

# Communigram

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY



On November 7<sup>th</sup>, the Sisters at the Motherhouse awoke to see this sign on the lawn in Sacred Heart court. The night before members of our Sponsored Ministries office

quietly moved in the sign and the huge flower pot with its enormous blossoms. It put a smile on everyone's face amidst our being quarantined because of Covid cases.

## Videographer becomes a CNA

*Invited to share her story, Sister Cecilia Joy Kugel writes from Kaukauna, Wisconsin—* Videographer becomes a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) ... say whaaaaat? But that is exactly what happened, and all because of a pandemic. In the beginning of COVID-19, video projects came to a halt and my days became filled with entertaining residents in the manor at St. Paul's. I would lead songs and other activities, but my eyes began to shift to what the CNA's were doing. I admired the work they did and the time they were able to spend with the residents. Unlike me, who spent most of my day behind a computer up until that point. The residents were really touching my heart, and I truly felt God nudging me to a "call within a call." It was a Mother Teresa moment. Putting my anxiety aside, I asked the administration if I could take a CNA course



offered through St. Paul Elder Services and they said yes! I enrolled in the course offered from May-mid June and then had some training days on the floor before I could fly solo. All of this happened just in time for our first major outbreak in August. Thirty-eight residents and thirty-five staff were infected with the virus at St. Paul Home, and I was in the midst of it, praying to God, "please help me put on a brief right the first time." Since then, we have had another major outbreak, I have learned the ways of the N95 mask, and residents melt their way into my heart only to be taken to Heaven's door. I am grateful that, as a novice, I was able to sit with our Sisters who were dying. This trained me to be comfortable with death and to view it as a new life with Jesus. I am grateful for the gift to be a CNA, while also working on media projects here and there. You never know where religious life is going to take you!



## News from the Novitiate - The Exciting Times of Recreation!!

Life has been different in the Novitiate during Covid 19, yet Sister Kathleen, as our fearless leader, hasn't abandon us to boredom and solitude. Although meeting in groups is no longer possible for recreation, still Sister Kathleen, through her ingenious ideas has opened the world of Zoom meetings as online entertainment for the Novices.

For example, last Sunday Sister Kathleen invited Sister Concepcion to join a Zoom meeting with the novices, Sister Maria Guadalupe and Sister Mary Jane. Unbeknownst to the Formation group what lay in store for them, they logged in dutifully. The evening started out with Sister Kathleen sending out a list of 12 scavenger items for the formation group members to gather from the room they were in. These items included something red, something old, something shiny, a piece of artwork, etc. When each person was satisfied they had fulfilled this task, then the reason for these items became clear. Sister Kathleen had organized a spinning wheel where there were three options; a soap opera, newscast, and a children's TV show. With the spin of a wheel, Sister Maria Guadalupe had the soap opera, Sister Mary Jane the newscast, and last but not least, Sister Concepcion had the category of a children's TV show. The purpose of this was that each person had to incorporate their scavenger hunt items in the format they were given.



Sister Maria Guadalupe kicked off the evening with a soap opera. It began innocently as a teacher who, after reading a story to the class, sent them out for recess. The audience soon learned though that this teacher had a secret. Her boyfriend was coming and she

had made the choice to enter the convent. Now the drama began with her having to reveal her choice to her boyfriend. It was very well done and dramatic!!



Sister Mary Jane began her newscast as a bumbling reporter from Fox News who was reporting the breaking story of the disappearance of a young woman who happened to be a famous Miss U.P. contestant. Was it a kidnapping or murder?

Nobody knows. The audience seemed to give the impression that the report made them feel scared.

Sister Concepcion finished the evening fun with her take on Sesame Street. She used her items to give an amusing lesson of short, "good to know" information bytes. For instance, (talking to children) "If you ever break an object, just turn and run the other way," or "Whenever someone shows you a painting, be polite and make a positive comment even if you don't like the painting." It was extremely funny and at the end she sang a lovely tune about how to play on the playground. Overall the evening was filled with laughter and it was one to remember.



—Sister Mary Jane

### Life at the White House

Sister Sue Ann Hall and Sister Delores Vogt enjoyed an unexpected stay (Nov. 2 - Nov 8) at the White House Jesuit Retreat Center in St. Louis, MO. The Respect



Life leader and others at the Archdiocese highly encouraged us to leave Our Lady of Guadalupe Convent because of the possibility of demonstrations and violence near the election.

What a perfect time to be there with many colorful leaves and flowers as well as sunshine and temperatures in the seventies all week. The eighty-acre campus on the bluffs of the Mississippi River provide outdoor stations of the cross, numerous shrines and statues. The cement paths offered easy walking with swings and benches provided for prayer and reflection.

We are grateful to the Archdiocese for providing this opportunity for prayer for our nation, community, families and an end to abortion and the coronavirus. The week was God's gift.

—Sister Delores Vogt

## Baptismal Consecration: The Life of Love

We leave the liturgical season of Advent, a season of hope, to embrace the season of Christmas, a season of love. With the appearance of the Incarnate Jesus, humanity (saved in hope), looks up to behold the dawning of the Father's love within our travailed time and space. This Christmas, how might we reflect anew on the love within which our Baptismal consecration has inserted us?

Let's begin with a story. Recently a Catholic friend of mine, who is an accomplished journalist, was invited to Princeton to lead a conversation with women attending their theological seminary. As she mulled over the invitation and what she might say to these women, she realized that both she (as a journalist) and these women (as students of a theological seminary) share a commitment to creating experiences that both reflect and welcome the lived experiences of women within society and within Christianity. My friend then began to think about the invitation extended her "in the key of her Baptism;" that is, she permitted the living faith of her Baptism to permeate her thoughts about this invitation, and she began to wonder about this invitation in the key of her relationship with the Lord Jesus. It was then that something amazing happened: "This is the Incarnation.," she said. "Jesus is the model for this. He inherently understands that to build and serve community, they must see themselves in you. And so he becomes man. He lives the experience so that we can see ourselves in Him." Out of a desire to be united with us (i.e. out of an abundance of love for us), Jesus came *in the flesh* so that we might see ourselves in Him; and seeing ourselves in Him, we might invite Him into our lives so that we might *experience* the Father's unending love for us.

Our Christmas devotion to the Baby Jesus often focuses on Jesus' helplessness. The poor, helpless Baby Jesus tugs at our hearts. We are moved to care for this helpless child and to offer him gifts in recognition of (*recompense for?*) his becoming so small, so powerless. We resolve, yet again, to live a life of devoted love. "Jesus you are weak and in need of love. I will show you my love. I will pray more, I will be kinder to the people around me, I will go to Mass more, I will say my Rosary more . . ." and on and on.

Sometimes our Christmas devotion to the Baby Jesus moves us to express sorrow to Jesus for his "needing" to become so helpless in order for us to renew our love and devotion. Our prayer might sound something like "Lord Jesus, would that I could have decided to live a devoted life without you needing to have gone to such an extreme to get my attention." And

then, we leave church, largely unchanged. Deep down, we all know that the life of love is not about our emotions. We all know that even our most devoted emotions disappear in a flash, leaving nothing indelible behind.

What's going on here? Why, at Christmas time, are our lives not changed by the poverty of Jesus' Incarnation?

When we ask the Holy Spirit to shed light on our devoted resolutions, we discover that each one comes from a place of "wealth" and "strength." We perceive ourselves as *capable* of loving Jesus by doing x or y, and so we decide that *we will do x or y*. From our place of strength, we *feel sorry* for Jesus' poverty; we view his poverty as a scandal for us to remedy with our devotion. And, with that, we realize that our perception of Jesus' poverty as a scandal is the opposite side of our self-perception as strong and capable. However, when we perceive ourselves as strong and capable, we become *incapable* of seeing ourselves in Jesus; we become incapable of experiencing the Father's life and love made present *precisely in His poverty*.

Jesus became *poor, helpless, death-bound flesh* because *we are poor, helpless and death-bound*. With all of the strength, talent, virtue, devotion, money and power we might have at our disposal, *we remain poverty*, for we cannot give ourselves life; nor can we *give ourselves love*, nor can we *earn* love.

Out of love for all of humanity (indeed all of creation), the Father sent His Son *in the flesh* so that, seeing ourselves in Him, we might experience His love which is beyond all telling. The life of love into which a Christian is Baptized does not consist of a series of actions, performed throughout our lives, by which we prove our love for God. Rather, as the writer of 1 John proclaims:

*"In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins."* 1 Jn 4. 9-10

This Christmas, can we permit the Father to soak us in this love? Can we believe in this love enough to *see ourselves* in Jesus's poverty? Instead of telling the Baby Jesus all we are going to do to for Him, can we tell him, in great detail, all about our poverty? For when we pour out the poverty of our hearts to the Lord Jesus, we make space in our hearts to hear Him tell us *all that He desires to do IN and FOR us!!* We permit Jesus Himself to say to us, with all His heart, "Merry Christmas, my most beloved one."

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This is the month to celebrate Advent and Christmas—the anticipation and welcoming of our God who is like us, who is human. So, Pope Francis asks us to pray: *That our personal relationship with Jesus Christ is nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.*

This intention seems to have little to do with justice issues. Yet, if we look at *Open Wide Our Hearts*, the pastoral letter on racism, we find these words of Pope Benedict XVI, “As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. It is not by isolation that man establishes his worth, but by placing himself in relation with others and with God.” So, in nurturing a personal relationship with God, we effect our relationships with our brothers and sisters. We color those encounters with the love that God plants in us through time spent in prayer. Toward this end, let us consider how we might strengthen our relationship with God by the two practices of being nourished by the Word of God and by living a life of prayer. This will unfold as a “Tale of Two Tales”!

The first story is of a little girl who was tired and wanted to eat. Grabbing her fork and ready to attack, she was halted by her father reminding her of the need to pray. Letting the fork clank down on her plate she whined, “Every time it’s ‘give us this day our daily bread’. Why can’t we just ask for our weekly bread on Sunday and be done with it?” Before her father could even respond, her brother quipped, “Well, you don’t want stale bread by Wednesday, do you?”

Our daily bread comes to us in the form of God’s holy Word. Daily we need to break open that Word and truly savor it. Charles Stanley, Baptist Minister says it well: “Since God knows our future, our personalities, and our capacity to listen, He isn’t ever going to say more to us than we can deal with at the moment.” The beauty of God’s Word is infinite, but He serves it to us in daily portions. Of course, like any food, it is of no nourishment if it is not consumed. We are called to learn not just about God, but to learn God, to know Him more and more fully. This is how we grow a relationship with Him and this is how we are led in the path of justice that leads to freedom for all God’s children. We don’t want to base our lives and our minis-



Google images / Light of the Incarnation, Carl Gustav Carls

tries on “stale bread” that we dined on at a retreat or last Sunday, or even yesterday. Ours is the fragrant fresh bread of a God who feeds and favors us, His beloved. The loaf of the Word awaits our breaking just as our own hunger awaits his food.

The second story is of four-year-old Melinda. Her favorite story was “The Three Little Pigs” which she asked her dad to read every single night before bed. He gladly obliged, but after several months, he got a bright idea. He found the story on YouTube, made a CD of it and told her to simply press “play” before jumping under the covers. She was not happy.

“But, honey,” he told her, “you can still hear it.”

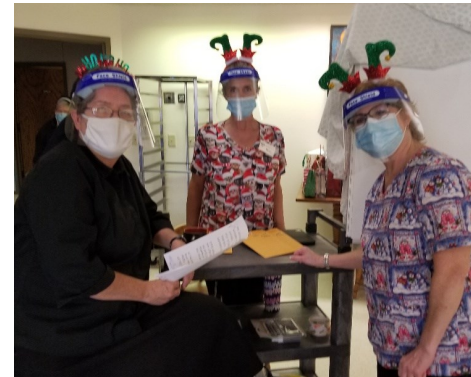
“Yes,” she replied, “but I can’t sit in its lap.”

This story relates to Pope Francis’ second practice aimed at growing in relationship with God. This is the practice of prayer. Melinda required more than just the script of a story in her ears. She needed the feel of a father to accompany the joy of the story. Just so, if we are to be in relationship to our God, we need more than just a text to read. We need to sit in our Father’s lap. We need to spend time just being with Him and absorbing His presence. This is relationship-nurturing prayer. The Jesus whose birth we celebrate came to live in a body like ours. He came to use His life to build a relationship with the Father from whom He came. He knows the drill. He knows that some days it takes work and perseverance to build those bonds. He is the story we share with the Father as we sit in His lap.



## Saint Francis Convent Christmas Party by the Staff

On November 17th, the staff at Saint Francis Convent, under the direction of Donna Ney, organized and conducted an early Christmas Party for the Sisters. Each staff member contributed items to be used as gifts for the Sisters. We played WIN, LOOSE OR DRAW.



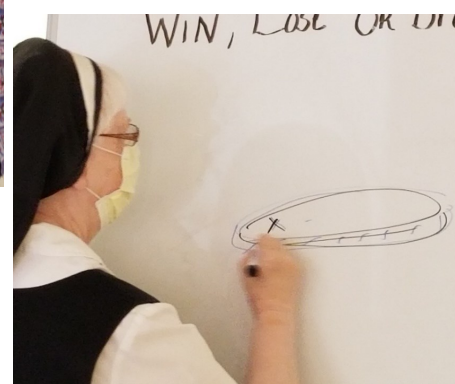
*Sister Caritas Marie Le Claire, Becky Jerale, and Donna Ney were the hostesses for the party.*

Sister Caritas Marie helped select the words and prepare the cards each Sister was shown. Becky brought her computer to help time the team's efforts.

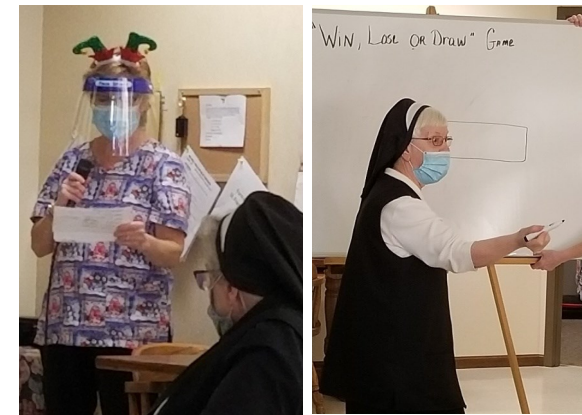
The Sisters were divided into two teams. One Sister from each team would come to the white board, Sister Caritas Marie would show them the word and then the Sister had one minute to draw the word while her team tried to guess it.

There was plenty of laughter as each Sister faced the artistic challenge of drawing a picture her team would recognize.

*—Sister Mary Ann Tupy*



*Sister Emy Beth Furrer doing her best to illustrate the word she had been given.*



*Sister Helena Young listened intently as Donna explained the rules of the game. Sister Rita Mae Suhr was excited that her team guessed the right word.*



*Sisters Mary Lou Loonsfoot, Juden Lang, and Mary Gabriel Van Dreef with their wonderful gifts.*



*Sister Anne Turba took advantage of the beautiful warm Saturday, November 7, to decorate the urns in front of the Motherhouse and these on the south porch for the holidays.*

Chassell, Michigan—Deer season opened on Sunday Nov. 15th in Michigan. Sister Marcelyn Gervais got her deer by completing a challenging BUCK puzzle on that very day! It was only 550 pieces, however, all of them were the same shape except for the pieces along the outer edge. She "hunted" for the correct pieces until she found them. Often, she was "puzzled" as she worked, but she succeeded without help from anyone. She was patient and persevered. Now she's hunting for some easier puzzles to put together!



*Sister Marcelyn with her buck!*



## Books Published



When asked in May 2019 how she would spend her time in the absence of full-time teaching, Sister Marie Kolbe Zamora would often respond “there are at least three books that need to get off my shelf.” By this, she meant that there

were books that needed to be published. Two of those three have indeed been completed and were published in the Fall of 2020. *Ecclesiological Elements in the Theology of St. Bonaventure* (published by Gregorian Biblical Press, Rome) offers a study of Bonaventure’s ecclesiology or vision of the Church. *Saint Bonaventure: Friar, Teacher, Minister, Bishop* (published by the Franciscan Institute, New York), of which she is co-editor (with Timothy Johnson and Katherine Wisley-Shelby) is a collection of essays that were delivered at an international conference held at St. Bonaventure University in July 2017. Both books have been catalogued in our own Franciscan library at Holy Family Convent. Sister Marie Kolbe remains grateful for the time and the space afforded her to do this work: “Thanks be to God, to our General Administration, and to all of the FSCC who, in one way or another, have contributed to the completion of this work.”

## St. Corona, pray for us!

The Novitiate Community has been lighting this candle whenever they pray together. Included in our prayer are petitions for those suffering from the Corona Virus, their families and caretakers and researchers working for a cure. Sr. Mary Frances, who is on our Novitiate Team, received this candle as a gift and passed it on to us to burn. But who is St. Corona? The picture surely seems to show the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A little research led us to *The Catholic Sun* website where we found the following information as contributed by Renée K. Gadoua.

*Some Catholics seeking spiritual solace during the coronavirus pandemic are turning to the 2nd century St. Corona (d. C. 170) as patron saint of plagues and epidemics.*



*St. Corona and St. Victor, a soldier who may have been her husband, were tortured and killed around 170 at the order of a Roman judge, according to an account that dates to the 4th century.*

*Their feast day is May 14, according to the Roman Martyrology, the Catholic Church’s official list of recognized saints and people who have been beatified.*

*As Corona was dying, she “saw two crowns falling from Heaven, one for Victor, the other for herself,” the martyrology says.*

*Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Corona means “crown” in Latin.*

*While several Catholic publications in recent days have connected St. Corona to the coronavirus outbreak, sources including Catholic Online identify her as patron saint*

*of gambling.*

*It’s unclear when people began associating St. Corona with plagues, given limited first-hand records of early saints. Sts. Victor and Corona were recognized as saints before the Catholic Church standardized its canonization process in the 10th century.*

*But St. Corona’s name, the reference to crowns in the martyrology, and accounts of her suffering seem to provide reasonable justification to call on her intercession during today’s unprecedented global health crisis.*

*On a Franciscan note, Gadoua tells us, “And don’t forget St. Marianne Cope (1838-1918), the Franciscan leader who was canonized in 2012, the 11th American named a Catholic saint. The patron saint of outcasts, she ministered to people with leprosy from 1883 to 1918 in Hawaii. Her constant mandate to patients and caregivers: “Wash your hands.”*

*—Sister Kathleen Murphy*

## God's Plan for Our Lady of Guadalupe Convent

Our Lady of Guadalupe Convent in St. Louis has an interesting five-year history. Sister Sue Ann and Sister Delores were reminded of this on Friday, Nov 13, 2020 when Mary Elizabeth Colman stopped at the convent on the fifth anniversary of the first Mass in the house. Mary Elizabeth, her husband, and three other couples were present for the Mass. These four couples purchased the three-story red brick house next to Planned Parenthood at 4311 Forest Park Ave.



*Sister Delores and Sister Sue Ann outside their convent in St. Louis.*

Here are a few interesting events during the five years:

- ◆ In 2015, there were 7,474 abortions at Planned Parenthood.
- ◆ In 2020, there are fewer than 50 abortions so far.
- ◆ Four couples purchased the house and the closing took place in 2015.
- ◆ The first Mass in the house was offered on Nov. 13, 2015 by Rev. Chris Seiler.
- ◆ An exorcism was performed in the house on Nov. 2, 2015.

The house was sold to the archdiocese under the leadership of Archbishop Robert Carlson who wanted a convent with the Blessed Sacrament next to Planned Parenthood.

Sister Natalie and her Council said YES to Archbishop Carlson to take on this new mission. Archbishop Carlson was supportive and said, "I am pledging my commitment under the care of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian that will offer a welcoming presence to those working to end abortion."

After the archdiocese made major renovations to make the house a convent with a hospitality area, Sister Sue Ann Hall and Sister Patricia Sevcik moved into Our Lady of Guadalupe Convent on August 28, 2017 to offer prayer and

hospitality to end abortion in St. Louis.

The dedication of the convent took place on September 29, 2017 at the eight-thirty Mass with Archbishop Robert Carlson as the main celebrant joined by other priests and invited guests. A reception followed.

Sister Delores Vogt joined Sister Sue Ann Hall in July 2018 to continue the mission of prayer and hospitality to end abortion in St. Louis.

*—Sister Delores Vogt*

## News from the Sisters in Imperial, Nebraska



*The eight Junior CYO students from St. Mary in Wallace, Nebraska are learning the Mysteries of the Rosary and how to pray the Rosary! This is a great way of teaching "unchurched" students about the events of Jesus and Mary's life in chronological order.*

*Trenton, Nebraska - St. James Parish's 11 CYO members range between Gr.7 and 12; boys outnumbering girls. This season's topic is the Catholic Social Teachings of our Faith. During October, each student was given a real pumpkin and an envelope of cut outs that had specific connections to this topic. Students were challenged to glue papers onto their pumpkins and explain what they have to do with our topic.*

*After many weeks of working individually with students from St. Patrick's Parish in Imperial, circumstances affected by the Covid 19 have been overcome!! **Sister Michael Ann's First Holy Communion group photo taken on Oct. 30!** Smiling faces tell the story of joy and happiness! Parents, Sister, Fr. Gilde and students are surely to be Congratulated.*

*—Sister Rochelle Kerkof*



## News from Tucson: **THE FRUIT** of our Garden



*L. to r: Sisters Mary Karen Oudeans, Rosalyn Muraski, Clare Rose Oswald, and Sister Carla Riach enjoy the ceremonial cutting of the one tomato!*

This spring we Sisters were blessed with a raised garden and enjoyed planting radishes, lettuce, spinach, tomatoes and basil. We faithfully watered it twice a day through the hot summer

until sadly the birds and squirrels ate most of it. Sister Carla saved one tomato plant and put it next to the Lupine in the patio with a wire cage around it. After faithfully watering it every day a little tomato started to grow. The plant completely dried up and the tomato finally turned red. A freeze was predicted for October 26<sup>th</sup> and the tomato was picked. It is **THE FRUIT** of our efforts. It was ceremoniously cut and shared by all the Sisters on October 27<sup>th</sup>. It was a bit green inside but tasted good.

A little fun in the midst of the pandemic. —*Sister Carla Riach*



*O blessed eyes that saw Him come at last,  
The Promised One.*

*O happy arms that held enfolded fast,  
The Eternal Son.*

*O heart that stored the memories of  
that night, so sweet, so stern—*

*Teach me to ponder Bethlehem aright,  
to look and learn.*

*Mother Generose - FSCC Christmas Novena*

# MERRY CHRISTMAS!