Brian retired from teaching, she continued in Austin to be a Senior Companion - visiting shut-ins, listening to them, and helping them with their daily chores. Her retirement at Assisi Heights provided her with leisure time and good visits with her Sisters.

Silver Jubilee

1990-2016



Sister Wanda Mettes

Golden Jubilee

1966-2016



Standing: Sisters Kay Wagner, Elaine Frank, Patricia Himmer,
Mary Eliot Crowley, Valerie Usher and Jan Reisdorf.

Seated: Sisters Joan Lewison, Jennifer Corbett and Martha Mathew.

Celebrating a New Vocation

Sister JoAnn Chevalier Professes First Vows



Sister Jo Ann Chevalier made First Profession of Vows with the Sisters of Saint Francis in Rochester, Minnesota, Friday, February 12, 2016. She is the daughter of Vernon and Donna (Ascheman) Chevalier and was raised in rural Clontarf, Minnesota, where she was baptized in Saint Malachy Parish.

Sister JoAnn is a graduate of the College of St. Teresa. She used her degree to work with mentally disabled and emotionally disturbed adolescents. Sister JoAnn also holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix. She worked for 20 years with Guidant Corporation, which later became Boston Scientific. Sister JoAnn's career with this medical device company relocated her to the states of Washington, California and back to Minnesota. Prior to leaving this organization, she held the position of Business Process Architect and Project Manager. Sister JoAnn reconnected with the Rochester Franciscans and entered into the two year process to become a Cojourner, one who shares in the Franciscan Charism without making vows or becoming a member. Sister JoAnn soon felt she was being called to vowed life.



... with Sister Marilyn

A two-year novitiate program for Sister JoAnn included an intense canonical year, which offered the opportunity to study the Franciscan Charism and religious life. This took place at the Franciscan Common Novitiate in St. Louis, Missouri, joining with four other women from different cultural backgrounds.

Sister JoAnn also spent a year in various apostolic ministries. For a few weeks, she lived with the Sisters of Saint Francis and Cojourners in Bogotá, Colombia, South America. There she worked with students in the *Colegio Santa Francisca Romana* school and the *Colegio Anexo San Francisco de Asis* school, which serves students living in the barrios. Later, she participated in Clinical Pastoral Education serving as a Hospital Chaplain Intern at Fairview Ridges Hospital in Burnsville, Minnesota. She also experienced life in El Paso, Texas, with two Rochester Franciscans serving displaced and undocumented persons on the border and in detention centers.

The Sisters of St. Francis now welcome her as a vowed Sister, sharing her talents and passion for the Franciscan way of life.



... with Sisters Clara and Chris



... with her parents

Stewardship of Our Gifts

Every day, I offer prayers of gratitude for the kind donors who share their gifts with the Sisters of Saint Francis. It's because of your generosity that the activities and efforts highlighted in this newsletter are possible. Your gifts to the Franciscan Ministries Fund help support Sister JoAnn and so many other Sisters in their important work. Gifts to the Retirement Fund provide safety and quality of life for Sisters living at Assisi Heights, like Sister Sean who has never really retired!

Our Franciscan spirituality directs us to be careful stewards of our surroundings. Your gifts allow the necessary updates and repairs to keep Assisi Heights, home of the Sisters, in good repair. Two current projects at Assisi Heights are the restoration of the beautiful stained glass windows in Lourdes Chapel, and repairs to the Inner Courtyard.

You've read about our stained glass restoration project in previous issues of the *Interchange*. We are happy to report that four of the eleven panels of windows have undergone restoration. As funding becomes available, the remaining seven panels will be repaired.

But perhaps you haven't heard about the challenges to the statuary and surrounding gardens in the Inner Court. The structure at the center of the Inner Court, which supports the statue of Saint Francis and the flower gardens, is slowly sinking into the ground, compromising the stonework. Repair will involve rebuilding the stone structure, putting in a drain to prevent future erosion and expansion, and repositioning the statue. This project is on hold until funding becomes available.

For many years, through the grace of God and through careful management of finances, the Sisters of Saint Francis have positioned themselves to meet their projected obligations, while continuing to minister to those most in need.

We invite your gift to the Chapel Fund or the Inner Court project as we continue to be good stewards of our buildings and grounds. Thank you for your generous gifts that allow us to care for our Sisters and maintain our surroundings.

For more information on these projects, contact Barb DeCramer at (507) 282-7441, or barb.decramer@rochesterfranciscan.org.

Make a Gift Today

The Mission of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota is to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation. Our ministries include praying for the needs of our world in the silence of the chapel and daily in our homes; ministering in hospitals and hospices; eliminating social injustice; providing support to immigrants and working to end human trafficking; volunteering at Dorothy Day Centers and social agencies in our local communities; ministering to those with addictions and those imprisoned; providing education in schools and serving as spiritual guides.

Your generosity allows us to continue these ministries as well as maintaining our home, Assisi Heights, which provides care for our retired Sisters. In addition, we welcome hundreds of people each year, who come to Lourdes Chapel for prayer, liturgy and reflection, or to Assisi Heights Spirituality Center for educational programs or retreats.

We are a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

To make a donation, you may use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.rochesterfranciscan.org. Click on the "Make a Difference – Donate" button at the bottom of the homepage.



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Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes

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