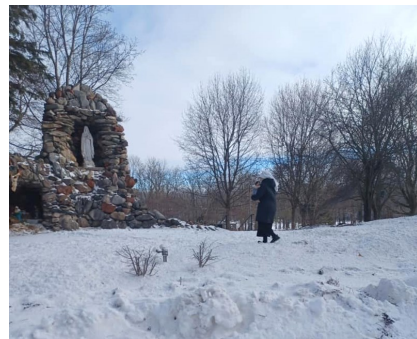


Communigram

FRANCISCAN SISTERS



Christmas Traditions Holy Family Convent





Las Posades on the U.S./Mexican Border

Sisters Marlita Henseler and Carla Riach joined the walkers in the annual Las Posades on the Border on December 17th. They met Bishop Wiesenburger and Bishop Gonzalez, many of the organizers from Kino Border Institute and volunteers Sister Marlita knew from her experience last year.

Sister Carla was impressed with the young families walking with children in strollers, on their shoulders, in their arms and toddling along. In spite of the difficulties of their lives the immigrants are full of hope and joy.

Three asylum seekers shared their stories along the way. After each testimony there was a call to action and prayer. Then the Las Posades song was sung. Each time the verses reflected the plea of the immigrant. I am sharing the verses sung after a single Mother of three children shared her struggle to get her children into school while waiting in Nogales, Mexico.

Sister Carla Riach

Hello Mr. Principal,
I'm here with my children
To enroll them here
And continue with their studies.

Don't you realize, Ma'am,
Your children cannot enter
It's too late to enroll them
We're about to finish.

My children have the right
To be able to study
How can it be possible
That you want to reject them?

Without documentation
How will I accept them
Show me their proof of studies
So that I can look at it.

When leaving
I could not prepare myself
Saving our lives
Is all I could think about.

I can consider them
But not guarantee
You only stay a while
And soon you will be on your way



Retirement Fund Joy

The Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Retirement Fund is getting many generous “perk donations” at this time of gift giving for Christmas. Many of these donations probably have stories of explanation behind them. At this time, we are sharing one with you.

Sister Humbeline Demers arrived at our office very excited and cheering the generosity of her 1949 Second Grade Class, who send her a donation each year at Christmas time. She was proudly holding a crisp \$100.00 bill to be placed in our Retirement Fund—a gift from her class. What joy on Sister's face! As we know, God is never outdone with His generosity!

The St. Rita's Sister Team

Sister Carol Mathe Receives Awards

Early in September I received an email from Anna Prakish, President of Education Empowerment Inc., a part of Intel. She informed me that I was being nominated for an award honoring my work and a lifetime of service to Education and Native Youth in Bapchule, AZ.

My nomination was accepted and I flew to Arizona on December 2. At 4:45 on December 4 the award ceremony was held at the Rustic Roost. To my surprise I received two awards.

The first award was a plaque for Leadership in Service to Education and for working with Native Youth in science, STEM and robotics. The powerful words “You Inspire Us” on the plaque summarize the commitment to fostering love for learning.

The second award was a Lifetime Achievement Award, a certificate signed by President Joseph Biden, President of the United States. It was given in recognition for a lifetime commitment to building a stronger nation through service, especially using robotics and STEM to promote engineering. Along with the certificate was a letter from President Biden thanking me for 4,000 hours of service.

I am deeply grateful to the Community who enabled me to have the opportunity to serve the Native Youth in Bapchule and to empower them with hope for their future, light to move forward, and love for one another and our world.

Sister Carol Mathe



agen Photography

Demolition Continues on College Building



December 6, statue of the Holy Family is down and stored for the winter.



December 13, patio lounge, cafeteria and kitchen are down.



December 19, demolition of library and art department.



December 19, after concrete is crushed rebar is piled for salvage.



December 28, view from the west side. Notice pine trees in middle cemetery.



December 29, crushing concrete and salvaging rebar. Arrow—art entrance.

Diocese of Madison San Lucia Vocations Dinner Includes Franciscan Sisters

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity were invited for the recent second annual San Lucia Vocations Event for the Diocese of Madison. The Eucharist was the immediate focus of the candlelit evening in the Oratory at Holy Name Heights (702 S. High Point Road, Madison). Bishop Donald Hying presided at the liturgy with Vocation Director Father Jared Holzhuter. Hostess Theresa Klinkhammer invited all guests including young women in discernment from ages 14-35, mothers of daughters present, Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration (ssfpa.org), Sisters of Mary Morning Star, a consecrated virgin, Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary and us to head downstairs to the upper room for a barbecue dinner following Mass.

After mealtime and conversation, our Franciscan Sister Kathleen Murphy, whose home is the Diocese of Madison St. Mary Help of Christians Parish, Briggsville, Wisconsin, and other representatives, shared remarks with the group. We share Sister Kathleen's comments here.



"The celebration of Santa Lucia day around the world features the wreath of candles worn by girls. In reflecting on this Sainly symbol, the idea of considering the "shape of discernment" seemed proper. Sometimes we have our life planned out along a neatly marked and dated timeline. Then God says to us, "Let's just slide all these benchmarks of yours off the line and let me turn things around for you." Then he forms that line of ours into a circle—an infinite, eternal circle that speaks of His will for us. The main part



San Lucia Discernment Prayer

Crowned with a circle aglow.
 Women shining with the Light who comes,
 Comes in Word,
 in silence, in beauty,
 in song, in Sacrament,
 He circles round us, circles with us,
 encircles us with love, rounds out our
 thoughts with His Spirit of Wisdom.
 May circles lead us eternally
 around His Presence
 spiraling ever deeper within.
 Wear this circle of braid as reminder
 that you are called to be entwined
 in the circle of His Light and love.

of that circle is the empty space in the middle. It is here, in this seeming emptiness that we meet and come to know God and His will.

Another shape to consider is the square—a solid, foundational shape. It's four corners are good reminders of our Community's four cornerstones or charisms. The first is simplicity firmly built on faith in a loving God. Franciscan simplicity doesn't mean dancing down the roads of life, carefree and barefoot like some images of St. Francis. Simplicity built on faith means that we laser focused on our God whose love for us leads us to be faithful to Him. The second charism is joyful acceptance of poverty with an emphasis on joyful. Poverty isn't so much doing without as it is joyfully holding what we have with a loose grip. If what I have would help you, then I am happy to give it to you. The third charism is love for the Church. Church is not so much a building or an institution, but rather, a community of faith and mutual support. As Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity we not only respect and obey the leaders of the Church, but we live in community as a sign of what the Church is called to be. Finally, the last charism is selfless dedication to the service of others. Central to understanding this charism is the element of selflessness. What we do, how we minister is not so much about me, my plans or my success. It is all about Christ present in the needs of those I encounter.

If we, as Franciscan Sisters, place our lives and very beings squarely on living these charisms then God can turn that square just a bit and form us into diamonds!"

Our Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity gift to the young women included a poem to San Lucia and a ribbon wreath of joy.



Virgin de Guadalupe at St. Thomas Parish

The Feastday celebration of the Virgin De Guadalupe at St. Thomas Catholic Community in Newton, Wisconsin was very memorable. I was grateful to share in the celebration of the Blessed Mother in a special way. The day was especially significant, because it is the Blessed Mother in the image of Our Lady Guadalupe that I grew up with and is tied to my culture.

I especially enjoyed the dancers, Mass and the Miachis who sang all the classic songs I grew up with. The fellow-

ship of a shared meal and music rounded out the event for hundreds of parishioners. Pair all of this with the welcoming and joyful nature of all the parishioners made for a blessed time. I was reminded of being able to make a home in any house of the Lord.

I think Mary is a mother for everyone which is most evident in her constant presentation of herself immersed in many different cultures.



Postulant Michelle Ozuma

Pinecrest Historical Village Christmas

Manitowoc, Wisconsin—Volunteers anywhere are always worth their weight in gold. Sister Donna Marie Kessler was a lifelong member of the Manitowoc Historical Society and was very active in the society. Sister Caritas Strodthoff and community members continue her legacy of volunteer work for the historical village. Volunteer work includes annual cleanup in April, annual decorating for Christmas and baking goodies for periodic fund raisers. Sister Caritas and Sister Sue Ann Hall are seen here baking Christmas cookies for the annual Christmas event: pink and green “Whoville” spiral cookies, green cornflake/marshmallow wreaths, and pink and white Christmas canes. Decorating the Niles Church in the Historical Village was done this year by Sisters Kathleen Murphy, Catherine Peter Logan, Caritas Strodthoff, Sue Ann Hall, and Michelle Ozuma, postulant.

Visiting other village buildings we especially enjoyed the Sorenson House where real wax candles were lit upon the Christmas tree. What a beautiful sight this must have been in years long ago even if only for a short time till the candles were “done.” Visiting the village any time of year is a real historical experience and a worthwhile adventure every time.

Sister Caritas Strodthoff



JUST Gospel!

By Sister Kathleen Murphy

Often the end of this month marks the beginning of Catholic Schools Week. Of course, this month also is a time for evaluating the old and planning for new beginnings. The Holy Father's prayer intention for this month brings this characteristic work of teachers to our own prayer. His intention is: *That educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping the youngest and most vulnerable above all.*

Competitive methods of teaching and learning have long been pitted against a more cooperative approach to education. Countless books and articles hail the pros and cons for each method. As in most things, a balance of the two would seem wise. However, Pope Francis goes beyond this academic argument. He asks us to pray that educators will be credible witnesses that go beyond cooperation to fraternity. What a world we would have if children grew up in a world in which they breathed only the air of charity and friendship. What if we taught our youth to help the vulnerable rather than step over them and mock their mistakes?

It might be a good month to revisit one of Aesop's Fables, *The Bundle of Sticks*, and ponder its point.

A certain Father had a family of Sons, who were forever quarreling among themselves. No words he could say did the least good, so he cast about in his mind for some very striking example that should make them see that discord would lead them to misfortune.

One day when the quarreling had been much more violent than usual and each of the Sons was moping in a surly manner, he asked one of them to bring him a bundle of sticks. Then handing the bundle to each of his Sons in turn he told them to try to break it. But although each one tried his best, none was able to do so. The Father then untied the bundle and gave the sticks to his Sons to break one by one. This they did very easily.

"My Sons," said the Father, "do you not see how certain it is that if you agree with each other and help each other, it will be impossible for your enemies to injure you? But if you are divided among yourselves, you will be no stronger than a single stick in that bundle."



Jacobs 72. *The Bundle of Sticks* (mythfolklore.net)

In unity is strength.

What greater celebration of unity and fraternity is there than the Eucharist? The *O sacrum convivium* prayer-phrase we will ponder this month is...*You live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.* To what greater model of unity and cooperation can we turn than that of the Blessed Trinity? The Three Persons of our God dwell in perfect unity to such an extent that they are One God. This doxology that is included at the end of so many prayers can become a rote recitation rather than a deliberate statement of faith. As we pray for educators this month, asking that they witness to true fraternity and nurture the same in their students, let us mindfully pray this closing part of the prayer and may our Amen echo the faith we have in a God who is close and present to us in countless ways, but especially in the gift of the Eucharist.

Trivia Night' raises funds for CSS outreach in SW Nebraska

The 'first of its kind' in recent memory, "Trivia Night" drew 15 teams—six members each—for a night of head-scratching questions, fellowship, food and fundraising that will help area families in need.

This fundraiser for the Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska and for St. Isidore's Gift & Thrift was held in Imperial, Nebraska at the Chase County Fairgrounds.

Teams went through seven rounds of 10 questions in each round. Categories touched on sports, Nebraska history, well-known pairs, board games, historic events/dates and more. Teams had a little over a minute to give written answers to each question. With scores tallied after each round, results were available for all, via technology and large screen access.

The winning team with the highest point total was "Deuteronomy". Second place went to "Charley's Gang," led by co-hosts, 'Charley Brown' Colton and Sister Rochelle.

Bill Sullivan said one important aspect of Trivia Night was that it helped educate people "on what we do." All proceeds are used for CSS outreach for people in need in southwest Nebraska. The Trivia Night fundraiser will help extend outreach possibly even more.

Five people from the diocesan CSS's office in Lincoln supported this event by their attendance including their executive director, their operations manager, and their development office director.

St. Patrick Altar Society of Imperial prepared and donated all of the abundant and delicious refreshments for the evening. Sister Michael Ann O'Donnell volunteered by walking the floors to keep the food trays filled and attractively arranged.

Bill Sullivan, St. Isidore's store manager, said they have had many comments asking if Trivia Night will be held next year. "We hope for it to be an annual event," he said. "So many people came up to us and comment-

ed that they loved the event—it was something different—and asked if we'll do it again," he said.

Sister Rochelle Kerkhof



"Charley's Gang"



Priest's Team

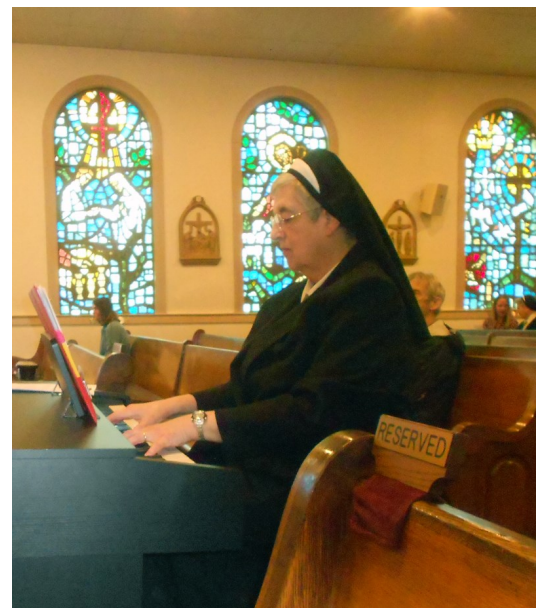
School Christmas Program

Cambridge, Ohio—The St. Benedict's School Christmas Program was held in the church on Thursday, December 15. The program was written and directed by Sister Carol Juckem called "Mother of Jesus, Mother of God."

Sister Carol wrote five songs: "Good Morning, God," "Here I Am! Use Me!," "Say Yes, Mary," "Behold, I Am the Handmaid," & "Making the Journey." Other traditional songs were added with scripture readings, read by individual students. Small group singers and individuals sang, while at other times all grades participated in the songs.

The program paralleled our lives with Mary. We are on many journeys and we listen to Jesus by using our individual gifts and talents—sharing them with our world, each day of our lives.

Sister Sharon Paul



Light of the World Giving Machine at Tucson Mall

From December 17 until New Years, A Light the World Giving machine was located in the local Tucson Mall. I had the opportunity to represent Sister Jose Women's Shelter where I volunteer three mornings a week, and help solicit shoppers to stop and donate to six local charities and a world-wide one as well. The Shelter where I work had five different levels of giving possible from \$6.00-200.00. Much like a vending machine, givers selected the item they wished to donate and paid with credit or debit card.

The experience was very pleasant, and I had many questions like: "Are

you a real Sister?" and "Where do you work?" as well as pleas for prayers. Giving witness to the Christmas shoppers gave me the real Christmas spirit of giving and receiving, and I was happy to join with my companions for 2 different 3-hour shifts. This was the first time a Giving Machine was located in Tucson.

I also had the chance to get my photo with Santa, whose chair was right in front of the machine!!! And Santa himself paid for it, as it was at his invitation!!

Sister Marlita Hensler

