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Communigram

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY

Leadership Enrichment Program

On October 15th the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Sponsored Ministries hosted ninety executive leaders, Sister volunteers, Sister board members and Sister presence individuals for the Leadership Enrichment Program (LEP). Mass in St. Francis Chapel opened the day with Father Mark VanderSteeg as presider assisted by newly ordained permanent Deacon Tom Brefka and music provided by the Franciscan Sisters Outreach Choir.



Attendees moved to the Franciscan Center for the program themed *In His Name, All Is Well.* After enjoying a continental breakfast, Sister Marie Kolbe Zamora presented the morning keynote, *Baptismal Leadership and Agency for the World.* After asking everyone to write in a few words what the word spirituality meant to them, her presentation and Q&A session set the tone for her future work with the organizations as facilitator of Christian Formation for the leaders and employees.

During the luncheon, catered by Newton's *Moose on the Loose,* Sister Marlita Henseler presented the prestigious Sister Martin Flavin Franciscan Ministry Award. This award recognizes a leader in ministry who lives and serves according to the strict criteria of dedication to local organization and system, servant leadership, respect, and creation of positive relationships. The 2026 awardee is



Thomas Veeser, Chief Nursing Officer and Vice President of Quality, at Froedtert Holy Family Memorial in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Tom is transformative in his work by leading quality initiatives and as partner and advocate with the Froedtert ThedaCare system. He manages the evolving nursing profession and quality efforts, ensuring governance and operations remain aligned to the local and enterprise priorities. Bringing a unique perspective to his work through his experience with other Franciscan health systems, Tom is assertive, objective, and passionate about his work and supportive of those he serves.

The afternoon keynote speaker, Chris Wise, Principal Chair, C12 Business Forums, who simply describes himself as a follower of Jesus, aligned his presentation, *Leading with a Spiritual Perspective*, with some practical ideas complementing the morning keynote.

In the final session of the day the participants were divided into groups of eight members of mixed organizations. Their task was to discuss three questions and later report out to the whole group: St. Francis said, "I've done what is mine to do." What is yours to do? Is there a collective theme at this table? How does your table's theme(s) resonate with what you heard today? Interestingly, many table collective themes were similar: service, mission, and building relationships.

LEP 2026 was a pack-filled day of information, relationship building, and high energy! Members of oldest to newest system organizations were excited to meet personally with each other.

Sister Kay Klackner

Sisters at St. Agnes Celebrate

These things I speak in the world, in order that they may have my joy made full in themselves.

This quote from St. Francis of Assisi lends itself to this year's commemoration of the 800th anniversary of his transitus from this life to eternal life. Here in Green Bay, we found many ways and reasons to celebrate!



On Saturday, October 3, we went across town to St. Mary of the Angels Parish. This is the home of the St. Ann Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order while the parish is served by the Friars of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province. Together the members of the fraternity along with the friars hosted an afternoon and evening of Franciscan enrichment. The celebration began with an inspirational talk by Father Bill Stout, OFM, who spoke about the down-to-earth accessibility of the spirituality of St. Francis. This was followed by a reflection by Sister Elise Cholewinski, OSF, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross. She entitled her presentation *AI—The Awesome Incarnation.* She spoke about Francis' focus on Jesus present in the Incarnation and the Eucharist. She highlighted the humility of God as St. Francis saw it. The afternoon concluded with a panel of members of St. Ann Fraternity. They spoke of their own call to the Franciscan life and the form that this life takes in their day to day lives.

At 4:00 we joined with the broader parish community for the weekend vigil Mass. Since it was a Franciscan church, we were privileged to join in celebrating the liturgy in honor of St. Francis. Following the Mass, many stayed to join in the traditional Transitus prayer service, calling to mind Francis' passing from this world, to eternity. This beautiful dusk gathering was led by Deacon Paul Umentum, also a member of the Secular Franciscan Order. As Sister Moon and Stars made their appearances we all proceeded to the parish hall to share a simple meal and much joy.



The morning of the feast of St. Francis found us attending Mass at Nativity parish in Green Bay. From this celebration we made the short drive to Bay Family Restaurant in Howard for a delicious lunch. Our next planned event was a blessing of our places of ministry. The first stop was McCormick Home here in Green Bay. We concluded our brief tour of the facilities with a prayer of blessing asking God to bless Sisters Dorothy and Joellen and all the work that they have done and will do within those walls. We then returned to St. Agnes where we toured Holy Family School and did the blessing prayer there asking God's direction of Sister. Kathleen and all who work in the school setting.



Sister Joellen Kohlmann and Sister Dorothy Wagner



Sister Kathleen Murphy

The final joy of the day was a sharing of the sweetness of Evening Prayer for the Feast of St. Francis as well as the deliciousness of brownies and ice cream—a truly Franciscan treat in its brown color! The days were ones of true joy and blessing as we gave thanks for our Franciscan calling!

Sister Kathleen Murphy

SPIRITUS Ministries Express Gratitude

This article first appeared in the October 2026 Newsletter SPIRITUS CONNECT. SPIRITUS ministries lead youth into life-changing encounters with Jesus through retreat ministry, prayer and parish youth ministry.



The Infant of Prague holds a special place in the heart of SPIRITUS Ministries as we entrust the future of our mission to His loving care, seeking His guidance to follow God's holy will. We are deeply grateful to the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity in Manitowoc for their generous gift of a beautiful Infant of Prague statue. The statue will hold a place of honor in our facility, serving as a reminder of the humility, trust, and childlike faith Jesus invites us to embrace.

As we look to the future, we pray through the intercession of the Infant of Prague that SPIRITUS Ministries will remain faithful to its mission of serving the Church and God's people. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Sisters for this beautiful gift of faith and devotion. May the Infant Jesus bless them abundantly for their generosity and continue to watch over our ministry, our supporters, and all those who share in our mission. Infant of Prague, bless us and guide us!

The Infant of Prague statue was originally in our House of Prayer at St. Francis Convent.

Sister Anne Marie Lom

Visit with the Sisters in Tucson

October 17th Sisters Rosalyn Muraski and Carla Riach had the pleasure of meeting Briana Lopez and her lovely family. Briana had contacted them asking if she could come for a visit so her children could meet Sisters. Of course, the Sisters welcomed them for a tour of the Convent and treated them to cookies and milk. Sister Carla was able to share her vocation story with them. Sister Rosalyn visited for a while and then had to leave for another commitment.



Briana attended Santa Cruz School when Sister Leonette Kochan was the principal. She is very grateful for Sister Leonette's patience with her as she struggled with her faith. Even in High School and College she'd visit Sister Leonette to talk about her faith journey which had included turning to Protestantism. After she married her husband became interested in the Catholic Church and that led both of them to the Catholic Church. Now the family is active at St. Edward's Catholic Church in Phoenix. St. Edward's offers Mass in Latin which the family prefers.

The Sisters hope the girls will remember their visit and maybe someday check us out. Briana would love to see her girls become Religious Sisters.

Sister Carla Riach



Sister Michelle Marie Ozuna shares her faith with St. Gregory Parish

Sister Michelle Ozuna originally from Austin, TX was asked to share her insights and faith with the parishioners of St. Gregory Parish in St. Nazianz, WI! She spoke of how the vows are prophetic because they show the world that a life given to God through the profession of vows is a concrete sign of God's presence in our midst. Along with Father Josuva Arulanandu, pastor of St. Gregory and Deacon Gary Wilhelm, Sister Michelle Marie addressed parents of the students in the Religious Education Program. They each wove the story of their call into the living works of the Church! It was a blessed night!

JUST Gospel!

By Sister Kathleen Murphy

The month of November offers two celebrations, both of which reflect the practice of our faith. We mark the Solemnity of All Saints and the national holiday of Thanksgiving. Pope Leo's intention for this month lends itself well to both days. The lives of the Saints are marked by their mindfulness and generosity towards the face of Christ present in the poor. Thanksgiving encourages us to not only offer prayers and acts of gratefulness, but to be actively aware of those who have less. Keeping these days in mind, we turn to the Pope's intention which reads: *Let us pray for the proper use of wealth, that not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service of the common good and solidarity of those who have less.*





An article by Beth Haile in *U.S. Catholic* in 2017 addresses the content of this intention well, so I will simply offer an extended quote from Ms. Haile's writing for our consideration this month. Some of it will not apply directly to our religious community as our leadership makes many donations to the poor and needy in our names. However, it is good for us to consider the way in which we encounter those in need in our daily lives, even if we may not be giving funds to them directly. So, let us consider the thoughts of Beth Haile.

A few months ago, an immigrant family, including three children, sat outside my church at the conclusion of the 9 a.m. Mass with a sign begging for money: "Anything helps. God bless." Parishioners averted their eyes and steered clear of the family as they headed to the parking lot. Nobody stopped to give money. Eventually the ushers literally ushered the family off the property after describing the various agencies and programs available to the family for assistance.

I witnessed this event soon after reading a controversial interview in a Milanese magazine with Pope Francis in which he argued that people should not hesitate to give money directly to the poor. "Help is always right," said the pope.

Almsgiving, donating money or goods to the poor, is a foundational and non-negotiable Christian obligation. How we give alms, however, is negotiable

Many Christians prefer organized almsgiving, whereby they give money to a particular organization or charity dedicated to serving a particular need, such as Catholic Relief Services or Catholic Social Services. Individual, or transitory, almsgiving such as the pope is exhorting Christians to practice, is much more controversial. Some of the arguments against transitory almsgiving were laid out by Bishop Thomas J. Tobin of Rhode Island. He urged Christians not to give money directly to the poor, insisting that such a practice enables a few dishonest "professional" panhandlers and "sustains a very unhealthy and degrading lifestyle." Bishop Tobin concluded, "Throwing some loose change at a panhandler while passing by is demeaning of his or her human dignity. Our community has legitimate and structured means of helping the poor and needy. We should support those."

Yet there are important reasons to heed the pope's call to give money freely to the poor. The most important reason is that giving money directly makes possible an encounter between the giver and receiver of alms that organized almsgiving does not always allow for.

In Pope Francis' interview, he contended that it is not enough to "throw a few coins at the poor" and insisted that dignifying those in need by "looking at them in the eyes and touching their hands" are the true marks of Christian charity. The pope explained that we should greet those who beg with a "hello" and "how are you?" We should acknowledge their humanity, ask what they need, and serve their deeper yearnings with more than our spare change.

By getting down and looking someone in the eye, starting a conversation, and, yes, granting their request for money or whatever else they might need, we serve the fuller needs of the poor for both material goods and, more important, for human love and care that they might not get at a shelter or food pantry.

This idea is not new to Christians. Jesus says "Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you" (Matt. 5:42). He does not place stipulations on giving based on the worthiness of the recipient or how the money we give will be spent. It is odd, then, that utilitarian calculations so frequently stymie our own generosity.

This is, however, a hypocritical judgment that fails to acknowledge how often we, the comparatively wealthy, also squander our own funds on luxuries like a carton of cigarettes, a cup of iced coffee, a bottle of wine, a new pair of shoes. Certainly, there is a time and place for luxury spending. But when we compare how readily we rationalize our own choices and how readily we condemn those of others, it may be time to turn the scrutiny on ourselves.

Certainly, it is not inappropriate to ask ourselves how we can most effectively serve the needs of the poor and put the bulk of our almsgiving into organizations well-equipped to reach the maximum number of people in need. But when it comes to individual almsgiving, our attitude ought to be one of luxury not utility. The money we give to the poor is likely money we were going to squander ourselves. As St. Leo the Great wrote, "Fear not to spend, sigh not over the doubtfulness of the gain." Our primary responsibility is to make sure that we are giving alms, not that those funds are necessarily what we deem well-spent.

When we see a person begging on the street, we need to remind ourselves that in all likelihood we are not doing enough to fight poverty by sharing our own wealth. We can start being more generous by responding immediately to the need in front of us, the family outside the church building, the mentally ill man with a cup outside Starbucks, the homeless veteran with a cardboard sign standing at the stoplight.

Let us join Pope Leo in his intention this month as we not only pray for the poor, but enter into compassionate encounter with them when we can, seeing them as the presence of Jesus among us.

The Transitus of St. Francis–800th Anniversary "Completion of the Baptismal Call"



Each person received a received a lite candle and renewed their Baptismal Promises at the start of this year's Transitus Service.



In the introduction Sister Mary Ann Spangers shared: "As we celebrate this Transitus of St Francis of Assisi; each of us, like Francis, is called to live the adventure of faith radically, to see and to undergo the experience of God and of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Christianity has its roots, as well as its flowering in the faith experience and it is to reach out from this center to take on concrete forms of expression.

Where did this faith begin for St Francis? The same place it began for each of us–the Sacrament of Baptism. Fr. Regis Armstrong tells us: *Francis simply wanted to live the fullness of life he received at baptism."*

This life of faith is what we celebrate during this Jubilee year of the 800th anniversary of St Francis' death becoming life, his transitus into eternal life and the example he left us."

Chicago Pope Leo XIV Pilgrimage

Sister Mary Ann Spanjers was invited to be the Spiritual Guide for the Holy Name Cathedral Young Adult Chicago *Pope Leo XIV Pilgrimage on Saturday, October 24th. The following is a brief look at the day's journey.*

At the first site, Insight Hospital *(Birthplace)*: 2525 S Michigan Ave, we looked at how the Family is the foundation of society**;** we discussed that Pope Leo continued the catechesis cycle on the Documents of the Second Vatican Council and reflected on the 1965 Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (meaning "joy and hope") on the Church in the modern world.



At Catholic Theological Union, (Received Theological Education here) the second site I emphasized that in his Apostolic Letter Drawing New Maps of Hope, signed on 27 October 2025 and released to mark the 60th anniversary of the Conciliar declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, he notes that the insights remain relevant in today's fragmented and digitalized environment, continuing to inspire educational communities to build bridges and to offer civic and professional formation with creativity.

The third site was: St. Mary of the Assumption (Childhood Church) 311 E 137th St. There, we discussed what he is teaching about the Liturgy; Pope Leo XIV is calling on the Church to strengthen the relationship between catechesis and liturgical celebration so that Christian initiation may lead people to Christ. Pope Leo recalled that Christian initiation cannot be understood merely as "preparation for the Sacraments. "Rather, he said, it should be the "womb" in which a community gives birth to faith and communion with the Lord."



St. Mary of the Assumption (Childhood Church)

The fourth site was his Childhood Home: 212 E 141st Pl, Dolton; The presentation there was on the needs of children today; Pope Leo XIV renews the Church's call to place children at the heart of global concern, warning that despite international commitments, the situation of the world's youngest remains deeply troubling.

The last site was the beautiful academy school for boys and the Shrine of St. Rita of Cascia; During his earlier days as an Augustinian seminarian, Pope Leo would have walked these halls, substituted in its classrooms, and celebrated Mass with the school community; Here the discussion was that of discernment.



The Chicago Pope Leo XIV Pilgrimage offered an experience of faith formation, prayer, community building, and spiritual reflection. Visits to locations connected with Pope Leo XIV's early life and vocation helped participants connect the Holy Father's story with their own faith journeys. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, especially regarding spiritual leadership, organization, and fellowship.

Sister Mary Ann Spanjers

NaProTechnology Goes to Mater Dei High School

If my journey to Breese, IL taught me anything, it was to trust the Lord above and beyond any misgivings I might have. You see, I had committed myself to speaking to 174 female high school students when I've had absolutely no contact with that age group over the past 30 years. Like I'm definitely convinced I've forgotten how to talk to adolescent girls, right??!!!!!



Here's the back story.

Katie, the theology department chair at Mater Dei High School, and I spoke on the phone about a question one of her female students brought to her attention. She (the student) was suffering from secondary dysmenorrhea, or painful periods and heavy bleeding, and wanted to know whether what her doctor was suggesting--inserting a Mirena IUD into her uterus--was a morally acceptable procedure.

I explained to Katie that while the IUD is a contraceptive, in this case it would be used therapeutically rather than as a contraceptive and, therefore, could be morally licit. However, insertion of the IUD left another question unanswered, also of moral consequence: **was this approach *good medicine*?** I explained how a NaPro doctor would treat the student and why it represents a medically superior way to treat an adolescent with secondary dysmenorrhea.

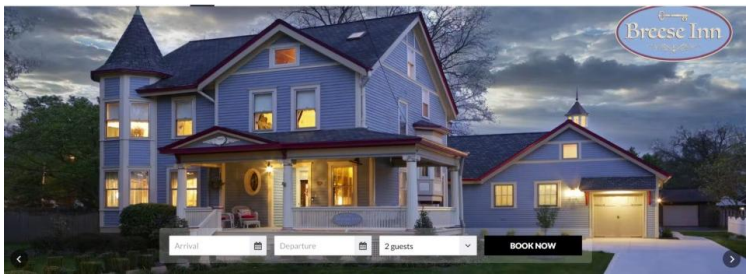
I eventually summarized a compare and contrast chart on treating dysmenorrhea between mainstream OB/Gyn and what a NaPro doc would do and sent it to Katie. She emailed me back--like within seconds of receiving it--saying I just had to come to Mater Dei High School and present the chart to all their 174 female students.

That conversation and conclusion evolved into what I and an Omaha Fertility*Care* practitioner, Shari Barrios, presented on the evening of October 6th. We developed a three-part Mother-Daughter lecture (*The NaProTechnology Revolution and YOU*) with the first part--The Wonder of EVE--where Shari exposed the beauty and power of female physiology and the ovulatory/menstrual cycle; the second part where I presented "Chastity, the Church and YOU" and the third segment--where Shari and I compared and contrasted the Mirena IUD approach to secondary dysmenorrhea with that of the NaPro schematic.

The delivery was superb, the reception beyond my wildest expectations, and the snowball-down-the-hill interest in the Illinois diocese of Belleville was simply heart-warming.

Lesson learned: God is much, much bigger than any of our misgivings.

Sister Renee Mirkes



PS The picture of the Victorian House is Breese Inn, a beautifully renovated 118-year-old home which was our home while in Breese, IL.



Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks, a time to celebrate,
a time to appreciate people who mean so much.
God bless you and give you joy and peace.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS
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Franciscan Center & Crossroads Community Church have BIG NEWS!





From the Franciscan Center and Holy Family Conservatory October Newsletter: We are pleased to announce a new long-term agreement between the Franciscan Center and Crossroads Community Church.

This partnership brings together two organizations committed to serving the community, supporting those in need, and building a stronger future for the region.

For community members, the most important things to know are:

- The Franciscan Center is NOT closing.
- All programs and services will continue.
- Staff and volunteer teams remain in place.
- The Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity retain ownership of the property and stewardship of the mission.
- This agreement strengthens the Center's long-term future and capacity to serve the community.

Together, we believe this partnership creates new opportunities to expand service, deepen community connections, and ensure that the Franciscan Center remains a trusted resource for years to come.

We are grateful to everyone who supports our organizations and look forward to sharing more information in the months ahead.

