

# Communigram

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

## Formation Weekend: The Vowed Life

The theme for Formation Weekend 2025 was “The Vowed Life”, with talks on the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. The weekend held many blessings for Sister Concepción Medina, Sister Catherine Peter Logan, Sister Michelle Marie Ozuna and Cyan Reed who were especially thankful to Sister Theresa Feldkamp, Sister Kathleen Murphy and Sister Julie Ann Sheahan for their preparation of such an enriching and memorable weekend.



*From left to right: Sister Theresa, Sister Concepción, Father Joachim, Sister Catherine Peter and Sister Michelle Marie.*

The weekend began with the viewing of the film *All or Nothing: Sister Clare Crockett*. On January 12<sup>th</sup>, less than a month before our formation weekend, Sister Clare Crockett (Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother) was declared as a Servant of God which made the viewing of the film very special. Following the movie we had time for discussion. The transformation of Clare that we witnessed in the movie as well as all the accounts of the lives impacted by her throughout her life as a Religious Sister were so inspiring and moving. She was quoted in the movie many

times but one scene was very memorable. She had taken a group on pilgrimage to her hometown of Derry, Ireland. After visiting with her family, a pilgrim asked her “Don’t you worry about your family?”. She replied with confidence, “If I take care of God’s things He will take care of mine!”. Whenever another Sister would ask her for a favor or something they knew was cumbersome she would reply without hesitation, “Of course.” She did nothing with half-measure she lived with an “all or nothing” disposition where she gave all to the Lord.

After the discussion of the film, we prayed a very special and meaningful night prayer prepared by Sister Kathleen that wove scripture readings on the vowed life with writings of St. Francis.

Due to illness Cyan was unable to join us physically for the entirety of Formation Weekend, but Sister Concepción, and Sister Catherine Peter and Sister Michelle Marie were able to connect with Cyan. Everyone was able to be united for a few moments via video while Cyan remained quarantined. Though we could not share physical space we felt the togetherness.

The first full day of Formation Weekend started in St. Francis chapel with morning prayer followed by Mass for the intentions of all of those in formation. Father Joachim Studwell, OFM, the speaker for the weekend, was the presider at Mass. Following Mass, we heard Father Kim’s first talk titled, *The Vow of Poverty – Depending on the Lord*. Father Kim provided historical information about the evolution of our faith and the rich history of Christian faithful who have tried to live a privileged life of poverty. He explained that to undertake poverty is a grieving process and we should ask ourselves, “What am I letting go of, what am I clinging to, and what does it symbolize?” Another thing we took note of from Father Kim’s talk was that poverty

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# Serving on the Board of a Sponsored Ministry

Sister Anne Turba and Sister Julie Ann Sheahan serve on the board of Clement Manor, Greenfield, Wisconsin—the most recent of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity's sponsored ministries. They are very new to the board - serving since September 2024.

Clement Manor, sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, is a faith-based senior living community in Greenfield, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Our mission is to promote healthy aging of individuals on our campus and in the community through the values of respect, collaboration, and quality service.

Continuum of Care includes Independent and Assisted Living Apartments, Transitional Care (short-term rehab), Skilled Nursing, Clare Suites Memory Care and Enhanced Assisted Living, and the Center for Enrichment Lifelong Learning Classes. Residents' needs will be cared for in every stage of life.

One of seven Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Sponsored Ministry institutions Clement Manor joined the system in 2024. It's Board which meets every two months consists of ten members, including Milwaukee business people (lawyers, financial professionals, IT, entrepreneurs) two School Sisters of St. Francis who were former sponsors of the facility and two Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity.

Serving on a senior living community board presents a different learning curve for each of the Sisters. Sister Julie Ann's only experience is seeing her Sisters in Community, family and friends deal with aging and retirement planning. There is much to learn! Being part of healthcare for many years, Sister Anne has previously served on the Holy Family Memorial Board as well as the FSCC Sponsored Ministries Board.

This past month was the grand opening of the Clare Suites Memory Care and Enhanced Assisted Living "Sensory Cove." The newly updated cove brings many sensory activities and items for our residents to enjoy in their programming. The IN2L touch screen system hosts online games, music, activities, exercises, relaxation screens, and more for residents to keep their minds and bodies active. The musical instruments are a great addition to our existing music therapy programming. The sensory toys and weighted blankets help keep minds busy while reducing anxiety. The robotic pets bring joy and calmness to residents as they hold and brush them. Essential oils use the sense of smell to help with relaxation and feelings of wellness. The Clare Suites Sensory Cove would not be possible without the love and support of a family donor.



Sister Anne Turba



Sister Julie Ann Sheahan



Clement Manor offers Cristo Rey students practical experience in nursing and senior activities through this partnership. Five students currently work at Clement Manor, three of whom aspire to pursue nursing careers and two of whom gain insights into senior care. Students actively contribute to the nursing and activities programs and are evaluated regularly by Clement Manor supervisors, ensuring they receive meaningful and constructive guidance.



Throughout the years, Clement Manor Senior Living Community has been more than just a place to live; it has been a nurturing senior living community for all stages of life. From the School Sisters of St. Francis to the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, the Catholic vision and mission remain the same – committed to providing a continuum of care and fostering the highest potential for the well-being of each individual on our campuses and in our communities through the values of respect, collaboration, and quality service.



## Formation Weekend continued from p. 1.

removes all shame. He painted the image of St. Clare when she presents herself to her angry family after having run away to follow Francis. Without shame she presents her cut hair to her family signifying her free choice of poverty while clutching the altar cloth with one hand. The attitude of poverty is dependence on the Lord and his Divine Providence. He explained that the fruit of poverty is joy and that it is the center of our solidarity with God, creation, and all those we encounter in our ministries.

After his talk Father Kim joined those in formation for lunch where he listened attentively to our vocation stories. He shared memories of his own time in formation and spoke highly of Father Placid Stroik who was his formation director after first vows.

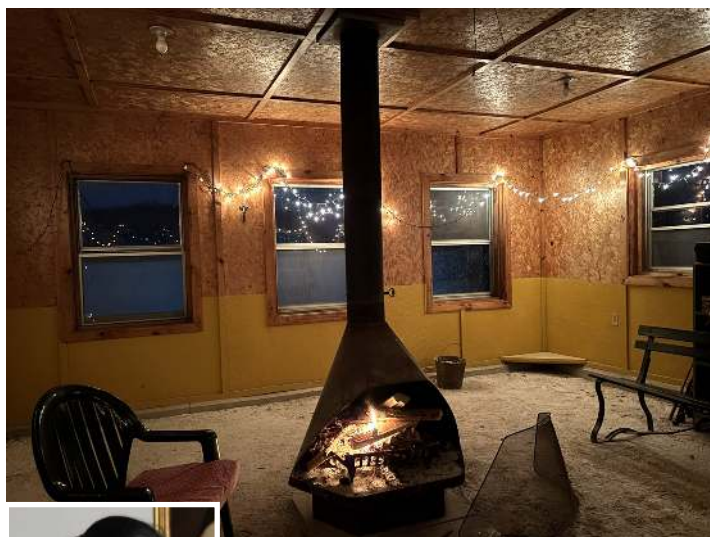


*Making popcorn for the Community - looks like they were having fun!*

In the first talk of the afternoon titled, *The Vow of Obedience – Surrendering My Will*, Father Kim explained that as humans we all have a vocation to worship God. He defined worship of God as obedience to God with the fruit of that obedience being eternal life. Living the vow of obedience comes from a foundation of love. Moving away from self-interest, self-absorption, or self-entitlement we are able to consider the needs of the other and the greater good.

Before Father's final talk, all took a small break to visit and share treats of ice cream and fresh baked chocolate chip cookies. It was just the needed burst of sugar before heading-into the final talk titled, *The Vow of Chastity – Sharing My Heart*. Father started the talk with reading the Gospel of Mark 10:28-30 in which we hear Peter tell Jesus "We have left everything to follow you." Jesus speaks to him of eternal life and the hundredfold. It is natural to count the cost

of what we are giving up but we do it all out of a sense of love and go into the future in and with faith. Love is truly the foundation of all the vows. Father Kim also made the point that integrating our human sexuality is a lifelong process. We live our celibacy by channeling our sexuality into service for others and for something "more". Father shared we have to open our hearts to God and allow God to open his heart to us—He is not ashamed of our humanity. At the completion of the last talk, all expressed thanks to Father Kim for his generosity in preparing such an enriching day.



Thankfully after evening prayer and supper Cyan was finally free from quarantine to join the group for recreation. Cyan and Sister Michelle Marie were charged with planning the evening. We all hiked through a little snow to the green hut where we built a fire, shared a few laughs, listened to music, made s'mores and drank Mexican hot chocolate. It was a fun evening and we cherished our time together. The next morning, we participated in Morning Prayer and Mass with the whole Motherhouse Community. Sister Natalie joined us for a nice Sunday breakfast. We ended our amazing formation weekend with dinner with our directresses.

Sister Michelle Marie Ozuna

# Tucson Catholic Young Adults Gather for Eucharist Reflection by Franciscans



St Thomas Parish, Tucson, Arizona was the gathering place for over forty Catholic young adults to reflect, discuss, pray and enjoy being together for a Franciscan presentation on the Eucharist on March 13, 2025. They came from St Augustine Cathedral parish, St. Mark, St Francis de Sales, St Thomas More Catholic Newman Center, St. Odilia and St Thomas the Apostle.

Franciscan Friar of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province, Brother Matthew Ryan, OFM serving as a transitional deacon at the Franciscan Renewal Center along with Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity Sister Mary Ann Spanjers guided the evening with an emphasis on how much God is in love

with us! Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity Sister Carla Riach and pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle, Father Patrick Crino, also accompanied the young adults. The evening was meaningful to them as expressed in their comments:

“Your joy and humor as you shared about the Eucharist was appreciated. Your enthusiasm is contagious. I liked the reflections that really made us think about our own lives in correlation with Jesus.”

“I appreciated sharing with those at my table their experiences with the Eucharist and Adoration. It was good to hear the stories told about the life of St. Francis and both Brother and Sister’s lives.”

“I was reoriented to how the Eucharist and Adoration is to direct us to minister and love others. I loved the part about a relationship with Christ not entailing just a private space with Christ.”

“I appreciated learning more about what it means to participate in adoration, listening to other people’s experiences and learning about how much God loves me”

## Sisters Attend Grand Opening of the new Poverello House

Sisters Rosalyn, Carla, and Marlita attended the Grand Opening of the new Poverello House in Tucson on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Poverello House is a home-like place of welcome and a safe environment providing daytime rest, food, laundry facilities, showers and companionship for individuals experiencing homelessness. Brother David Buer established the first Poverello House in Tucson back in 2008 when he resided at San Xavier Mission.

This new house is larger and has more yard space for the guests. The sisters were impressed with the wonderful Board Members and volunteers available to give tours of the house. Ten guests can be served each day and they register for their day ahead of time. Many come back each week.

Poverello House hosts women on Wednesdays and men Thursdays-Saturdays. Besides the basic house amenities individual case management is offered as well as a free clothes closet and free hygiene items.

An active guest said, “I am so grateful to this place. It means so much to know people care about me. Being able to just come and sit down inside is something so much bigger than people realize.”

Sister Carla Riach



Sisters with Br. David



Front of House



House Fence



## Parish Mission Focuses on The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy



Sister Pam Biehl gave a parish mission for the parishioners of St. John's parish in Little Chute, Wisconsin from March 9-11, 2025. Her topic was "Living the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy." She began by asking the question, "What can we do to make ourselves available to God so He can do incredible things with us?" She answered that question by sharing how the works of mercy is the way God can do just that.

For three evenings from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Sister Pam looked

at each work of mercy in this way:

- Began with a quote about one of the works of mercy.
- Shared a short insight into that work of mercy along with a practical way to carry it out in daily life.
- Spent a moment of quiet reflection thinking about how to put that work of mercy into practice.
- Shared that idea in a group discussion.



Sister Marie Kolbe Zamora said in one of her talks last month that Pope Francis' legacy can be summed up in one word: Mercy. What better way to share that "mercy" with others then to put the corporal and spiritual works of mercy into practice every day.

Sister Pam Biehl

## Sound of Music in Zanesville



The hills of Zanesville were alive with the Sound of Music on March 20, 21 and 22 as the Drama Club at Rosecrans High School presented their spring musical. The week before the show we Sisters were invited to participate in it with the students. We saw this as a vocation opportunity, so Sister Michael Ann and Sister Bernadette joined the last few practices and the dress rehearsals with Sister Maureen Anne being their supporter in prayer. During the practices there was plenty of time for interaction with the students,

and they were amazed when Sister Bernadette shared that her mother and her oldest sister actually saw the REAL Von Trapp family in concert about 75 years ago! Despite the apparent chaos during some of the practices, the five shows were a smashing success! But, as one of the songs says: "we cannot tell a lie," we were relieved when it was over! There were 43 high school students and 7 grade school students in the show. We thank all these young people for welcoming us "old ladies" into their world.



*The two Sisters with Jillian Lepi (Director of the show) and the 2 youngest Von Trapp children.*

Sister Bernadette Selinsky

# JUST Gospel!

By Sister Kathleen Murphy

"When I worked at a computer repair place, a guy brought a unit in to get repaired, and I looked at him and said that I couldn't help him. He was kinda irritated and was asking why a computer repair place couldn't repair his computer. I told him it was because he brought in a dehumidifier and not a PC tower." (buzzfeed website)

We've all probably made some silly mistakes in our use of technology. However, Pope Francis can also see a more serious side of the use of technology today. He finds this concern worthy of our prayer. His intention for April is: *Let us pray that the use of the new technologies will not replace human relationships, will respect the dignity of the person, and will help us face the crises of our times.*

Journalist, Bill Schmitt considers Pope Francis' thought on technology in an article entitled *Perspectives on the Ethereal Battle of Man vs. Machine Learning*. Let us look at some of these ideas.

*One might say that four decades after Pope John Paul II concluded his landmark presentations on the "Theology of the Body," Pope Francis is compiling a less formal "Theology of the Disembodied."*

*He is summoning the flesh-and-blood faithful to heighten our commitment to mind, heart, soul, solidarity, and dignity at a pace that outwits the growing global endeavor to give us "chatbots" and much, much more.*

*Francis has said "At this time in history, which risks becoming rich in technology and poor in humanity, our reflections must begin with the human heart. . . . Only by adopting a spiritual way of viewing reality, only by recovering a wisdom of the heart, can we confront and interpret the newness of our time and rediscover the path to a fully human communication."*

*Technical extensions of our natural abilities can help the world to overcome its language gaps, better understand our "patrimony of written knowledge from past ages," and support our thinking in many disciplines "as a means of loving service," he acknowledged.*

*However, digital dominance can also cause "cognitive pollu-*

*tion" that misinforms and misleads us. This is the battle of Man vs. Machine Learning, the Flesh-and-Blood vs. the Disembodied. Pope Francis has clearly studied both the benefits and dangers of any new "wisdom" that is not ensouled with human values and activated virtues.*

Continuing with the same train of thought, in a message delivered to the Society of Saint Paul, the pope said, *Use the most effective and up-to-date means of communication to bring the Good News to people where and how they live."*

*He told the priests not to forget St. Paul's message in the Letter to Romans to not be conformed to this age, but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds. Paul does not say transform the world, but ... 'let yourselves be transformed,' that is, make room for the only subject who can transform you: the Holy Spirit, the Grace of God."*

*The Holy Father continued, and now, after the early days of euphoria for technological innovations, we are aware that it is not enough to live 'online' or 'connected,' we need to see to what extent our communication, enriched by the digital environment, actually creates bridges and contributes to the construction of the culture of encounter.*

How does all of this relate to hope and to Francis' Cantic of the Creatures? You may recall an earlier citation of a thought from the Brothers of Taizé that says: *Far from being a simple wish for the future with no guarantee that it will come about, Christian hope is the presence of divine love in person, the Holy Spirit, a current of life that carries us to the ocean of the fullness of communion.* Can this current of life that is the Spirit have anything to do with a technological reality? No! The Spirit can only live and move in a human heart and mind. The Spirit's truth can then be shared and enlarged upon through technology as the tool of a human inspiration.

In terms of a glance at St. Francis' Cantic of the Creatures, we can focus on the last two lines which say: *Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks, and serve him with great humility. God has gifted us with intellectual gifts that have led to amazing advances in the field of technology. Yet, Francis calls us to serve God, not to **become** a god, not to be creation's dictator. He also challenges us to serve with humility. This must be a true and*

*sincere humility which recognizes the glorious person of our God. We are reminded of God's awesome power in creating all that is and then to see our role in using our talents to preserve and complement the wondrous universe that surrounds us.*

Perhaps this month we can take time to examine our own use of and attitude toward technology. Do we use it as a tool to make quality connections with people and worthwhile content? Do we use technology in ways that merely produce information and idea pollution in our minds and days? Do we allow our devices to dominate our time? Do we allow these tools to rule us by convincing us that cer-

tain gadgets, fashions or modes of entertainment are necessary for our comfort and happiness? When is the last time we used a technological device to bring truth or inspiration to our day? When is the last time we used technology to make a worthwhile and charitable connection with someone?

We pray in the words of the National Council of Catholic Women, *Loving God, we seek balance in our use of our devices. May we use technology and our time wisely as a means to communicate your message of love to the world. Amen.*

## How Great Are your Works, O Lord!

These words from Psalm 92 rumbled through my mind about three weeks ago. On Thursday, my phone rang, and the person on the other end said: 'Sister Renee, this is Michael Weitz. You probably don't remember me, but eight years ago you helped me recognize God's call, inspired me to follow it, and now I'm now a priest with Madonna House, Combermere, Ontario.'



Father Weitz

'Praised be Jesus Christ!' I replied. But before I could go on, he hurriedly declared: 'The reason I'm calling is that we (like he and I were joined in some joint apostolate) must get to Vice-President JD Vance and tell him about NaPro, so he knows there's an alternative to IVF!'

Wow! A double whammy. God leads Michael Weitz, through something I said or counseled, to the priesthood, and now God was talking to me and moving me to action through Father Michael. Again, 'How wonderful are your works, O Lord!' roared through my cranium.

Next day, Friday, I answered my phone only to hear: 'Sister, my name is Angela Schnieders, and 10 years ago I

heard your interview on Edith Stein and the genius of woman. I want you to know that what you said changed my life forever.' She quickly recounted how she was single and discerning her vocation when she heard my interview, how she subsequently met and fell in love with her husband (taking his surname, Schnieders), and was blessed with two lovely children with the help of NaPro-Technology. She continues: 'Would you be my guest on my podcast, Viriditas and share Of Pillars and Spores: the Genius of Woman with my audience?'



The Schnieders'

'Of course,' I replied (desperately trying to absorb how mysteriously, yet exquisitely God works). 'How the power of the Holy Spirit, speaking through Edith Stein—Saint Teresa Benedicta—spoke to your heart and set you on the path of marriage and motherhood so that you could help form women into whole persons—and now you want to share that vision with your listeners.'

**How great your works, O Lord, accomplishing your Will perfectly!**

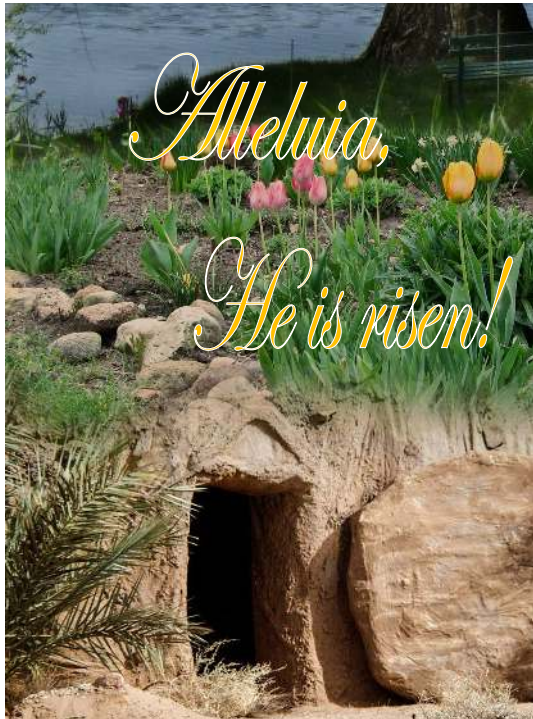
Sister Renee Mirkes



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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED



## Houston Catholic Parish Nurtures Franciscan Sisters' Postulant's Vocation



What kind of parish nurtures a Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Postulant's vocation? On a recent vocation road trip Sister Mary Ann Spanjers and Sister Julie Ann Sheahan made it a point to sojourn to Postulant Cyan Reed's home parish in Houston, Texas.

Dedicated to our Lady's honor, the parish is served by Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Martin De Porres. Holy Rosary Catholic Church was established in 1913. Today families filled the pews for the 8 a.m. English Mass. The church's exterior was built from Bedford stone; the interior was constructed of Texas limestone. The windows were of a strikingly Marian blue with Dominican saints highlighted throughout.



Father Joseph Paul Albin O.P. is the current pastor. Father Thomas More Barta O.P. presided at the liturgy at the time of our visit. The former pastor knew Cyan well enough to encourage her to follow her heart to a Franciscan vocation. Eight friars live in community at this Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston parish.