

Communigram

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY



St. Mary Chapel, Holy Family Convent, decorated for Christmas.

Ready to Open – A Digital Library for Greenwood, Mississippi

Exciting news! After months of preparation our team is ready to send an electronic link to Greenwood, Mississippi. The link houses PDF documents with corresponding video demonstrations of mathematics and English Language Arts instructional strategies. It's the beginning of a digital library!

How did this project originate? In my role as an Educational Consultant for our Community, one of the first contacts with school leaders I had in August was with Jackie Lewis, the principal of St. Francis School in Greenwood, Mississippi. In response to her interest in Servant Leadership I developed an inventory she and her staff could use for professional development.

In late September Jackie requested support for her teachers regarding math and reading strategies for grades 1-6. Recognizing the experience and expertise of our Sisters, I invited the Sisters at the Motherhouse to join me in assisting Jackie. Their involvement required a willingness to model math or reading strategies using a



Sisters working on the Greenwood project l to r: Sisters Christine Stoller, Elena Gonzales, Kathleen Murphy, Karen Suhr, and Marcolette Madden.

digital platform such as ZOOM. Sisters Elena Gonzales, Sister Kathleen Murphy, and Sister Karen Suhr volunteered. I invited Sister Christine Stoller to be our Technology Coordinator.

Our team designed a lesson plan based on the Catholic Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, Curriculum Guidelines. We identified standards, objectives, assessment tools, and engagement strategies. So far, the modeling of math strategies includes Sister Elena's multi-step word problems, Sister Karen's

construction of a pictorial graph, and my plan on estimation. Sister Kathleen's List-Group-Label plan addresses English Language Arts.

After each of us developed our plan, we then had the option of modeling the strategy through the videotaping of the presentation or the recording of the presentation using Screencast-O-Matic. Sister Christine coordinated the technology aspect.

We have just begun! Our plan is to continue building the digital library. Please stay tuned!

—Sister Marcolette Madden

Christmas Celebrations



Left: Sister Natalie Binversie placed the infant in the crib before the Christmas Eve Mass. Center: Sisters met in the front lobby after the Christmas Eve Mass. They formed a procession: Singing as the first year novice, Sister Mary Jane carried the statue of the Infant Jesus to the crib in the Lourdes grotto. (Right)



Left: Fr. Placid celebrated Christmas Eve Mass at St. Francis Convent. Above: The Chapel decorations at St. Francis Convent.



Christmas morning Mass was celebrated in St. Francis chapel at 10 a.m. for the Motherhouse Sisters. The Sisters in St. Rita Health Center attended either the 9 a.m. Mass or the 10:30 a.m. Mass held in St. Mary chapel to ensure social distancing.

Motherhouse Sisters Decorate Christmas Cookies



Sister Maria Guadalupe Martinez

Sister Florita Schneider

Sister Christine Stoller

Sister Dorothy Wagner

Sister Carol Seidl shows us her tree.

Sister Theresa Feldkamp

Sister Winifred Crevier

Sister Annette Kurey

Give, Pray, Save

St. Louis, Missouri—On December 15, Sister Sue Ann Hall and Sister Delores Vogt responded to the request to fold, stuff, and seal 8,000 envelopes to support efforts to save unborn lives. All volunteers were socially distanced at the Coalition Office. The three words, **Give, Pray, Save** appeared with three infant pictures on the front page of an appeal sent out by the Coalition for Life to pro-life friends in Missouri and Illinois. Some of the money donated in the past helped fund ultra sounds, counseling services, financial help for family needs and open a Pro-Life Community Center in Fairview



Heights, Illinois. The Center is very close to the Planned Parenthood whose initial goal was 1,100 abortions a year. The Community Center has a prayer room with windows facing Planned Parenthood offering peace and prayer to end abortion.



The enclosures being sent out promote the mission of **ending abortion in the St. Louis region . . . peacefully and prayerfully** and thanking pro-life friends in Missouri and Illinois for promoting the life of the unborn.

—Sister Delores Vogt

St. Francis Students Light Up the World



Yuma, Arizona—Advent is a time, just like birthdays, when lighting candles is a tradition. The Advent wreath is not complete without the ritual of lighting the appropriate number of tapers. Sister Mary Beth Kornely was inspired in another way when reflecting on light during this season.

She created a bulletin board that would take this idea and modernize it. Rather than candles, she thought of light bulbs. Rather than lighting just any light bulbs, how about Christmas lights? St. Francis of Assisi School students were invited to light up the board with their acts of kindness written on light bulb cut outs. Many little light bulbs being added to the scene each day.

St. Francis of Assisi School faculty felt the need to create an uplifting community spirit and clear the air of a purely pandemic focus. They asked everyone, including the stu-



Sister Hannah Jobnecheck is seated second from left among the faculty.

dents, to dress a little differently. Everyone was to wear a Christmas sweater to school with their uniform, and of course to also continue to wear an appropriate mask. There were prizes for the most memorable designs.

January brings to us the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Perhaps we can even extend this to a prayer for unity of all who seek God's ways. Pope Francis leads us in this direction as he admonishes us to pray:

May the Lord give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions, praying for one another, open to all.

Mansour Hallaj, born in 858 AD, was a Persian mystic, poet and teacher of Sufism. Among his writings we find the following poem about God.

"Before" does not outstrip Him,
"after" does not interrupt Him
"of" does not vie with Him for precedence
"in" does not inhabit Him
"when" does not stop Him
"if" does not consult with Him
"over" does not overshadow Him

"under" does not support Him
"opposite" does not face Him
"with" does not press Him
"behind" does not limit Him
"previous" does not display Him
"after" does not cause Him to pass away
"all" does not unite Him
"is" does not bring Him into being
"is not" does not deprive Him from Being.

His essence is without qualification.
His action without effort.

These haunting lines aptly describe the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the God of Mohammed and the God of Jesus. They describe the totality of our own God. It is this month's task to pray that the fabric of faith be rewoven, be mended back into one tapestry. We are all children of the Creator, of God. If we have learned various names for this loving Presence, this should not be our reason for disharmony. If others have found other ways to pray and other ways of envisioning God's face, this should not be our reason for



Google images/Peacemonger.

discord. If we take time to ponder it, we know that we do not possess the one true name of God, save the name of Jesus, His Son. We find many titles in the Scriptures such as Adonai, Abba, and El Shaddai. We do not have a snapshot, statue or sketch of the face of God. We do not address God, or see God, any more accurately than others. God is robed in mystery and is present to all His children.

God's work needs active hands and feet in many places, in many languages and in many forms. It is our prayer that all of us join with all believers in serving God's purposes. One of those purposes which has been present in our reflections is that of ending racism. Our Bishops write in this regard: "Certainly we cannot accomplish this task alone (abolishing racism). We call on everyone, especially all Christians and those of other faith traditions, to help repair the breach caused by racism, which damages the human family. Ecumenical and interreligious cooperation has been pivotal at key moments in our history, for instance, in the abolition of slavery and during the civil rights era. The leadership of the civil rights movement, especially that of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., invited ecumenical and interreligious cooperation, as was seen when Catholics, Protestants, and Jews marched together. That spirit is integral to the fight today. As religious leaders, we must continue this tradition. *Open Wide Our Hearts, USCCB*

Finally, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. included in a sermon, the following: "If we are to have peace on earth, our loyalties must become ecumenical rather than sectional. Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and our nation; and this means we must develop a world perspective." Amen to that!

Baptismal Consecration into the Beatitudes

We have just celebrated Christmas during which time the Church proclaimed the coming of Jesus in the flesh. If there is one trait (or even virtue) that Jesus embraces from the moment of his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary, it is poverty. God the Son, God the Word through whom all things were made, became a beggar, even to the point of borrowing flesh so that he could redeem us from death. In addition to his physical poverty (attested to not only by his borrowed flesh, but also the poverty surrounding his birth), Jesus embraces a “moral” (i.e. interior, emotional, even spiritual) poverty manifest in the failure of his own people to recognize and welcome him. He is celebrated by the poorest and most outcast (Shepherds) and worshiped by outsiders (the Magi). Meanwhile, Jewish religious leaders (who, one would think, would have *welcomed* him) met him with murderous hostility, plotting his assassination even as an infant. As a result of their hostility, his family is forced to leave their homeland and Jesus spends his childhood as a foreigner and immigrant. Jesus embraces the poverty of this hostility and all its consequences so that, with patience and love, he might redeem us from the sin that leads to death.

By having noted the poverty that Jesus embraced at his birth, we find ourselves at the threshold of the Beatitudes, the heart and soul of the new, Gospel law which Jesus communicates. Right out of the gate, Jesus focuses on the poverty that is the “DNA” of his existence in the flesh: “How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs.” *Matt. 5.3*

Before addressing each of the Beatitudes, however, it is important to understand that the new law Jesus gives us does not consist primarily (or worse, exclusively) of “words preached.” If “words preached” were the heart and soul of this new law, our task as the Baptized would be to first *know* the words of the law, and then *apply* these words to our lives. In this scenario, the Beatitudes would be no more than “correct information” for me to use. Furthermore, this “correct information” makes no sense. Honestly, when did we ever see the *meek inheriting anything, much less the earth??* Could it be that there is so little preaching on (and therefore conscious living of) the Beatitudes because we tend to treat them as “legal information” that makes no sense, leading us to tolerate, but politely ignore, them?

Jesus *does indeed* teach the Beatitudes, but not as a “class” after which we have all the correct information we need to live the Christian life. The credibility of the Beatitudes (as with the entirety of the Gospel) is not in the *information* they communicate, but in *the person, they mirror and communicate*. In preaching the Beatitudes, Jesus lays out for

us the attitudes which moved him to take on flesh and which animate his every choice in the Gospels. In the Beatitudes, Jesus offers us an inside look at his own mind, will, emotions and even his imagination as he embraces, day by day, the mission given Him by the Father. Jesus preaches the Beatitudes *not* to convince us of the new law as “information,” but rather call our attention to ***Jesus’ person as the new law. Jesus’ person embodies the new law.***

Why do we settle for asking “what would Jesus do?” when, in the Gospels, Jesus reveals the *interior / spiritual source* of his every choice? Why settle for looking at what Jesus *does* when we could be contemplating *Jesus Himself*?

Might we prefer “law as information” because it is easier to negotiate and control? As long as I “know” the right stuff, and then “do” the right things, I am set. “**Person as law**” presents us with an entirely different scenario, before which we might find ourselves slack-jawed. Our approach of “knowing” and then “doing” no longer “works.” As a result, we might find ourselves filled with anxiety; **or** we might decide to live safely within the boundaries of correct information; **or** we might decide to make peace with the conviction that the Gospel cannot be lived “for real.”

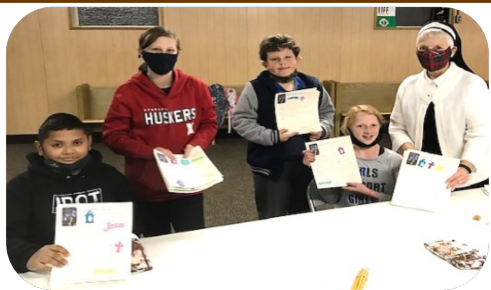
At this writing, it is evident that the Gospel *cannot* be lived “for real,” by which is meant that the Gospel cannot be lived “confined within the boundaries of human strategizing.” Throughout his ministry, Jesus lives the poverty of being up against those (even his closest companions) who would enclose the Gospel within the isolation of human strategizing. Knowing how difficult it would be for his listeners to forsake their self-centered way of thinking (and even of “doing” religion), Jesus affirmed that “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” *Matt 19.24* The disciples fail to take his meaning, attesting to the above-mentioned difficulty, and ask “Who, then, can be saved?” Jesus responds “For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible.” *Matt 19.26*

The Beatitudes are indeed impossible for us to live within our usual logic of “know” first and then “apply” what we know. Because the Beatitudes are a portrait of **Jesus the New Law**, we can only live them by acknowledging the gift of Jesus’ person within ourselves, communicated to us at our Baptism, and by permitting *Him* to live *His Beatitude Life* within us by the power of His Spirit. In this new year, may we ask for the grace to contemplate Jesus’ person so that we might be transformed into men and women of the Beatitudes; and may we ask for the grace to be accompanied by His Blessed Mother, the one in whom God bore great fruit by the poverty of her contemplation!

Sister Marie Kolbe Zamora, OSF, S.T.D.

smkolbeschol@gmail.com

All Hands on Deck!



of themselves. All non-tangibles, but **‘very strong defenses’!**

Our Outcomes? Each Sister in St. Rita’s Health Care, plus several Sister staff members, received an attractively decorated Christmas ‘letter’ from a new, younger friend across the miles of **‘rough terrain’!** Yes, spelling and punctuation reviewed—mostly!

Our Goal achieved! Inner Joy on both ends of this exchange!

Students each received a surprise Christmas gift bag containing religious items and a large candy cane as they were **‘honorably discharged’** as classes end!

Sister Michael Ann O’Donnell assisted in obtaining supplies for mission; Sister Rochelle Kerkhof organized details of its execution!

—Sister Rochelle Kerkhof

An **‘army’ of ‘warriors’**, (actually, 12 students ranging between Gr. 1-7, three high school ‘young men’ and four willing **‘Captain’** teachers) commandeered, successfully, **A Christmas Outreach Maneuver** during their final CCD/CYO classes before the Christmas Break!

The Mission? To share Christmas Spirit and personal greetings to many deserving recipients residing one thousand miles from their **“post”** in Benkelman/Stratton, NE.

Our Weapons? Each individual’s imagination, inspiration, creativity, generosity, compassion and willingness to share

More Snow in Ohio

Cambridge, Ohio—St. Benedict Convent Sisters awoke on Thursday, December 17th, 2020, to a gorgeous wintery scene. Schools were closed and the Sisters took advantage of enjoying God’s amazing, wintery, wonderland!

L to r: Sisters Sharon Paul, Mariadele Jacobs, Helen Marie Paul, Carol Juckem and June Smith.

St. Benedict Convent in a fresh coating of snow!



Christmas Break Fun



Tucson, Arizona—The Sisters at San Xavier enjoyed being creative as they began their Christmas break having fun! The Gingerbread houses had plenty of snow, which won’t melt in the Arizona sun! *The five Sisters on mission there are l to r: Sisters Rosalyn Muraski, Carla Riach, Clare Rose Oswald, Mary Karen Oudeans, and Mary Ann Spanjers.*

Franciscan Sisters' Thanksgiving Abundance

Thanksgiving is a day most of us naturally think of others. Before Covid 19, it was tradition to have large friendly gatherings where family, communities, especially those who were alone or in need, could enjoy a hot meal with others.

In 2020 this was not wise or safe. Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity at St. Peter Indian Mission in Bapchule, Arizona did not invite a lot of people to share their meal time, but they did reach out broadly to their neighbors on the Gila River Reservation before they sat down to eat.

Many generous people and organizations helped them purchase the needed groceries to feed 250+ families. Just try to picture the large amounts of food! Needless to say, the Sisters had a good time cooking. Together they were able to enjoy their own meal after they fed the multitude. The pictures highlight those moments.



Indeed, the mask says it all! The Lord bless us all as we give God first place in our Thanksgiving celebrations.

Thanksgiving in St. Louis, MO



We had a new experience this year for Thanksgiving. The Respect Life Apostolate team brought us dinner with all the works. Denise brought the turkey which was all dressed and ready for the oven, so in it went when we got to the kitchen. The turkey made the house smell so good. Denise also brought some cranberry butter for the dinner rolls. That was delicious! Cindy brought mashed potatoes, dressing and gravy and cranberry sauce. Mary brought green bean casserole. Madeleine sup-

plied a sweet potato casserole and rolls. Amy gifted us with a pumpkin pie and whipped cream. What a meal! All we had to do was heat it up. The turkey was done about 3:00 p.m. so we heated up what we could eat and enjoyed this wonderful dinner we had nothing to do with! We topped it off with a little wine. Needless to say, Thanksgiving could not have been nicer. This team is very good to us and looks out for us. May God bless them abundantly!

—Sister Sue Ann Hall



Tables

Maybe it's straight
And very carefully done.
Maybe it's swirls
Overlapping each one.

It might be plaid,
Much like a weave.
But no matter what,
No VIRUS we leave.

And if you wonder
There's really no prize
For the very best way
TO SANITIZE!

—Sister Dorothy Wagner

2021 Franciscan Sisters Vocation Discernment Experiences

A new year calls for new adventures. It also calls for holding on to the best of the past as we move into the future. Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity are continuing to offer a spiritual discernment retreat introducing Catholic young women ages 20-35 to Saints Francis and Clare on January 15-17, March 19-21, and April 30-May 2. However, we are withdrawing a bit from just focusing on purely prayer and inviting you to consider two other experiences that involve prayer in action.

On January 6 you are invited to join us for a light-hearted Groundbreaking Franciscan Convent Game on Zoom. Expect the 6:30 PM event to focus on people, places and phrases that are associated with the Franciscan family. Sister Concepcion will be our Zoom host. Novices Sister Mary Jane and Sister Maria Guadalupe will also add to the fun of the evening. Expect a few meaningful door prizes.

Do you ever wonder as you wander what a convent looks like in different places in our country? Our second experi-

ence is a Franciscan Convent Zoom Visit on January 13 at 6:30 PM. Our Franciscan Sisters serving in Arizona, Michigan, Nebraska and Wisconsin will offer an inside view of some of our living areas in these locations. St. Albert the Great, Houghton, Michigan Campus Minister Sister Jacqueline Spaniola will serve as the host for this virtual pilgrimage.

In the case of these possible discernment experiences, you need only register for the event and a Zoom link will be sent to you. We invite you to register for the game night or the convent visit here:

[Vocation Retreat Registration – Franciscan Sisters \(fscc-calledtobe.org\)](https://www.fscc-calledtobe.org)

