

# Communigram

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity

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*"For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son!"*

## Christmas Eve Tradition

*O Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ, kneeling before Your crib, we believe that You are the God of infinite majesty, even though we see You here a helpless Babe. We adore You. We thank You for having so humbled Yourself for our salvation as to will to be born in a stable. We thank You for all You suffered for us in Bethlehem, for Your poverty, humility, tears, cold, and nakedness. Would that we could give You love like that of Your Blessed Virgin Mother and St. Joseph. We unite our praise to that which the holy angels gave You on the first Christmas night. Most Sweet Jesus, take possession of our hearts. Renew in us that spirit whereby we may keep the Commandments faithfully and thus be made worthy to see and praise You for all eternity in Heaven.*

*With love throbbing in our hearts, the sweet picture comes to mind of the Grotto of the Nativity, scene of supreme joy and blessedness, making a heaven on earth, "for while all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course, Your Almighty Word came down from heaven from your royal throne."*

*In touching words St. Luke tells of the Blessed Virgin, "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn."*

*From our Novena for the Feast of Christmas compiled from Liturgical Sources by Mother M. Generose, OSF*



## Why St. Francis?

Why is a statute of St. Francis in our crib?

St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) in his *Life of St. Francis of Assisi* tells the story the best:

"In order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible solemnity; and lest he should be accused of lightness or novelty, he asked

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# St. Francis School Accents Advent

Greenwood, Mississippi—As the world busies itself hanging tinsel, shopping sales and stressing, St. Francis of Assisi School took a quiet moment to truly celebrate Christmas in a wholly holy way! The students and staff proudly presented *Creation to Christmas: A Musical Jesse Tree*, composed by Rosemary Hakim Fedorchuk.



The young ladies of grades five and six opened the evening with a praise dance to *You're Bigger* by Jekalyn Carr. The song shared a message of faith shown in the lyrics:

“You’re bigger than the universe, yes you are  
You’re bigger than the Sun and the Stars  
You’re bigger than the problems I’ve faced,  
You’re bigger, You’re so much bigger Jesus  
Than what this life may bring. You’re bigger!”



The three and four year olds of the pre-k class helped us consider the wonder of Creation as they sang *I Am Wonderfully Made* and *He's Got the Whole World In His Hands* with gusto! Some kindergarteners introduced the concept of Adam and Eve's first bad choice and the whole school sent out the voice of hope by singing *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*. As each group unfolded their part of the Jesse Tree story, they hung large handmade symbols on the Jesse Tree. Moving on through salvation history, the kinder-

garten brought Noah's ark to life with animal costumes and a joyful rendition of *Who Built the Ark?*



As the generations marched on, the second grade marched onto stage to do their energized version of *Father Abraham*. With this song, who needs the gym or a workout?



The stories of Jacob, Joseph, and finally Moses followed. The sixth grade class shared a beautiful combination of the Spirituals *Let My People Go* and *Wade In the Water*.

They may look like ordinary shepherds, but they are really the first graders, come to share the stories of Ruth, Jesse, and ultimately David. Donning their shepherd garb and harps in hand they shared the lively song *Little David, Play On Your Harp*.



The ages of history continued to reveal themselves as grade five shared story and symbol for Solomon and Ezekiel. They embellished the story with a lovely pairing of Spirituals, *Ezekiel Saw the Wheel* and *Now Let Me Fly*.

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## Accents Advent (Continued from p.2)

God's love story for us now enters the Gospel era with the entrance of John the Baptist and the connection of the Savior to the House of David. Grades five and six teamed up to share a Round entitled *Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord*. The combined classes took a collective deep breath and launched into *Mattew's Begats*. You guessed it! The students sang the entire genealogy of Jesus without a pause! Amazing!



As God's People had waited for generations for the Promised One, our evening came to a climax as the fourth graders brought the characters of the Nativity to life. Audience and cast alike raised voices in singing *Silent Night*.

All the students gathered in glory on the stage to share the joy in the coming of the Savior as their voices celebrated the Caribbean rhythms of the finale, *He Came Down*.

By Sister Annette Kurey



At long last the story turns to Joseph and Mary. The members of the third grade class portrayed the Annunciation. They sang out with clear voices as Mary must have in the song, *Magnificat*.

## Christmas Program at St. Benedict's



Cambridge, Ohio—St. Benedict School students presented their Christmas Program, "Families Shine On" at St. Benedict's Church on Thursday, December 14, 2017. Sister Carol Juckem was the composer and director of the program and Jeanine Bock directed the Band.

The message was a welcomed one as *Jesus' LIGHT shines in all hearts IF we let HIM shine*. The students carried little vigil lights and surrounded the aisles of church after their last song as a sign for all to "let their light shine" today and every day. Submitted by Sister Sharon Paul

## More Christmas Programs



The Holy Family Conservatory of Music harp ensemble performed at the Franciscan Center for Music Education and Performance on December 10, 2017 under the direction of Sister Marsaia Kaster.



The children at St. Peter Indian Mission, Bapchule, Arizona dramatized the nativity story according to the Gospel of Luke at their December 21, 2017 school Mass.

# A Christmas Celebration

The Sisters at the Motherhouse enjoyed a Christmas afternoon variety show planned by Sister Karen Suhr with Sisters volunteering to present in a choice of formats. "He Comes" by Sister Nathanael was read by Sisters Karen Suhr, Lois Ann Gosch, and Judanne Stratman from three different locations in the chapel. Sister Barbara Belinske (right) read a selection submitted by Sister Gratia Hosfeld.



Sister Virgine Van Thull played a flute solo of "Silent Night".



Sister Veronica Schad (above) and Sister Mary Frances Maher read "Papa Panov's Special Christmas" by Leo Tolstoy.



Sister Francis Mason has been teaching Spanish to the novices. Together, they sang a Spanish carol with Sister Theresa Feldkamp accompanying on the guitar.

Sister Cecilia Joy Kugel and Sister Marcus Steede performed "O Come Little Children" on violin.



Sister Marlene Schwaller brought the house down in laughter with her reading of a house wife's "The January Diet Resolution". (See p. 7)

Left to right: Sister Natalie Biversie, Sister Anne Marie Lom, Sister Myra Jean Sweigart, Sister Theresa Feldkamp, and Sister Adrianna Schouton sang "Happy Birthday, Jesus".



Left: Sister Colette Hoadley stops to reflect on the nativity scene in St. Mary Chapel.



Sister Mary Ann Tupy and Sister Francis Mason sang a German Hymn.

## Volunteering at Christmas Food Panty



*Sister Sue Ann Hall with a Religious Sister of Mercy helped at the food pantry.*

*St. Louis, Missouri*—On Friday, December 15 the Curia from the Archdiocese had an Advent day of recollection. However, instead of the usual speaker they went to St. Vin-

cent de Paul Parish in southeast St. Louis to help with the down town "shopping day." The "shoppers" were all registered and had been given a day and time in which they could come to shop. The room was set up similar to a grocery store. Along with two volunteers the shopper took a grocery cart picking up items. The volunteer had a list of how many items they could choose from each section according to the number of people in the family. At the end they received some meat products and then the Christmas items they had asked for all nicely wrapped. The people I was happy to

serve said "Thank You" with nearly each item they put in their cart.

After our time there we attended the noon parish Mass and returned to the Archdiocese for a pizza lunch. One of the Religious Sisters of Mercy gave a talk comparing the Old Testament Adam and Eve Story of rejecting God with Mary's "behold the handmaid of the Lord."

This was my first time working in a food pantry. All in all it was a most rewarding day surely one of insight and inspiration.

*Submitted by Sister Sue Ann Hall*

## Advent Giving Tree



*St. Louis, Missouri*—The Sisters at Our Lady of Guadalupe Convent Life House were gifted with three art pieces by a talented artist who is serving

prison time. These pieces hang in various rooms of their home.

The prisoner was asked to teach other prisoners art. The Sisters received a number of these little pieces—post cards and origami boxes with inspirational quotes, as well as the stars shown to the left. Sister Pat Sevcik and Sister Sue Ann Hall gave the little boxes to people at a diocesan function and asked them to pray for prisoners, the forgotten.

The giving tree stands in their foyer and people who stop to visit and pray in the chapel are invited to take a star and pray for the forgotten in prison.

## Francis and the Crèche

*Continued from p. 1*

and obtained the permission of the sovereign Pontiff. Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. The man of God [St. Francis] stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem."

Such was Francis' love for the crib, the cross, and the ciborium—the Incarnation, Redemption, and the Eucharist.

# JUST Gospel!

By Sister Kathleen Murphy  
Social Justice Commission

...Be with us, you who say, "Do not be afraid." Make us your own, now is the time. We begin this new year singing the words of Tom Kendzia's hymn. God consoles us and sends our fear away. Despite the happenings in our world, God remains the Creator, the Almighty one directing the proceedings of our universe. Now is always the time for God's work.

In our country and in our Community we are safe from fear in so many ways. Yet, countless others throughout the world do not enjoy the level of safety that we do. Pope Francis asks us to send our prayers once again to the people of Asia. His intention for this month is: *That Christians, and other religious minorities in Asian countries, may be able to practice their faith in full freedom.*



Image: John Ragai / Flickr

One has only to do an internet search regarding the Church in Asia to find such language as, *underground Church, risk their lives, hostile country, religious-governmental tensions, protests, rebels, ban on Christians, persecution, flight, embattled Christians.* This is an unfamiliar lexicon for us. It surely does, however, confirm the need for prayer in this part of the world. These Christian communities need to be assured of that phrase "Do not

be afraid." Our prayerful support can be that assurance.

Our further consideration of freedom from fear leads us back to the words of Father Federico Lombardi, former papal spokesman. He writes, "The presence of evil in the world is a terrible, pervasive and powerful reality. Yet, the power of evil in the world is the most difficult test for our faith: Where is God? Where is justice? The dynamics of communication generally give particular weight to the worst news, disasters, conflicts and scandals, and so the darkness of the evil grows thicker and thicker. Unfortunately these things are true, but they are not the whole truth. God is also at work in the world. You have to open your eyes to see it, your ears to learn how to hear it." We place our hope in and our prayer behind the goodness that lives in the faithful who labor for the Kingdom in Asia.

In terms of our own Community, we look to our Core Value statements and find, *We work at building community by being more sensitive to each other.* In our understanding and empathy toward one another, we build a stronger Community, a body of faith which entreats the God who does not know constraints of time and space. In our efforts to be sensitive to the needs and realities of each other, we also build up the Body of Christ which extends throughout the world. In our prayer, in our actions, in our efforts, let us remember that, *now is the time!*

## Sisters at SLC Volunteer Christmas Party

Silver Lake College hosted a Christmas Party for their volunteers on December 11, 2017. Among those attending were a number of the Sister volunteers.



Sister Ritarose Stahl and  
Sister Mary Gabriel Van Dreef



Sisters Lorna Zemke and Sister Rosita  
Bunge



Sister Margaret Ann Wallander and  
Sister Mary Edith Schimpf

Photos by Suzanne Weiss, SLC  
Director of Advancement and Communications/  
Public Relations

# Our Lady of Guadalupe Honored

Manitowoc, Wisconsin—Silver Lake College students and guests presented 400 roses to our Blessed Mother for her feast—Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The college is dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe and the image to the right hangs in a prominent place in the chapel vestibule.



Sisters Adrianna Schouten, Myra Jean Sweigart, and Natalie Binversie joined the students in the procession of roses.



# The January Diet Resolution

*This resolution appeared in a bulletin published by St. Paul Elder Services, Kaukauna, Wisconsin. It was read by Sister Marlene Schwaller at the Motherhouse Christmas social. Enjoy a good laugh.*

*T'was the month after Christmas and all  
through the house,  
Nothing would fit me not even a blouse.  
The cookies I'd nibbled, the eggnog I'd taste,  
At the holiday parties had gone to my waist.  
When I got on the scales, there arose such  
a number!  
When I walked to the store (less a walk  
than a lumber),  
I'd remember the marvelous meals I'd prepared.  
The gravies and sauces and beef nicely rared.  
The wine and the rum balls; the breads  
and the cheese,  
And the way I'd never said,  
"No thank you, please".  
As I dressed myself in my husband's old shirt  
And prepared once again to battle the dirt,  
I said to myself, as only I can,*



*"You can't spend a winter disguised as a man!"  
So, away with the last of the sour cream dip.  
Get rid of the fruitcake, every cracker and chip.  
Every last bit of food that I like must be banished,  
'Til all the additional ounces have vanished.  
I won't have a cookie - not even a lick.  
I'll only just chew on a long celery stick.  
I won't have hot biscuits, or cornbread, or pie,  
I'll munch on a carrot and quietly cry.*

# St. Gabriel Mercy Center Names New Executive Director



Mr. Myron Douglas, of Starkville, Mississippi, has been named the new Executive Director of St. Gabriel Mercy Center, Inc. in Mound Bayou, MS. St. Gabriel Mercy Center is a non-profit organization, which offers several programs at no cost to the citizens of Mound Bayou and the surrounding cities through grants and donations. Mr. Douglas replaces Sister Monica Mary DeQuardo, OSF, who began as the Executive Director in August, 2014. Mr. Douglas will be the first layperson to hold the position as Executive Director in the history of the school and the Center. Sister Monica Mary's last day was December 31, 2017 and Mr. Douglas will officially begin on January 2, 2018.

*-Trena L. Robinson, MBA, Director of Advancement and Communications/ Public Relations*

# Sisters Among Those Honored at SLC for Years of Service

*Manitowoc, Wisconsin*—Silver Lake College employees were honored for their years of service at the college's Christmas Party and Service Awards celebration on Dec. 18, 2017 at Knox's Silver Valley Banquet Hall.

**Sister Christine Stoller, associate professor of computer science and department chair, was honored for 25 years of service.**



Rick Balzan, adjunct faculty; Valerie Grissom, assistant professor of psychology and department chair; and Dr. Dionne Landgraf, associate pro-

fessor of art and art department co-chair, were honored for 20 years of service.

Dr. Brian Danzinger, adjunct faculty; **Sister Nancy Kinate, assistant professor of education and English;** and Dr. Albert Sears, professor of English, were honored for 15 years of service.



Jennifer Endries, adjunct faculty, and JoAnn Johnson, student account specialist, were honored for 10 years of service.

Jamie Grant, dean of enrollment

management; Robert Kieckhefer, adjunct faculty; and Dr. Diana Shapiro, assistant professor of music and undergraduate music department chair, were honored for five years of service.

*By Suzanne Weiss, SLC*

*Let us pray for the deceased*



SISTER JEAN HEPPLER  
October 4, 1924  
December 13, 2017