



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Associate Program

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The Associate Alliance

Behold, We Are Doing Something New!

Kathy Doyle

As we experience the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, we find ourselves living a different life. One of the things we miss is the ability to be together in community to share our Franciscan-Clarian spirituality.

As most of you in Jamaica, Brazil, and the US are aware - and may have already experienced - there is a way to meet and share virtually: on Zoom. All of the associates in the U.S. are meeting regularly and have found Zoom to be a very good experience. It has even allowed some who have not been able to attend meetings for various reasons to now be able to participate. Welcome back, extended members!

Many of us have also had the opportunity to have Zoom meetings with other Associates and Sisters from our four countries.

During a discussion at the Associate Advisory Committee's meeting in May, the idea arose of creating a new "virtual community" to which we would invite those who now or in the past have been connected with us and our Allegany Franciscan charism but may not be able to join an existing Associate Community in person.

Response to the invitation which went out in early July was remarkable! Family and friends of sisters, associates, former members, Partners in Ministry, FSA employees, and Seculars resulted in 28 women from the US and Jamaica forming a new community.

At the first Zoom meeting, everyone introduced themselves, spoke of their connection to the FSAs and her reason for wanting to join. Most expressed an attraction to the charism and joyfulness of the sisters and a desire for a deeper understanding of Franciscan-Clarian spirituality as their main motivations. They also hoped to journey with friends in a faith-sharing community. Many alluded to the loss of community which social distancing has imposed.

While information about the Associate Way of Life was presented, the real intent was to provide a place where women of faith can meet and find "food for their souls." The meetings are held every fourth Tuesday at 7:00 pm (US time - Jamaican time is 6:00 pm). Currently they are using Sr. Briege O'Hare's talks on St. Clare, a woman for our time, who can show us how to "encounter the Divine in everything in creation." It is somewhat appropriate that while using computers and telephones, pads and laptops that Clare - the light - is the focus.

So we are asking you to invite those whom you know are former members, former students, your friends and family, those who have been influenced by the Allegany Franciscans and/or have a Franciscan heart or anyone who might be interested in learning more about the Associate Way of Life, to meet with us via Zoom.





Myrnamae Engleton

Myrnamae has always felt a strong connection to the Allegany sisters and has felt like she is a part of a caring, strong and devoted family. She immediately felt like a newborn child of God when she was so warmly welcomed while searching for a more fulfilling spiritual life. She needed to feel that who she is was important and acceptable, not just by God and herself, but also by the associates. She needed to feel included yet comfortable with her values, lifestyle and spiritual goals.

She knew she was in the right place when she first met Sr. Cathy Cahill at the Franciscan Center. Myrnamae was attending a program which led to other fulfilling programs, including the Tampa Bay Associate community.

Myrnamae attends the Tampa Bay associates' meeting each month because she feels spiritually, by God's grace, the urge to assist others and to perform God's teachings through the Franciscan-Clarian way. This has manifested itself not only through Tampa activities, but also due to a trip to Jamaica, where she lived with the sisters at Immaculate Conception Convent and assisted Sr. Grace Yap in welcoming missionary students from Canada, building new homes, feeding, clothing and providing medical care for less fortunate communities, and repairing old homes. She even attended an all-day youth rally!

She says that God led her to the Allegany sisters by way of the Catholic Church but she realizes that the Franciscan-Clarian life manifests itself in all people - with no distinction based on religious denomination, race or ethnic background.

Myrnamae remains an Associate because she feels close to the sisters and their charism - they are role models and show her God's direction. What keeps her hanging on is knowing she has God's ultimate strength and promise, now and forever.

Associates of Pires do Rio Celebrate via Whatsapp

Claudio Alves de Oliveira



Meeting via Whatsapp, Pires do Rio Associates joined to celebrate the Feast of St. Clare. Dear Saint, pray for us all.

Betty Parbst



The North Carolina Associate Community

When trying to maintain social distancing, what better way to meet than in the back yard of your parish? St. Brendan's has an area that one of our Eagle Scouts created as an Inspiration Garden and we decided that it provided us with a great opportunity to see one another. We prayed, shared stories about our recent experiences, shed a few tears since some of us have lost relatives to the COVID-19 virus, and continued our discussion of "Build With Living Stones."

We plan on meeting like this again!



Letter from Kingston, Jamaica

Hyacinth Campbell

Every night in my prayers, I mention my Franciscan Sisters and Associates and pray that God will forever strengthen you to do the work He has assigned to you.

I celebrated my 90th birthday on November 6th. My first contact with the Franciscan Sisters was at the age of 17, so for the last 73 years of my life, I have been spiritually nourished with Franciscan values. My early role models - Sr. Mary Bartholomew, Sr. Tarciscia, Sr. Fidelma, Sr. Mary DePaul, Sr. Rosita Clare, Sr. James Vincent (all deceased) - and so many more are mentioned in my nightly prayers. I had the privilege and honor to teach in Franciscan schools all of my working life and all the Franciscan Sisters who were my co-workers are near and dear to me.

The young Associates in my Jamaican group are all a source of inspiration to me and I enjoy fellowship with them whenever it is possible. My attendance at meetings has been curtailed but I will die a Franciscan. God has blessed me with clarity of mind even at this delicate age. I do have the opportunities to practice Franciscan values: sympathy, empathy, Evangelical love, my love for the clouds, the sun, the moon, the seas, the trees - all of which keep me going.

Some of my past students have become Franciscan Sisters. One told me years ago that I am the one who made her become a nun. Only God knows how it could be possible for me to have made such an impact!

I thank all the Allegany Sisters and Associates for the gift of your prayers and the knowledge that I am a member of such a family of believers. May God continue to richly bless your efforts as you reach out to our brothers and sisters in the Amazon and the needy and sometimes forgotten members of our human family.

For all those who have suffered tragedy in their lives - illness, death, spiritual challenges, etc. - my prayers are with you. Remember, God never gives us more than we can bear. When I have problems, I envisage the nails in the palms and ankles of One who never committed a sin, of One who loved unconditionally, even His murderers - "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." I love you with the love of the Lord. May He continue to richly bless you as you kiss the leper, tame the wolves, enlighten the ignorant, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, father the fatherless, etc. May you experience the peace that passes all understanding.

Let me close with the prayer that Sr. Mary DePaul sent to me when I graduated from St Joseph's Teachers College in 1949: "Before you lies the path of life as yet untrod. Whether 'neath dark or shining skies remember you walk not alone. For One there is, Who knows the way, Whose feet all paths of Earth have trod. Stay close to Him from day to day for they are safe, who walk with God."

In Memoriam



Carol Lang, an Associate from Miami, died peacefully after a long struggle with cancer. She worked at St. Francis Hospital as a nurse for many years and had a great love for the Sisters and their ministry. She happily became an FSA Associate so she could continue her love for our Franciscan Spirituality which led her to a deeper love for God.

May the choirs of angels lead Carol into paradise, and may she have eternal rest!

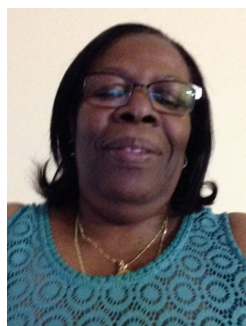
New Associates in Tampa Bay

Myrnamae Engleton & Kathy Doyle

Besides our regular Associates (Judy Radell, Linda Dees, Sheila Vincent, Marion Tarallo, Nancy Parente (Inquirer), Cindy Housely, Sally Mazzarella, Myrnamae Engleton), Kathy Doyle and Sisters Jeanne Williams, Joyce Ramage, Pat Klemm, Chris Tenn, Gloria Oehl and Anne Martin Robonie, we had extra “company” join in our Zoom meeting. We also had extended members Nancy Harrigan, Paula Lyn, Rosemary Randall, and Laura Grasso. Laura joined from her hospital room in New Jersey, where she is undergoing chemotherapy treatment - that’s commitment! Lively introductions and exchange of greetings ensued among friends, new and old.

Following a prayer to the Holy Spirit, the Rite of First Commitment for Leslie St. John and Karen Rocheleau took place. A ceremony program had been sent out previously, so everyone joined in the prayers and the singing. Mentors Judy and Jeanne introduced Leslie and Karen, who then made their formal commitment. They then placed their Associate pins on themselves, which they had received earlier, and the blessing of St. Francis was sung. The rest of the Associate community will make their recommitment on a later date yet to be determined.

Several then shared what being an Allegany associate means to them and sisters shared what journeying with associates has meant to them. What followed was a beautiful, uplifting, meaningful and deeply spiritual expression of the Allegany charism and family: laughing over memories, tears of joy over reconnecting, adding richness and depth to the Allegany community, and finding a spiritual home. It was also pointed out how important it is for an associate ‘family’ to remain connected via phone or zoom, to check on each other during hard times, isolation, health issues, etc.



Leslie St. John



Karen Rocheleau

The foundation for the Associate Program has its roots in the II Vatican Council which brought up the role of laypersons in the Church and recognized the search for a spirituality which would bring meaning to their lives. This recognition inspired religious communities to partner with laypersons in sharing their spirituality; in our case, in the charism of St. Francis of Assisi. The Allegany Franciscans officially began the program in 1987 in the US and in 1991, Sr. Teresa Sweeney introduced the program in Brazil. The objective of the program was to facilitate a mutual relationship in the spirit of Francis and Clare and to help in deepening Franciscan spirituality.

The commitment made by Associates is a response to the invitation by God to live the charism of the FSAs. The relationship with the Sisters is manifested in many ways; they share and support each other in faith, in life, in ministries and in prayer. The Associates and sisters share their gifts and talents within their local communities, faithful to the mission "to be and to witness." Above all else, they seek a deeper spiritual life by attempting to live a Gospel life, to serve the Church, to serve the people of God, to promote fraternity through ministries, and to demonstrate the FSA charism wherever they are.

Associates are present in all four of our countries: the US, Brazil, Jamaica and Bolivia, with Sr. Joyce Ramage and Kathy Doyle as co-directors. In Brazil alone, there are currently 164 Associates in 12 cities. In five cities there are no longer sisters present. Associates voluntarily participate in parish ministries as Eucharistic Ministers, Minister of the Word, coordinating tithes, coordinating parish and/or chapel activities, teaching catechism, courses for baptism or marriage preparation, etc.

In 2020, we celebrate 32 years of the Associate Program - may it continue strong!

Some of the Associate communities of Brazil



Porangatu & Novo Planalto-Goiás



Ceres-Goiás



Quirinópolis-Goiás



Pires do Rio-Goiás



Macajuba-Bahia

Season of Creation 2020



In the Bible, Pope Francis reminds us, a jubilee is a “sacred time to remember, return, rest, restore, and rejoice.” As a time of remembrance, he said, the day of prayer and the Season of Creation should call to mind “creation’s original vocation to exist and flourish as a community of love. We exist only in relationships: with God the creator, with our brothers and sisters as members of a common family and with all of God’s creatures within our common home.”

The call for a jubilee for the Earth, he said, is a call for repentance and for restoring harmony with God by taking care of “our fellow human beings, especially the poor and the most vulnerable.” We have broken the bonds of our relationship with the Creator, with our fellow human beings, and with the rest of creation,” the pope wrote in his message. The exploitation and plundering of the Earth’s resources at the expense of the poor and vulnerable cry out for justice, Pope Francis said.

In his message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (Sept. 1) and the Season of Creation, which runs through Oct. 4, the pope said the observance is a time to renew, repair and restore humanity’s broken relationship with God and his creation.

He also said it was time to “heal the damaged relationships that are essential to supporting us and the entire fabric of life.” Creation itself, he added, admonishes humankind “to return to our rightful place” as members and not masters of “this interconnected web of life.” “The disintegration of biodiversity, spiraling climate disasters and unjust impact of the current pandemic on the poor and vulnerable: all these are a wake-up call in the face of our rampant greed and consumption,” the pope said. Humanity, he said, must stop excessively consuming the Earth’s resources and “pushing the planet beyond its limits.” “Our constant demand for growth and an endless cycle of production and consumption are exhausting the natural world,” the pope said. “Forests are leached, topsoil erodes, fields fail, deserts advance, seas acidify and storms intensify. Creation is groaning!”

The coronavirus pandemic, he added, “has given us a chance to develop new ways of living” and “has led us to rediscover simpler and sustainable lifestyles.” “We must use this decisive moment to end our superfluous and destructive goals and activities, and to cultivate values, connections and activities that are life-giving,” the pope said.

So what can we do? We can discuss with the priests in our churches ideas for liturgies on faith and the environment, so that the leaders of churches know how they can work these themes into their services in order to raise awareness among the church members. The biggest highlight of the season is always when people stop to discuss these issues during church services, because this is not a common thing to be done. We can also produce materials for children, so that even the kids can be included in the Season of Creation!

We can also work to raise awareness of the Jubilee and the restorative economy among church leaders by embedding them in their formation, so that when they are getting their education to become pastors they are already engaging with these subjects.”

There has been a movement in recent years to plant new trees., and in areas where there has been lots of garbage piling up, people have gathered to clean them up.

Obviously, due to the pandemic, the actions this year are going to be more reflective ones. We can still get things done, for example start a Disposable Challenge. The challenge’s focus is to encourage people to reduce the use of disposables for seven days. It may just become a habit!

So while mass rubbish walks or clean-ups won’t feature as much this year, there will be plenty of opportunities for contemplation, action and prayer.



Message from Our New Co-Director

Greetings to all!

I am so happy to return to ministry in the Associate Program. It's great to see so many of you whom I have known for many years and meet those who have come in the past few years.

This time of pandemic has been and still is very challenging, very difficult for so many people. But there are positives as well. In our time of isolation we have still been able to come together in our communities via Zoom and have been able to invite new members to join who would otherwise not be able to do so. Although I have not been able to visit you in person, I have actually been able to visit most groups virtually at least twice!

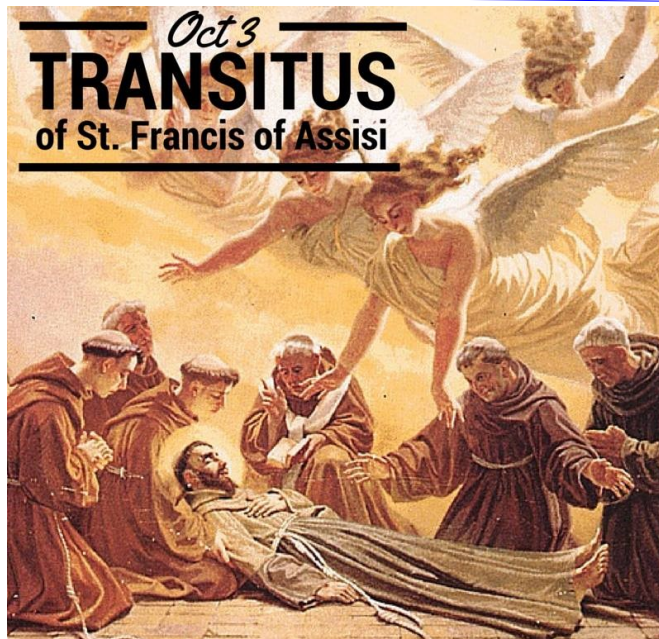
So now we are called to be present to each other and to pray for each other, as well as for so many in need of our prayerful support. We know that God is in this and will bring us through to wherever we are called to be. Remember our Chapter theme - Behold I am doing something new - LISTEN!

So let us listen together as we move forward into whatever God has waiting for us. I look forward to being on the journey with you!

Wishing you blessings of peace and joy in the Spirit of Francis and Clare.



Sr. Joyce Ramage, OSF



The Associate Alliance is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.
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