



FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

# CommuniGram

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## Franciscan Sisters Visit Immigrants in Mexico



*Sister Lorita Gaffney, Sister Mary Beth Korneley, and Sister Mary Teresa Bettag with immigrant children.*

For months major attention on the news focused on the immigrants traveling through Mexico towards the United States. Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity in Yuma wanted to reach out in whatever way we could.

An opportunity came through the help of Fr. Emilio Chapa, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Yuma. Instead of exchanging names for Christmas to buy a small gift for each other, we pooled that money, and those of us who had passports joined him on a trip across the border which he frequently makes into San Luis, Mexico, 45 minutes from Yuma. There we visited with immigrants in tents along the border wall. The children came out from under their tents and tarps to talk to us

and show us their little toys.

Parents with young children were willing to tell their story with those of us who knew the language. As we took in their beautiful smiles and hugs we slipped dollar bills quietly into the hands of the children.

Seeing their conditions first hand and realizing their long wait to be processed touched our hearts.



Our next stop was to a girl's orphanage run by a group of Sisters from Mexico. Their dedication and spirit was uplifting. The girls ranging from three to sixteen were in school at the time of our visit. They are from very poor families and stay at the orphanage during the week and go home on weekends. The tour showed a loving place totally supported by donations.

We were then treated to a tour of the sister church of St. Francis of Assisi in

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## Franciscan Sisters Go to Drug Court



*Judge Mark Rohr is pictured here with Sister Natalie Binversie and Sister Anne Marie Lom.*

*Manitowoc, Wisconsin*—Through a generous invitation from Kevin Crawford, former Mayor of Manitowoc and present member of the Board of Directors for Silver Lake College of the Holy Family, Sister Natalie Binversie and Sister Anne Marie Lom attended Manitowoc's Drug Court on Wednesday, February 20. Drug Court for Manitowoc County held its first session on August 17, 2017. (Reported in the Herald Times Reporter) Drug Court is an alternative to jail time.

Present at the weekly Court sessions are one or more judges, parole officers, participants in the program and concerned citizens. Each participant is called forth by the judge. The question, "Have you been clean and sober since our last meeting?" is posed. The participant responds, hopefully in the affirmative. Then the judge asks about how they are doing, what accomplishments they have made and if there is anything they need. They are finally asked, "What was the most fulfilling thing that happened this week?" Some responses were: "I went, for the first time, to my son's parent/teacher conference." "I got to spend some time with my child last weekend." Then the judge checks with the parole officers to see if all paper work is in order. If given the "all OK" statement, the judge awards one or more magnet smiley faces which the participant places after their name on a chart in the courtroom. Much applause is heard in the courtroom as each success is celebrated.

On February 20 a graduation from Drug Court was celebrated with applause and a big congratulatory cake. Participants graduate after successfully completing the five rigorous phases of their Drug Court journey, usually taking about 12 to 18 months. It should be noted that while a person may have used a wide variety of drugs, the common denominator among most participants is opioid addiction that may have started with legal use of the substance.

A moving discovery was how patient, compassionate and concerned the judge was and the extensive support system of agencies ready to assist the participants in the recovery process. Sister Anne Marie had the added bonus of seeing two of her former Roncalli students in positions of assisting the process of rehabilitation of convicted drug users. Sister Natalie got to visit with a man named Langston Hughes. Though this was not the famous black American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist, this Mr. Hughes was thrilled that Sister noticed his name badge and spoke with him about her Mississippi students memorizing some poems by the poet.

— Sister Anne Marie Lom

### Sister Sue Ann Hall and Sister Delores Vogt are featured in the YouTube video



The Archdiocese of St. Louis is sharing a video on our Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity who offer a welcoming presence to those working to end abortion. Archbishop Robert J. Carlson states that "This Convent is a powerful witness, directly across the street from the city's abortion clinic in the Central West End in the city of St. Louis."

## Visit to Mexico (Continued from page 1)

San Juan by the same name. Parishioners have come over and provided help in making it possible to get basic needs for a larger church, such as a roof, floor (they kept talking about how it was a dirt floor before), lights, and air conditioning to start with. They are a blessing to each other and are very proud of all that has been accomplished so far.



Continuing our drive we saw an area where homes are made of cardboard or from whatever materials can be found. With it being near the dump, debris is everywhere, especially on an extremely windy day as this day was. Gratitude for our many blessings prevailed.

Coming home gave us an appreciation of those who have to cross the border every day, including many of our students. The wait to cross the border through San Juan would have been at least two hours, so a drive to Algodones was only an hour and a half wait and then just ten minutes from Yuma.

We are truly grateful to experience this special day.

— Sister Mary Beth Korneby

## Sister Facilitates Faculty In-service



*Sister Rochelle is enjoying the moment with teachers.*

*McCook, Nebraska*—On February 1, 2019, as the culmination of Catholic Schools Week, St. Patrick's Elementary School provided a morning In-Service for their teachers, staff, and parish priests. Sister Rochelle Kerkhof was the facilitator for the event which began with Mass at 8:00 a.m. and concluded with a Mexican meal at noon.

Focused on the Cognitive Distortions of Thought, 'mind reading' is

## Sisters Share Our 150th



*Greenwood, Mississippi*—In order to share the 150th anniversary of our Community founding with our St. Francis Parish family, we decided to host an open house. Wanting to include our school families as well, the opening of Catholic Schools Week made a perfect time for our event. We printed off many of Sister Caritas' archival pages from our Community Facebook page and displayed them on the cupboard doors for our guests to enjoy

We have also been sharing the blessings of our founding through weekly articles printed in our parish bulletin. The first in the series offered a brief history of our Community and its roots. This will be followed by pictures and recollections of and about all the Sisters who have ministered here over the years. —Sister Annette Kurey



being demonstrated by two teachers in the above photo. The teachers were very responsive and engaged which made the morning go swiftly with joyful frolic and bonding.

— Sister Rochelle Kerkhof

## Formation Weekend



We often receive the Blood of Christ. Yet, how often do we take the cup and truly see Jesus? Do we think about ourselves and others reflected in the precious metal? These were questions we pondered during our Formation Weekend, February 15-17, with Fr. Jim Baraniak, O.Praem. The weekend was centered on the Eucharist and allowed us to ponder how we are broken and shared for others. Fr. Jim had many positive words to share about our Community and his incorpo-



ration of our charisms was inspiring. We are all blessed to have been called to the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. While there was time for learning and prayer, we were also able to make memories playing hockey, Catchphrase, and even having a sleepover complete with snacks and homemade guacamole. This weekend was truly a time of community and praising God for the gift of how He is reflected in each one of us.

— Sister Cecilia Joy Kugel

## Tucson Diocese Honors Jubilarians

The Tucson Diocese Bishop Edward Weisenburger celebrated the World Day of Consecrated Life through a beautiful Jubilee Mass and dinner for the Religious men and women of the diocese!



*Among those celebrating 55 and 50 years of faithfully living their vows are Sister Leonette Kochan and Sister Mary Beth Kornely!*



*The Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity from Yuma, Sierra Vista and Tucson enjoyed the beauty of the day together with many of the other Sisters, Brothers and Priests serving in the Tucson Diocese!*

Lent offers us a chance to remember how privileged we are to openly renew the traditions of our faith. Not all Christians in the world will be able to proclaim this holy season, to gather to pray the Stations of the Cross or to have special Lenten services. It is easy for us to overlook the reality of persecution in our modern world. Pope Francis calls us to pray, “that Christian communities, especially those who are persecuted, feel that they are close to Christ and have their rights respected.”

He doesn't ask that they necessarily be delivered from this injustice, but that they identify their suffering with that of Jesus and that perhaps their Christian approach to persecution will bring about a greater respect. Before we can truly pray about this intention, perhaps we need to be more informed about it. We have only to look at the mainstream news sources to find information. The following was reported by *Newsweek* in January of 2018.

The persecution and genocide of Christians across the world is worse today “than at any time in history,” and Western governments are failing to stop it, a report from a Catholic organization said.

A study by Aid to the Church in Need said the treatment of Christians has worsened substantially in the past two years compared with the two years prior, and has grown more violent than any other period in modern times.

“Not only are Christians more persecuted than any other faith group, but ever-increasing numbers are experiencing the very worst forms of persecution,” the report said.

The research showed that Christians suffered crimes against humanity, and some were hanged or crucified. The report found that Saudi Arabia was the only country where the situation for Christians did not get worse, and that was only because the situation couldn't get any worse than it already was. It detailed attacks against Coptic Christians in Egypt and monasteries burned in Syria. In Africa, the report focused on countries like Sudan, where the government or-

dered that churches be destroyed, and Nigeria, where there has been a surge in attacks on Christians. In Eritrea, hundreds of Christians have been rounded up and imprisoned over the past year because of their faith. The report also documented numerous case studies in which Christians in countries such as India and Nigeria were murdered or beaten for practicing their faith.

Also in January of 2018, *America* magazine reported the top 10 countries where Christians face the most persecution:

- North Korea — Christians and Christian missionaries are routinely imprisoned in labor camps.
- Afghanistan — The government of this Muslim country does not recognize any of its citizens as Christian.
- Somalia — The Catholic bishop of Mogadishu has described it as “not possible” to be a Christian in Somalia.
- Sudan — The Muslim government has slated Christian churches for demolition.
- Pakistan — Christians and other non-Muslims sit on death row, facing charges of blasphemy.
- Eritrea — Only four religions are officially recognized (Sunni Islam and the Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran churches). Those belonging to other faiths are persecuted and those of recognized faiths are routinely harassed by the government.
- Libya — The government is reportedly training militants to attack Coptic Christians.
- Iraq — Iraqi Christians have yet to return to their homelands after expulsion by ISIS.
- Yemen — The ongoing political and humanitarian crisis has further squeezed Christians and other religious minorities, who already faced severe restrictions on practicing their faiths.
- Iran — Religious minorities, including Christians, face “systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom,” according to the U.S. State Department.

Just below the top 10 is India, where rising Hindu

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## Parent and Kids Loved It.



How does one pass along etiquette in today's world? Some parents had an idea. Sister Carol Seidl comments on a recent extracurricular school activity that parents at St. Anthony of Padua School, Casa Grande, Arizona, planned with enthusiasm. Life has been super busy! Here I am with the school committee that put on a Father-Daughter dance and the following Friday Mother-Son dance. I encourage other schools to do the same.



### Just Gospel *Continued from page 5.*

nationalism has increased persecution of other religious groups.

*Gaudete et Exsultate* takes note of Pope Francis' esteem for those persecuted. He writes, "Saint John Paul II reminded us that 'the witness to Christ borne even to the shedding of blood has become a common inheritance of Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants.'" He goes on to say, "The martyrs are a heritage which speaks more powerfully than all the causes of division."

We can join in the faithfulness of those persecuted who live the Christian challenge to practice meekness. The document tells us, "We live in a world that from the beginning has been a place of conflict, disputes and enmity on all sides, where we constantly pigeonhole others on the basis of their ideas, their customs and even their way of speaking or dressing. Ultimately it is the reign of pride and vanity, where each person thinks he or she has the right to dominate others. Jesus proposes a different way of doing things: the way of meekness. Even when we defend our faith and convictions, we are to do so with meekness. Our enemies too are to be treated with meekness. The meek shall inherit the earth, for they will see God's promises accomplished in their lives.

When we feel "persecuted" by the words, actions, or judgements of others, let us count ourselves among the company of the meek. Let us offer our little daily persecutions that those who are violently persecuted in the world may have the strength to be meek.

### NaProEthics in Florida



From February 8th through the 10th, I had the privilege of addressing physician-members of the Florida chapter of the Catholic Medical Association who held their annual educational conference in Venice, Florida. My lecture critiqued the ethics surrounding the latest assisted reproductive technology variation of in vitro fertilization called the INVO procedure (I've also published an article on INVO in the Catholic World Report [<https://www.catholicworldreport.com/?s=The+INVO+procedure>] in case you'd like to read about this procedure). I'm happy to report my analysis was well received and prompted a very robust Q&A session following the presentation. Since this is my fourth time lecturing at the annual Florida CMA conference, the board members pictured here asked me to be an honorary member and to pose as part of their photo shown here. It is such a blessing to spend time with these committed Catholic physicians.

— Sister Renée Mirkes

## Cultural Experience: Vietnamese New Year (Tet)



On Sunday, February 10, the international Sister students, living at the Motherhouse, furnished us with the opportunity to share in a Lunar New Year celebration by providing a party complete with Vietnamese food, magic tricks by Sister Mary John, O.P., games, and dances. Sister Mary Theresa, O.P. was the MC and shared bits of cultural information to introduce each event.



## February 22 in Tucson and Greenwood



On Feb. 22, 2019, the Sisters at San Xavier Mission sat at the table and just watched fat snowflakes come down! Most of us were already off from school for Rodeo break, so could leisurely sit and enjoy the beauty of the snow. Of course being from Michigan and

Wisconsin, it was fun and amazing to see snow as it gracefully fell. It snowed all morning and actually stayed on the ground. Sister Ellen Pachmayer, who is from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, says, "This is my kind of snow, enjoy the beauty of it, praise God for it and then watch it disappear within a day! We had the better of two seasons in one day!"

Our Tucson daily paper even compared it to Michigan!

— Sister Ellen Pachmayer

On the same day in Greenwood, Mississippi the Sisters posted: Here are flooding pictures after 7 1/2 inches of rain Note the tops



of the park benches. Playground is covered. Back porch is now up to the second step. Sand bags are supposed to be coming.

We are doing well though school was dismissed at 12:30. This is the highest we've seen the water here.

## News Bits



*Joe Cerney and Sister Jan Villemure*

*Cambridge, Ohio—*  
The Sisters from St. Benedict's Convent went to Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio and attended the 10:30 Mass on Sunday, February 3.

After the Mass they mingled with the students and had lunch in the College Pub where Joe Cerney—a Roncalli High School graduate—recognized them as Franciscans from Manitowoc.

They left literature on our retreats and discernment days with the chaplain's office. The Lord works in many ways!

*— Sister Sharon Paul*

*Check out the face on this parked car at the Motherhouse someone had fun making it and many others had a good laugh sharing the creation with anyone around.*



*The Sisters at the Motherhouse enjoyed the annual formal Spaghetti Supper prepared and served by Chef Tom and the kitchen staff on February 21<sup>st</sup>.*