

Communigram

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

Formation Mission Experiences

Two of the temporary professed Sisters share their winter mission experience.

Experience of Sister Concepción Medina Mission: St. Paul, Kaukauna, Wisconsin

This year, I was able to go on a mission experience to Kaukauna, Wisconsin. This was my second time to go to Kaukauna and though it was the same place, the experience was different. I am blessed to say that both of my experiences to Kaukauna have been delightful and my favorite part of each mission experience has been spending time with the Sisters and getting to know them. It was so nice to share a meal, a laugh, and time with our lovely Sisters in Kaukauna. For me personally, it is all of the small things that I love the most. I loved every laugh and impromptu song that I shared with Sister Cecilia Joy Kugel, every walk and bird sighting with Sister Delores Wisnicky, and every puzzle piece placed and all the advice from Sister Charlene Acker.



for liturgy. For those who do not know I have a fear of reading in front of people, well actually doing anything in front of people. I am very happy to fade into the background, but she helped me overcome some of my fear.

I am thankful for the experience and thankful for the graciousness of the Sisters in Kaukauna for welcoming and embracing me.

Experience of Sister Maria Guadalupe Martinez Mission: St. Anne, Chassell, Michigan

It was great to be in Michigan in January, when there was a lot of snow everywhere. I particularly enjoy the cold weather. I'm in awe of God's creation in the cold and the snow. The week went by really fast. Sister Jacqueline Spaniola took me to see the statue of Bishop Berriga. I enjoyed that experience. I had heard a lot about Bishop Berriga and now I was able to learn more about him.



Sister Jacqueline took me with her to St. Albert the Great's Catholic Center at Michigan Tech. It was nice to say hi to some of the students after Sunday Mass. This meant a lot for me because it is important to reach out to people after the celebration of the Eucharist. Also, I had the opportunity to be at an adult faith formation session. One day we were inside the ice chapel and it was so great and refreshing.

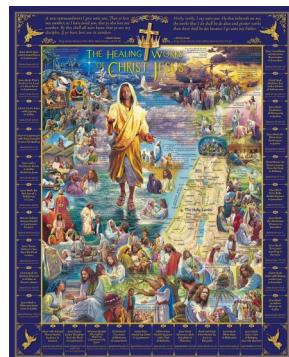


In the ice chapel at St. Albert the Great.

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Formation Mission Experiences (continued from p. 1)

I got to be a part of Sister Marcelyn Gervais' ministry as well by helping her take inventory of the books in St. Al's. I also enjoyed watching her finish a beautiful puzzle of the healings of Jesus and reading the passages on it.



Then I had the privilege of going to Sacred Heart Catholic School, L'Anse, Michigan and interact with the children and teachers. It was a great experience. Sister Carolee Vanness allowed me to help her with quizzing her students in spelling and their prayers. I visited Pre-K, the Spanish classroom and the 3rd grade classroom. I loved it and hope the chil-

dren were positively impacted by my visit there. The children and teachers were so loving and kind: They made me feel welcomed.

I am thankful for the opportunity to attend Mass at St. Ann's, and St. Al's. The priests and the parishioners were very kind. One of the parishioners invited us to dine at his house where we had pizza and dessert. Another parishioner shared pie and cookies with us. These were meaningful experiences and it taught me the value of hospitality. This was an awesome Mission Experience and I am thankful for it. I appreciate the Sisters. They were really nice and hospitable to me. It meant a lot for me that they spent time with me and took time out of their schedules to make me feel at home. They are a blessing.

"Once a Teacher—Always a Teacher"

Manitowoc, Wisconsin—During Catholic Schools Week I was invited to zoom with students from St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School in Casa Grande, Arizona. I was principal here two years ago. There are now no Sisters in the school. This was a perfect opportunity to promote religious vocations and to see old friends. I first did a zoom session with the 2nd grade class. They each had written me a letter for Christmas. I wrote a letter back to each and sent a little gift from Sr. Julie Ann's vocation materials. All of the students were back in class with their masks on. It was so much fun answering their questions and seeing how much they had grown. They did a dance for me to get "their wiggles" out. It was as much fun for me as for them.



Sister Carol with students when she was their Principal.

The next day I did a zoom with the 4th grade class at St. Anthony's. I was the surprise invited guest. With this class, two students were zooming from home. Their parents didn't allow them to attend in person class. One of the boys at home sent a



message to all via zoom "I really miss all of you so much!!" It was great to see this. I sent to the teacher ahead of time the prayer "Make Me An Instrument of Your Peace". There was a suggested action for each phrase. I was amazed to see that they had all the actions memorized and did a super job with the hand motions for this beautiful prayer.

Zoom is an amazing invention to stay in close contact with friends far away and to keep students learning when not able to attend class. Catholic Schools Week is a great time to promote religious vocations!! Dear Lord, may some from Casa Grande answer your call. —Sister Carol Seidl

Participation in Catholic Schools Week

Manitowoc, Wisconsin—The days of late January and early February would not seem normal to many without a mention of Catholic Schools Week. Some Sisters from the Motherhouse and Chiara Convent felt somewhat “normal” in participating in the activities of St. Francis of Assisi School, Greenwood, MS during this year’s Catholic Schools Week.

A faculty member who was charged with planning a Vocations activity called Sister Kathleen Murphy to ask if something could be arranged via Zoom. Sister Kathleen recruited several Sisters to help with the project. Having been asked to speak for 45 minutes, the Sisters each handled a different area of the life of a Sister. The Franciscan Friars from Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary province spoke simultaneously to the boys while we Sisters shared virtually with the girls.

Once the young ladies gathered in front of the screen in the cafeteria, the Sisters each took about 10 minutes to collectively tell about our life. Sister Carol Seidl talked about the types of work we do and the kinds of places in which we serve. Sister Elaine Turba followed with a summary of our community’s history. Sister Mary Jane Schwartz followed with an explanation of the stages of formation. Sister Julie Ann Sheahan did an illustrated talk on the life and spirit of St. Francis and Sister Kathleen concluded the presentation by talking about the importance of prayer.



The students were very attentive and excited to see the Sisters. As the allotted time drew to a close, all felt again the blessing that technology can be in our lives. The National Catholic Education Association’s website notes that the theme to be used for this year’s celebration is “Catholic Schools: Faith. Excellence. Service.” They go on to explain the meaning of the logo saying, “The CSW logo emphasizes that the Catholic school, like the Catholic Church, is not a building or an institution, but it is the people. As the people of God, we work together to bring the Kingdom of God to Earth and raise up the next generation to do the same. Sisters, Staff and Students all seemed to feel that this logo came to life during their time shared.

—Sister Kathleen Murphy

Cambridge, Ohio—Catholic Schools Week was celebrated at St. Benedict’s School from January 30 to February 4. Building on the national theme of Faith, Excellence, and Service, St Benedict’s activity schedule for each day was: Sunday—Parish Appreciation; Monday—School Spirit Day and Door Decorating; Tuesday—Community service project making blankets; Wednesday—Parents Appreciation School Visit and Mass with Bishop Monforton; Thursday—Students Crazy Hat and Sock Day with Bingo; and Friday—Teacher and Staff Appreciation Luncheon.

It was a blessed week celebrating St. Benedict’s School & all those who served so graciously since 1910. God Bless Them!

—Sister Sharon Paul



Sister Carol Juckem, Music Teacher, teaching the Pre-Schoolers.



Sister Mariadele Jacobs, Primary Religion Teacher with some students .

Sister June Smith greeting the students as they arrive at school.

JUST Gospel!

By Sister Kathleen Murphy
Social Justice Commission

This month I have invited Sister Renée Mirkes to be our guest columnist. This month's intention deals with an area in which she has a great deal of expertise so it is a wonderful opportunity for us to benefit from her gifts. Thank you, Sister Renée!

The prayer winds of March are blowing. And this March, Pope Francis focuses our prayer on:

"Christians facing new bioethical challenges that they may continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action." How refreshing! The Pope is asking every FSCC to pray for herself!

For, after all, which one of us is not required to take a stand against evils like abortion, human trafficking, transgenderism, contraception and surrogacy?

Who of us, in our teaching and healing or through our vote, our letters to our political representatives, our participation in rallies does not stand up for the dignity of human life, the truth about human sexuality, and the survival of the family?

Most importantly, who of us is not deepening our union with the Incarnate Son so He, the Light, is the engine running our pro-life, pro-woman, pro-marriage & family actions?

It seems to me this would be the perfect time for a mini-retreat to just soak up the Light. Our director, St. Therese of Lisieux, through a letter to her younger sister Celine, puts us in touch with Zacchaeus—a prototype for each of us. For aren't we all persons who yearn to see Jesus more clearly? Don't we all want our thinking and acting on behalf of humanity to radiate from our love-union with the true Light of the World?

So, as you settle into your mini-retreat, St. Therese invites you to read her letter to Celine as she helps her and us to imitate Zacchaeus.

Dear Celine,

Jesus has raised us above all the fragile things of this world, whose image passes away. He has

placed, so to speak, all things under our feet. Like Zacchaeus, we climbed a tree to see Jesus. Then we could say with Saint John of the Cross: "All is mine, all is for me, the earth is mine, the heavens are mine, God is mine, and the Mother of my God is mine."

Celine, what a mystery is our grandeur in Jesus! This is all that Jesus has shown us in making us climb the symbolic tree about which I was just talking to you. And now what science is he about to teach us? Has he not taught us all? Let us listen to what he is saying to us: *Make haste to descend, I must lodge today at your house.* Well, Jesus tells us to descend. Where, then, must we descend? Celine, you know better than I! However, let me tell you where we must now follow Jesus. In days gone by, the Jews asked our divine Savior: *Master, where do you live?* And he answered: *The foxes have their lairs, the birds of heaven their nests, but I have no place to rest my head.*

This, dear Celine, is what Jesus has done in my soul during my retreat. Let us allow him to act, he can complete his work in our souls. What Jesus desires is that we receive him into our hearts. No doubt they are already empty of creatures, but alas I feel mine is not entirely empty of myself, and it is for this reason that Jesus tells me to descend. He, the King of kings, humbled himself in such a way that his face was hidden, and no one recognized him, and I too want to hide my face. I want my Beloved alone to see it, that he be the only one to count my tears, that *in my heart at least he may rest his dear head and feel that there he is known and understood.* Yes, it is there *in the intimate retreat of the soul that he instructs us together*, and one day he will show us the day which will no longer have any setting.

Your Sister Therese

(A letter written to her younger sister, Celine, when Therese was 19 in the year 1892, two years following her religious profession of vows at the Carmelite monastery of Lisieux.)

Sisters Experience St. Thomas Aquinas Academy Catholic Schools Week in Marinette, Wisconsin

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity experienced a memorable Catholic Schools Week in Marinette, Wisconsin. On Sunday, January 30, 2022, we were invited to lead music at the Holy Family Parish for the 10:00 a.m. liturgy. Pastor Father Celestine Byekwaso was quick to welcome Sister Myra Jean Sweigart, Sister Theresa Feldkamp, Sister Elaine Turba, Sister Kathleen Murphy, Sister Caritas Strodthoff, Sister Maria Guadalupe Martinez Lopez, Sister Mary Jane Schwartz, Postulant Katie Logan and Sister Julie Ann Sheahan as we set up in the front choir area of the church. Sister Myra Jean Sweigart was asked to tell a little about us and expressed our delight to be present at this Eucharist.

Was this the first time our Sisters have sung for Mass in Marinette? No. Our Sisters came to town in 1921 and at that time came to St. Anthony Parish. It seems fitting that the Franciscan spirit was already present among the people before our arrival. Our Sisters served until 1982 teaching at various buildings with different names over the years and having various grades depending on the enrollment. In 1975 the Sisters started commuting from Holy Spirit, Menominee, Michigan. It was time for others to serve and they have done so beautifully.

After Mass we not only met relatives of our Sister Patricia Sevcik, but also heard some good stories. One of these memories was about one of our Sisters going every day for a month to the hospital to bring homework to a student who had been injured in a car accident. This was one time that homework was especially well received and the consistent company created a relationship that neither the teacher nor the student forgot even many years later when meeting each other a second time for a parish event when the student was now an adult. Indeed, our Sisters in heaven continue to smile upon this special town and its people.

On Monday of this Catholic Schools Week we were invited for breakfast with grades 6-12 at St. Thomas Aquinas Academy. Students were grouped in teams for the week and ate with their team mates. Father Celestine, Father Robert Chinnapan, Deacon Dave Denby, Deacon Charles Schumacher, Sister Cecilia Joy, Sister Julie Ann, and Katie each joined one of the tables. Principal Jonathon Keepers provided conversation starters which helped to create a

friendly sharing while enjoying pancakes. After seconds and thirds of the pancakes were enjoyed, students climbed the bleachers and guests formed a panel to respond to student questions on vocations, prayer, personal lives, etc. Students also distributed handwritten cards to the panel to show their appreciation adding another personal touch to the gathering.



In the afternoon, we visited the elementary children PK3-5 grade at St. Thomas Aquinas Academy building in Peshtigo. This is a school that has a playground area perfect for all times of year, but especially for winter. The snow banks were already transformed snow forts and children wore warm snow suits so that they could enjoy recess whole-heartedly. Before making a visit to all the classrooms we were introduced to Mike Cattani, Director of Academic Services. He sent greetings to Sister Catherine Gilles who he got to know in the past Silver Lake College Educational Leadership Program.

In the classrooms we had hoped to leave behind a little Franciscan spirit whether in the form of a San Damiano Crucifix color sheet, learning the prayer *Lord Make Me An Instrument of Your Peace* with hand gestures or a simple game/prayer about six Franciscan saints. We were touched by the genuine goodness of the faculty and students. We also distributed a hand-made item whether tau crosses, PAX or Joy bracelets, or prayer cubes with Franciscan Saints to each child.

After experiencing this peaceful school environment at both campuses, we couldn't help but feel hopeful for the Church and the world in this geographical spot. We are praying that other families will choose Catholic education for their children in Marinette, Peshtigo, and nearby Michigan. We also pray for the young women God is calling to be Franciscan Sisters from this place and ask our Sisters in heaven for their prayerful intercession.

Initial Formation Weekend

Pictured seated l to r: Sisters Mary Jane, Maria Guadalupe, and Mary Teresa. Standing: Fr. Paul Fliss, Sister Concepción, Katie, and Sister Cecilia Joy.



Manitowoc, Wisconsin—The weekend of February 11-13 six women of our Community gathered for initial formation weekend at the Motherhouse. From start to finish the weekend was a positive experience for all involved, based on the sharing that took place.

It began on Friday evening with evening prayer, supper, and the viewing of the movie *War Room*—a film that highlights the importance of prayer. Prayer was the theme of the weekend. Our guest speaker was Father Paul Fliss, from Sheboygan who gave very practical insights on prayer methods and spiritual principles. We were able to put these into practice on Saturday afternoon during a formation holy hour in St. Francis Chapel.

Yet, while the spiritual and formative components of the weekend were wonderful, it was the time together that was some of the best. All of us enjoyed meals, ice skating, walks and a fabulous, Olympics themed rec together. In fact, we enjoyed one another's company so much that one of us had to reluctantly initiate our going to bed (late!) each night because we were having such a good time sharing and laughing together. This experience of the beauty and joy of community was as enriching as the conferences.

I think it is safe to say that we all returned to our “regular” lives renewed from the time of growth in relationship—relationship with the Lord and with one another.

—Sister Mary Teresa Bettag

Students Express Appreciation for the Sisters



Sister Barbara Mathe writes a thank you to the teachers and students at Roncalli Catholic Elementary School as Sister Deborah Shepeck, Sister Greta Peter, and Sister Florita Schneider enjoy the various art works and decorations made by the students for the Sisters.

Manitowoc, Wisconsin—During Catholic Schools Week all the students attending Roncalli Catholic Elementary School made cards and decorations for the Sisters at Holy Family convent, St. Francis Convent, and Chiara Convent.

The Elementary, which comprises pre-kindergarten through grade 4, has an enrollment of 295. The decorations included penguins, snowflakes, valentines, snow boarders, and Olympic medals. Continued on p.7.

Sisters Invite Discerning Catholic Women for Convent Picnic

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity at San Xavier Mission Convent, Tucson, Arizona, invited discerning Catholic young women for a recent Convent Picnic. The day began with Morning Prayer in the convent chapel followed by Mass in the San Xavier Mission courtyard.

A unique surprise for our guests was to climb the San Xavier Mission Tower. The blue skies accented the desert landscape making it a truly magnificent view from the church's pure white heights. This was a discernment awakening. Seeing life from a different perspective can make all the difference in the world.



Next, the group moved to the convent patio and delighted in picnic-style food outside under continued sunny skies. Conversation centered around these questions and more:

- Why did you want to become a Sister?
- What type of prayer do you enjoy?
- Who's your favorite saint or holy person that you admire in your life?
- Share about your life in a Religious Community.
- Tell us about your family and your relationship with them as a Sister.

At the end of the meal and the sharing time, the Sisters' primary goal of the prayer and picnic was achieved. Guests left for home with some of their deeper hungers filled, knowing a bit more about each other and the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity.

—Sister Mary Ann Spanjers



Students Express Appreciation (continued from p.6)



Students expressed their appreciation of all Sisters with these comments: "You Sisters make this world a great place." "You guys are amazing and cool." "Thanks for teaching us about God." "There's snowbody quite like you." "Jesus loves you and we are praying for you."

The Sisters directly involved with Roncalli Catholic Schools include Sister Marsaia Kaster and Sister Veronica Shad who share the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Sister Carmen Marie who serves on the Hispanic Outreach Committee, and Sister Marcolette Madden who has worked with the Elementary principal and teachers on the Curriculum Mapping project and serves on the Roncalli Education Committee.

—Sister Marcolette Madden

An Acrostic on FAITH

F is for my very best Friend
our good and gracious Lord.

A is for Answers
only He could afford.

I is for Ideal pal
no one else could be.

T is for the Thanks we give
to no one else but He.

H is for a place in Heaven
we all hope one day to be.

So-o-o, put them all together
they spell **FAITH**, you see.

By Sister Leone Wellner

Attends Mass at St. Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church

I [Sister Mary Ann Spanjers] had the opportunity to join some of the Friars [from San Xavier Mission] in attending Mass Sunday, February 27, at St. Michael Ukrainian Catholic Church in Tucson to pray with and for the people of Ukraine. The Pastor, Fr. Nick Kostyk welcomed us warmly asking us to thank all who are praying for them. We were given a book with the liturgy of St John Chrysostom written in Ukrainian and English. The singing was beautiful, Father Nick's homily so inspiring, he quoted their Bishop saying, "For us this war is a problem, but not for God. Jesus holds the world in his hand and will bring good from this. Where there is darkness and evil people look for light..."

At the end of the Mass there was a prayer of forgiveness, Fr. Nick invited the people to look at where each of us needs to be forgiven and to come forward, look into the eyes of the deacon, the young boys who were serving,



himself and each other to hear the words of one asking forgiveness and to forgive one another. He went on to say that humility and forgiveness are what God uses for our conversion. He reflected on what must have happened in the life of young Vladimir Putin to bring him to this point? God works through individuals who open their hearts and turn to each other.

This was a very moving Liturgy, so many people thanked us for joining them. I relayed that all our Sisters are praying for them and for peace.