

Communigram

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

Sisters Invite Green Bay Diocese Called By Name Nominees to Convent

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity invited young women whose names were submitted from the Diocese of Green Bay Called By Name Parish Nominations for a recent Mother-Daughter Event at our Motherhouse Holy Family Convent, Manitowoc, Wisconsin. These were young people that others in their parishes felt Jesus might be calling them to be a religious Sister.

The experience began with a meal with some of the Sisters joining each table of guests in our convent cafeteria. Conversation was lively. Next, all toured various parts of our Motherhouse from chapel areas to hallways with artwork done by our Sisters to libraries, kitchen, bakery, recreational places, creative craft areas and conversational spaces for guests. Mothers then had time to talk among themselves and young women focused on our particular Community with questions, the reading of a few pages of the novel *Buried Wheat* written by our Sister Rosamund Nugent on our early days. All checked out the gym and had some moments to freely explore the craft room. The day closed with a candle light procession to St. Francis Chapel to remember all our loved ones.

Here are some comments from the young women themselves.



"I would want to see the clinic. Maybe I could volunteer down there. I got my CNA this summer. I could see more of what life is like here as Sisters. I've met Sisters before, but only in short conversations."

"Thank you so much for the beautiful day. It was amazing to learn of the rich history of the place. It's beautiful."

"I am open to what God has planned for me-I can look ahead and see happiness with any vocation. I just don't know what He has planned for me yet!"

"Thank you for today. Please keep doing what you are doing for other

girls. I will keep an open mind for the Sisterhood, but right now I am feeling called to marriage."

"I loved reading and finding out the Sisters are as crafty as I am. My favorite quote from the book is: 'The most loving human heart was pierced.'"

"I am excited to visit again."

"God bless you all and keep you in his dear and loving arms. My aunt is a Sister at the Schoenstatt Convent. I want to join the Carmelite Convent at Denmark."

"I hope you can put on a day/overnight weekly retreat."

Continued on page 3.

Serving on the Board of a Sponsored Ministry

Sister Joy Rose shares her experience of serving on the board of St. Joseph's Elder Services in West Point, Nebraska—one of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity's sponsored ministries.

I have been a Board Member of St. Joseph's Elder Services for eight years. We have a board consisting of five board members. I am the only Sister on this board. These are challenging times and truly a Ministry of the Church to serve the elderly, poor and vulnerable. According to Statistics for Nebraska over 100,000 people are 75-84 years old. Just since I have been a board member four long term facilities have closed around our area. Many of the elderly who have lived in this area all their lives are now being moved to facilities 3-4 hours away or even out of state from their loved ones. Why have these long-term care facilities closed? Some are due to poor Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates, the mandates that are put upon the long-term care facilities by the government if they are to obtain government funding and just plain regulations with one being staffing needs.

Since COVID we have had a great nurse shortage so to provide care for our residents "agency staff" are needed to provide the best care possible. Agency staff are very expensive they require 2-3 times more salary than the average nurse or healthcare provider and they are hired for 2-3 months at a time. Many of the agency nurses work just for the money so the care they give to our vulnerable elderly is not the type of committed service that St. Joseph's dedicated staff provide.

This is one of the challenges that as board members we are challenged with. Do we limit the number of residents to our facility due to the staff shortage? Do we continue to hire agency staff? How does St. Joseph administration and board have agency staff live St. Joseph Mission and values? With the reimbursement rate and the Medicare Advantage programs how can the Facility be kept updated and repaired? How can St. Joseph's Hillside villa remain a 4-star facility with the above challenges? How can we continue to pay and keep our Nursing Home Administrator and administrative team who are truly committed to our Mission?

Not only do we have a long-term care facility but also an Assisted Living—St. Joseph's Retirement Community. Two years ago, a major water leak occurred in the winter that 2 wings of the 65-apartment facility had to be closed. So once again the board had to make a major discussion. What are we going to do? Tear down the building that has had no major renovation since it was built in 1988? No longer provide assisted living services, or renovate with a Capital Campaign? It is our Mission and a real need for this area to provide care for the elderly. It was decided that a major campaign will be needed to renovate. With great faith in a loving God and as the Sisters before us, we are in the process of raising money to pro-



Sister Joy Rose



vide an updated and home like living space for the elderly.

I am a member of the Franciscan Healthcare [another of our sponsored ministries in West Point] administrative team and have attended these Board meetings for over ten years. Every month I have a written report that goes into the board packet on the Mission activities that occur. Then at the board meeting I give an oral report. The Board member are amazed how the staff of Franciscan Healthcare carry out our mission: To Live and Promote the Healing Mission of Jesus Christ into the communities where they live as well as at Franciscan Healthcare.

It is a privilege to be a board member and with great trust in a loving God we will be able to move forward to provide a needed service for the vulnerable and elderly in this area.

Called By Name Nominees

Continued from p. 1.

Mothers enjoyed their time together and desired to begin their own chat room to help mentor their daughters in being open to all vocations in the days ahead. These comments indicated the time was beneficial for them and their families.

“Visiting the chapels, hearing the Sisters’ stories.”

“The continuation of discovery about prayer life and still retaining the person God created my child to be. All of the possibilities to see her shine while married to Christ.”

“Seeing the living of life and faith. The Sisters doing everyday things. Just being here. It’s very peaceful.”

“Allowing our girls to shadow a Sister from early morning Mass through

dinner. A day in the life.”

“Getting our girls together with other girls interested in vocations.”

“Especially knowing the discerning period is also a time to earn a degree.”

“More of these events! We need to have more exposure to Religious Life, so it doesn’t seem ‘uncommon’.”

“Hearing and seeing the unique ways one can be a Sister, not losing themselves but becoming more of themselves.”

“Seeing all the opportunities available to the Sisters to work and visit family.”

“Learning about the process of becoming a Sister”

“Living out God’s call, but in community with other Sisters. Seeing the joy on the Sisters’ faces...with us and with other Sisters.”

“The fact that mothers were invited to participate with their daughters and also had time to ask questions and hear from other mothers.”

“The beauty alongside the simplicity.”

“You present beautifully, a joy-filled, welcoming spirit. There was a nice balance of history as well as an explanation of what distinguishes the Franciscan Sisters from other orders.”

Sister Julie Ann Sheahan

Celebrating Our St. Rita Sister Artists



The table in the basement hall outside the office of Breanna and Cecilia, Activity Directors, is a showcase of artistry. The St. Rita Sisters did *Animal and Seasonal Mini-Pumpkin Decorating* and a *Fall Forrest Diorama* as part of their October activities. Their mini-pumpkins display a spirit of fun and joy rather than the scary and “spookiness” of Halloween.



The diorama, painted with care by the Sisters of St. Rita’s, was “inspired by the autumn colors of their own beautiful home (Holy Family Convent) and the enchanting fantasy forests of Walt Disney.”

St. Rita’s Sister Staff



JUST Gospel!

By Sister Kathleen Murphy

December dawns and finds us reflecting on the circle of the Advent wreath. Its circular shape is a life circle of Jesus in which we anchor our hope. We are filled with this hope at the manger wherein lies the realized promise of the Old Testament, we are similarly hope-full at the foot of the cross where momentarily hangs the one who will soon burst forth with a life promised us forever. Francis knelt beside that manger and stood in the shadow of that cross with an overflowing sense of hope that was rooted in the very person of Jesus, a Jesus he knew so thoroughly that the wounds of Love also came to mark his own hands.

This hope seasoned by straw and stigmata plays into Pope Francis' intention for this month. We are asked to pray: that this Jubilee year strengthen our faith, helping us to recognize the Risen Christ in our daily lives, and that it may transform us into pilgrims of Christian hope.

This prayer can be strengthened by pondering the call to be a pilgrim. The following excerpt of a story entitled "The Pilgrim" by Joy Cowley may help us in these reflections.

I began my spiritual journey in a fervor of prayer, asking God to give me the companions I needed for the road. The voice in my heart was gentle but firm. "Name your needs."

Ah, but that was easy. There were three whose company represented my constant longing. "Wisdom! Compassion! Holiness!" I cried.

I wasted no time but set out, delighted that I had found favor in God's eyes . . . but my companions did not appear. I looked for them along the

road. I called their names in vain. Indeed, I was so concerned with finding them, that at first, I didn't notice the three ruffians who followed me at a short distance. They were travelers of the worst kind, ragged, shifty-eyed, probably thieves and possibly murderers. I tried to outpace them, but they walked faster.

The first, a man with bandaged hands, reveals his name: Error. The second, a woman with matted hair and a crooked back: Pain. The third and oldest, a man with no hair and thick glasses: Doubt.

The Pilgrim makes her way and Error, Pain, and Doubt continue to shuffle along behind her, growing closer with each passing day.

"The fact that I was continually aware of their presence interfered greatly with my prayer and songs of praise," the pilgrim complains.

And as the story goes, one night, in deepest despair, the pilgrim called out in prayer, "Help me to get rid of them!" And God responds, "Why don't you listen to what they have to say?"

"You can't be serious!" the pilgrim cries.

She begins to speak with her companions. First with Doubt, who notices her pilgrimage is uphill even before she does.

"Getting steeper," said Doubt, "but the views are getting better."

Pain comes next.

"No one wants to walk with me," she notes. ". . . There was only one who welcomed Pain with wide open arms

and even he had some misgivings.

She goes on. "Pain, you know, is part of the wholeness of God."

This makes the pilgrim angry.

"What do you know about God?"

Pain drew her hair back to look directly at the pilgrim. "Not as much as God knows about me," she said.

Finally, it was Error's turn.

"I might be unpopular," he says, "but . . . if you haven't known error how can you choose good? But . . . most people don't see it that way . . . they want to see themselves as good. . . . Let me tell you something. You think there are evil people in this world? The evil you see out there is done by people convinced of the goodness of their motives. They never learn, you see. They pretend they don't know me."

"That's because they see you as the enemy," the pilgrim replies.

Error shrugs. "I'm the enemy of pride. I'm the friend of spiritual growth. If pilgrims value my guidance, I show them how to find the compass needle that points to true North."

The pilgrim journeys on and begins to speak more and more with Error, Pain, and Doubt. Better yet, she begins to listen. And to learn. And to realize that these companions were not as miserable as she once thought. In fact, they were not even who she once thought them to be.

"Haven't you worked it out yet?" asked Doubt.

Continued on page 5.

From the Four Corners of our Planet Earth to Omaha

Healthcare providers—Nurse practitioners, physician assistants, MDs—converged on Saint Paul VI Institute and the *Doubletree Hotel* to attend the eight-day, phase 1 of our training program in the Creighton Model FertilityCare System of family planning and the women's health science of NaProTechnology. The participants flagged from foreign countries (see the attached pic): Australia, Brazil, Colombia, France, Germany, Mexico, Slovakia, and Spain and from the American states: California, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin. The collective spirit was nearly indescribable with each of the long days anchored in the celebration of the Eucharist in the early morning and Evening Praise in the evening.



Particularly memorable was the sacrifice that many of the attendees, especially those from foreign states, professed in thousands of dollars of tuition to cover the textbooks and supplies for the first phase, the interim six-month practicum, and the second training phase in April.

The Holy Spirit flew low, enlightening the minds of all. It was such a privilege to be a member of the wonderful faculty that you see seated in the front row in the accompanying picture which includes a majority of the participants.

Sister Renée Mirkes

JUST Gospel!

Continued from p. 4.

"I don't understand," I said. "Worked what out?"

"Our other names." Doubt put his hand on Pain's shoulder. "This is Compassion," he said. Then he held up Error's scarred hand. "His other name is Wisdom." I looked at Pain and Error and felt their truth in my heart. "And you?" I asked Doubt.

He chuckled. "Yep. I'm Holiness."

As we come to the end of the 800th anniversary of Francis' reception of the Stigmata, may the wounds of Christ attract us to the beauty of life flowing from them. May these wounds be a source of our hope!



Sisters Rosalyn Muraski, Carla Riach and Marlita Henseler celebrated Veteran's Day by visiting the Tucson Botanical gardens. Among the plants under the hood of the car is a statue of St. Francis.

This giant moth is larger than the expanse of an adult hand. Butterfly Magic is a closed in Tropical garden space. New cocoons and chrysalis are brought in each day. Once they hatch they only live a couple days-long enough to lay eggs.

Sister Carla Riach



A Saturday Adventure in Rome

Weather here has become beautifully autumn (well, no colors really, but sunny and cool - even cold!). I had quite an adventure on Saturday - to St. John Lateran for Mass (with two of the Sisters plus the Domus' former administrator). The very elderly priest who celebrated the Mass almost collapsed at the final blessing. They had to bring him a chair . . . eventually even an ambulance arrived.

Then we went out for breakfast - during which the former administrator almost backed her chair off the platform on which the chairs and tables were set. Barely missed needing to call an ambulance for her also. Oy.

Then the former administrator returned to the Domus and three of us went shopping for Thanksgiving stuff. We decided to take the bus in order to accommodate my aversion to the subway on account of all the thieves and pick-pockets. The irony of THAT choice was that we were caught right in the middle of an all-out brawl on the bus between some non-Italian guy and his girlfriend and the bus-supervisors who board the busses to make sure that everyone has a validated ticket. The non-Italian tourist couple refused to accept that they had been caught (wanted to pay, even bribe the supervisor after the fact). When the supervisor asked for their ID, they refused to hand it over.

Unfortunately, this tourist couple was sandwiched between the rows in which the three of us sat. Taryn and I were seated in the row just ahead of this couple, while Sr. Bernadette (a slight, super polite Vietnamese Dominican from Houston) was seated in the row directly *behind* this couple. As things heated up, the tourist couple had gotten out of their seats and had moved toward the back door. Perhaps they had hoped to escape, but because the back door was closed, they were CAUGHT between the back-door and the bus-supervisor who had moved in and was standing exactly alongside Sister Bernadette. Taryn and I managed to bail from the bus with relative ease. Because Sister Bernadette was blocked by the bus supervisor, her only

hope to escape was to shove the bus supervisor out of her way . . . which she did, barely managing to escape through the middle door with me and Taryn.

However, in shoving the bus supervisor out of her way, Sr. Bernadette opened up a "hole" through which the tourist couple (the guy) decided to run. Riding Sr. Bernadette's wave, they ALSO tried to shove their way past the bus supervisor. Well, the bus-supervisor was not having it. Fists were flying as Sister Bernadette ran through the middle door to make her escape. The three of us were stunned on the side-walk . . . the bus rolled and rocked . . . thudding inside . . . At first the bus doors remained closed, keeping the brawl inside the bus. THEN the middle door opened and people cascaded topsy-turvy out of the bus into the street.

Just when it seemed that things could not get worse, *as people were rolling out of the bus into the street*, a really old man shuffled up to the doors that had opened because, of course, he wanted to BOARD the bus and was clueless to the brawl unfolding at his feet. Thankfully he wore a backpack. Because he showed no signs of moving away from the door, I stepped forward and took hold of his backpack to pull him backward. He remained clueless the whole time.

At that point, we left the scene. We were not the *only ones* to escape. You see, there had been a whole 'NOTHER crew of passengers, Italians, who had ALSO boarded the bus without tickets and who were ALSO in the process of being ticketed by the bus supervisors. For them, the brawl with the tourist couple was bad-news / good-news in that it shifted all of the attention toward the tourist couple and away from them, enabling each one of them (7 or 8) to escape the fate of a €150 fine. They were scampering along the sidewalk just ahead of us, counting their "blessings" or the turn of events that enabled them to get off the hook.

After this, we moved along to continue the shopping experience that we had begun. We stopped into a Bialetti store and purchased a long-needed 9 cup



Sister Bernadette and I in front of the Bialetti store. She was fascinated by the HUGE porcelain moka. Right: a smaller version of the moka itself.



moka for the Domus. Then we moved along to Castroni's, a Roman supermarket that specializes in international food-items. We purchased our cranberries, some molasses and other holiday items. Castroni's also has a famous classic bar where they serve coffee, pastries and sandwiches. Roman parents bring their children to Castroni's to introduce them to the world of Italian coffee-bars - what to order, how to order, how to eat standing up at the bar in a crowd; it is almost a "rite of passage" for Roman children that I enjoy watching unfold. I appreciated the openness of Sister Bernadette and Taryn to this Roman shopping experience. We tend to identify Rome with Churches, but Rome is so much more than Churches (even if they remain core to our experience of Rome).

The three of us made our way home, this time on a peaceful bus. What a day!!

Sister Marie Kolbe Zamora

Sister Veterans Honored at Veteran's Breakfast in Manitowoc, WI



Manitowoc Sunrise Rotary invited Sisters Mary Frances Maher and Charles Ann Champeau to their annual Veteran's Breakfast on November 12. The Sisters joined forty-five other veterans gathered in the Wisconsin Room at Felician Village in Manitowoc. Sister Mary Frances served in the Army prior to joining the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity; Sister Charles Ann served in the Navy. The program began with the Invocation by Father Gerald Foley, and was followed by a Color Guard presentation of flags including the portrayal of a soldier Missing in Action, and a personal account of military service by Todd Brehmer, Manitowoc County Director of Veterans Services. The program ended with heartfelt expressions of thanks to all who served.

Sister Marcollette Madden

Sisters Welcome Michigan and Northern Wisconsin Mothers and Daughters



On Saturday, November 16, 2024, Sisters at the Motherhouse welcomed Mothers and Daughters from the Menominee, Carney, and Escanaba Catholic parishes. All of these are in the Diocese of Marquette, Resurrection, Holy Spirit specifically in Menominee. Marinette's Holy Family Catholic parish (Diocese of Green Bay) were also among the guests.

Allie Ripplinger, once a FOCUS Missionary at St. Albert the Great Campus Ministry, Houghton, Michigan, organized the visit. Young people ages seven months to high school and their mothers toured our home, prayed with our Sisters and dined with us in our cafeteria. It was a day

of family and Sister interaction. It was certainly difficult to determine who enjoyed it more. The added voices enhanced the liturgy and kept before us the intention of families and vocations on this third Saturday of the month.

For part of the last hour of the visit, mothers walked to Chiara Convent for a session on prayer led by Sister Pam Biehl. Sister Mary Ann Spanjers interacted with teens. Sister Kathleen Murphy, Sister Theresa Feldkamp, Sister Carolee Vanness, Sister Myra Jean Sweigart, Sister Carol Juckem and Sister Sue Ann were hands on with the children in the bakery. Sister Concepcion Medina, Sister Michelle Marie Ozuna and Candidate Cyan enjoyed running with the wee little ones. Sister Christine Stoller also added an extra pair of hands. A group photo was captured before the group made their road trip home.

We received this sweet message:

Dear Sisters,

Your generous, loving hospitality is the Lord's gift to us. Thank you! We are so grateful to receive the gift of yourselves and praise Him for all the ways you pour yourself out for us-emulating His Love. Your motherhood to us leads us ever closer to Him. We love you!

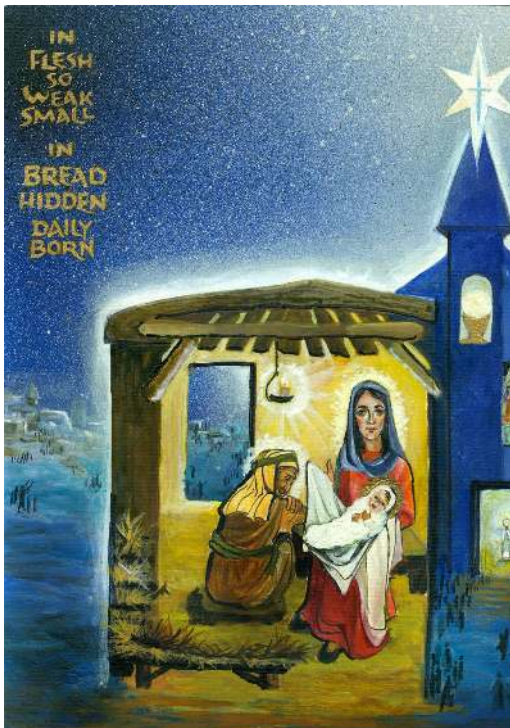
In Christ's Love,
the Mothers and Daughters of Marinette, Escanaba,
L'Anse and Menominee

Sister Julie Ann Sheahan

**FRANCISCAN SISTERS
OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY**

Holy Family Convent
2409 S Alverno Rd
Manitowoc, WI 54220

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



Motherhouse Sisters Extend A Warm Welcome to Manitowoc Sunrise Rotary

Twenty-one members of Manitowoc Sunrise Rotary, including spouses, gathered in the Patio Lounge of Holy Family Convent the afternoon of October 29. The visit featured a Motherhouse Building photo quiz, the history of Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, an interactive tour, and supper with the Sisters.

Excerpts from messages of appreciation sent by Rotarians follow.

“Holy Family Convent is a peaceful, welcoming place.” - Kathy Bernhart, Past President

“Mary and I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to visit and tour your Convent. You provided us a great experience, education, and even a wonderful meal. I believe we all came away with renewed inspiration of our faith.” - Dennis Huckins, Rotarian

“The Sisters have a long and interesting history of service.... Sunrise Rotary is grateful to have learned about this treasure in our community.” - Elsie Patterson, Sunrise Rotary President

“The tour will remain a memorable event in my mind. I am certain all who attended came away with a little more knowledge and understanding, and thoroughly enjoyed it.” - Paul Roekle, Rotarian



Left to right: Ed Hansen, Rotarian; Judy Decker, Ed's sister; Tammy Beringer, Rotarian, Sister Marcolette Madden, Rotarian, Sister Caritas Strodthoff and Sister Carol Mathe.