



Associate Program

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

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The Associate Alliance



Happy New Year and welcome to the 30th year of the Allegany Franciscan Associate Program!

Kathy Doyle

Besides celebration, anniversaries are often the impetus for a time of reflection on what has transpired over the years. They provide a window to look back and see how we have changed. This 30th anniversary year offers each associate a wonderful opportunity to reflect on their Allegany Franciscan journey, from the moment of first encounter to personal commitment and beyond. Clare's four-fold method of contemplation - Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, Imitate - can help us rediscover what it means to be an Allegany associate, to once again rekindle the glow that stirred within us when we recognized that we found the spiritual home we were seeking.

Since everything Franciscan is relational, besides taking this spiritual 'trip down memory lane' individually, each local community might like to use this anniversary year to reconnect with their past and perhaps try to 'vision the future.' Normally Jeanne and I do not require that local communities follow a proscribed agenda for the year - however, with the recommendation of the Associate Advisory Committee and given the uniqueness of this year, we are asking each group to revise their monthly agenda and incorporate these Franciscan Spirituality and Associate Formation Resources into this year's meetings:

- at least the first three (of four) of Meg Guider's Assembly presentations on "Embracing the Clarian Dimension of our Franciscan-Clarian Life" – available on DVD or on the FSA website – under the Associate Tab, Members only, the password was listed in the 2017 Associate Advent letter or check with your LAC. These reflections may provide a deeper understanding of Clare and the relevance of such insights for your life.

This is proprietary material and can only be shared with Allegany Franciscan sisters and associates.

- from the recently revised Associate Guidebook, review the Associate Mission and Vision Statements and Chapter Statements.

Note: All these resources are available in English and Portuguese. Spanish translations are in progress

As part of each associate's 30th anniversary reflection you are encouraged to read the short biography of Clare and Elizabeth and become familiar with the other sections of the Associate Guidebook.

It seems local communities are always looking for new Franciscan-Clarian spirituality resource material for their meetings. Our Advent letter recommended that groups use the new edition of "Build with Living Stones" for their 2019 meetings. Each LAC was given a copy at the Joint Meeting in 2017. We realize that many of you have done this formation work before, however, this new edition is a "wonderful blend of current theology, Franciscan research and pastoral practice, applicable in a North American context." The reflection questions are thoughtful and timely and each of the 14 chapters includes a resource bibliography that groups and associates will find helpful. An added incentive to consider this book is the fact that Paula Scraba from the Allegany Associate community was one of the contributors! Unfortunately it is not available in Spanish or Portuguese.

While Franciscans hardly need one, a 30th Anniversary is the perfect excuse to celebrate our Associate Way of Life in joy-filled authentic Franciscan tradition. Send in stories and pictures for a future Associate Alliance newsletters!

North Carolina Associates

Betty Parbst

Here we are, making sandwiches again! The local Meals-on-Wheels of our area does not make deliveries over Thanksgiving weekend, so local churches get together to feed their clients.

The FSA Associates and friends at our parish, St. Brendan the Navigator, bought and prepared lunch on the Friday after the holiday. We bought enough bread, ham, and cheese for 250 sandwiches, 250 apples, and 500 cookies! Our dedicated crew gathered at 7 Thanksgiving morning to make and wrap the sandwiches.



L-R: Betty Parbst, Bobbie Caldwell, Gail Callan, Mark Prokop, Ellen Nash, Rita Canfield, and Sharon Abbate.

Associates in Palmas ...

Associates and Sisters gather together for a meeting in Palmas, TO in Brazil.

L-R: Sr. Isabel, Lara, Carlos, Maria das Graças, Sr. Maria José, Andreia, Sr. Dayane, Andréia and baby Mariana, Cleila, Sr. Lilian and Rodrigo.



... and in Quirinópolis

L-R: Sr. Valdeci, Sr. Nara, Jandira, Júnior, Maria das Graças, Santana, Cicero, Jonas, Odilia, Ducineide, Lídia, Sr. Julieta, Leila, Eliene and Raimunda.



*Start by doing what is necessary;
then do what is possible;
suddenly you are doing the impossible.*

- St. Francis of Assisi

Meet Sandra Klose - Associate from New Jersey

Sandi joined the Associates six years ago at the invitation of Sr. Kate Murphy and became the LAC two years ago. At the Associate gatherings, the community usually prays then discusses a book. Currently they are delving into "Beloved of God." Their favorite annual project is to buy Christmas gifts for two families in need.

One of Sandi's many talents is as a facilitator for the Virtus Program - Protecting God's Children from Sexual Molesters. Anyone in the parish who works with or near children must take the three hour course and be certified. She became a facilitator in 2006 and teaches three or four courses a year.



Sandi and some of her "lunch buddies"

Besides taking communion to the residents of an assisted living facility (for 14 years already), she also takes them for lunch outings once a week. She is the "official Monday volunteer!" This is in addition to being a Eucharistic Minister and Lector at her parish, St. Francis of Assisi in Long Beach Island, NJ.

She maintains her relationship with the Associates, she says, mainly because of the Franciscan charism of its members and the vowed sisters of Allegany.



Sandi Klose

Tampa Bay Associate Activities

Sheila Vincent

*"To be in Your presence is all I desire;
to be in Your presence and feel Your fire
of love burning in my heart,
love that ignites,
spreading hope in a hurting world" **

Beginning the meeting with a prayer ritual, contemplation and music, the Tampa Associates gathered to celebrate Advent and Christmas together. The concept of hope in a hurting world was reflected on, as well as the Franciscan focus of "it is not so much what we do but what we are." Prayers were offered for the world to become a more just and compassionate place for all people as well as for personal intentions.

The Associates were then joined by sisters from a local covenant community and the sisters from St. Elizabeth Convent, who participated in a Recommitment Ceremony. With prayer, music, and commitment statements, the service in the Chapel was a lovely affirmation of the bond between the sisters and Associates.

** Music and lyrics by Cathy Sherman, CSJ*



Tampa Bay Associates (L-R): Olive Johnson, Sheila Vincent, Cindy Housely, Myrnamae Engleton, Linda Dees, Judy Radell, Marion Tarallo, Sr. Jeanne Williams and Laura Grasso.



Grocery store gift certificates for this year's "adopted" family



Tampa Bay area Sisters and Associates in the Chapel at St. Elizabeth Convent



English Associates and Spanish
Prospectives Associates Miami
Groups

L-R: Joanne Zarowny, Ella Pulido, Alba Mejia, Carol Lang, Rani Biswas, Patricia Estrada, Maria Saavedra, Sr. Lucy Cardet and Sr. Jo Streva.

Miami Associates' December Meeting

Marcia Gill

At our December meeting, held at the San Damiano Convent, Rani Biswas, our newest Associate, led us in three beautiful antiphonal prayers. The first Advent litany we prayed were the "O Antiphons", traditionally sung or recited during the seven days before Christmas Eve. The second and third Advent Litanies spoke of the longing of our hearts and the hope that Christ will come. The third litany was a poem which described the reality of the conditions of our Lord's birth in a stable, contrasted with the glitz and tinsel of modern celebrations, and ended with the verse:

"Christmas is subtle things reverberating
Past, Present, Future re-made.
Christmas is small things making meaning.
Hopeful waiting and arrival.
Christmas is the homeless finding refuge...
That is the Gloria the angels sing."

After a period of reflection, we all signed Christmas cards for the sisters in the Motherhouse, a project undertaken by our Associate candidate Joanne Zarowny. We discussed the meeting format for the coming year, as we incorporate Meg Guider's presentations on Clarian spirituality and the new Associate handbook into our reflections. We've also decided to include the newly formed Spanish Associate group with ours for a while, to support them in the early stages of their formation.

Our retreat will take place on January 13, 2018 - we look forward to it!

Books for Jamaica from New Jersey ... with love ...

Kathy Doyle

For many years, Associate Linda Dix has coordinated an effort to provide books and school supplies for children in Jamaica. The New Jersey Associates have been her willing partners.

In anticipation of my trip to Jamaica for the retreat "*Love Unfolding... Becoming a Wholemaker*" with Srs. Colleen Brady and Jeanne Williams, I asked Linda for recommendations of some books to take with me. Her first words were, "Be culturally sensitive!" Using that advice as my guide, I googled "approved books for school-age children in Jamaica" ... and got a list nearly 12 pages long of books for all ages! I chose titles and story lines that piqued my interest.

A concern of the Jamaican Associates, expressed at our meetings during Chapter, was their inability to get books on Franciscan-Clarian spirituality. We, therefore, added some books from the collection Sr. Kate Murphy bequeathed to the New Jersey community when she moved to the Motherhouse. We also included some from our own personal libraries.



My personal delivery plan went awry when medical issues forced me to cancel my participation in the trip. The books will get there, however!!! The books will be left in Tampa at the end of January and Sr. Maureen Clare and other sisters have agreed to take the books back with them to Jamaica.

Back Row, L to R: Peggy Madison, Carol Ciesielski, Kathy Doyle, Joan Hoolahan, Margaret Boland, Sandi Klose, Barbara Angelini, Edna Suckow.
Front Row, L to R: Robin Roche, Maddie Foley, Laretta Chiarini, Sr. Pat Sheerhan

“(strive to be) Artisans of the common good”

- Pope Francis

A Franciscan Dimension on “Ecological Conversion”

“... ask the animals and they will teach you, or the birds of the sky and they will tell you. Or speak to the earth and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea declare to you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this, in whose hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all the human race?” (Job 12:7-10)

In these lyrical phrases, the Book of Job exhorts the human person to be open and ready to be taught by animals, birds, fish, and indeed, the earth itself. It is a passage that resonates with people of goodwill, and in particular with those who have been touched by the wonderful richness of the Franciscan tradition. Inspired by the example of St. Francis, we are challenged to ‘do’ in order that we might understand more deeply the cries of God’s people, the cry of God’s creation. We are invited through our actions to become mystics, people of faith who are capable of perceiving the beauty and wonder of God’s handiwork in the lives of our brothers and sisters, and in every living thing, all created to participate together in giving glory to God and in offering a service of love and care one to the other. We must reassess our manner of perceiving and acting, and to restructure our lifestyles in order to allow the Spirit of God to fashion within each of us an ‘integral ecological vision’ that embraces all, in charity and justice.

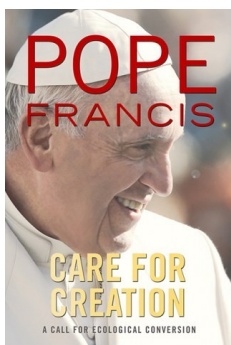
We Franciscans are accustomed to the terms “brother sun, sister moon, brother wind, sister water” - but if we stop and think about it, these are really unusual expressions. How can I say, for example, that the wind is my brother? The explanation is that the brotherhood/sisterhood that Francis intuited and experienced was cosmic: it extended to every creature and expresses an universal bond that comes from the simple fact of having a shared Creator, Father, God.

Since 2015 and the publication of *Laudato Si*, it has become very evident that a Franciscan cannot assume that attention to ecological issues is a non-compulsory element or some kind of optional extra. The notion of ‘integral ecology’ which the Pope presents in this encyclical is an essential task for all Christians and even more so for Franciscans because the Pope wanted to bind his call for an ‘ecological conversion’ to the person of Francis of Assisi, who is cited several times in the text.

Therefore, the deepest motivation of our Franciscan ecological commitment, following in the footsteps of Francis, is a *theological* motivation; God is recognized as the Creator of everything, something which demands respect for God’s creation which He has given to all, not just to some.

Knowing the theoretical reasons for our commitment to ecology is not enough: we need to develop a personal conviction. The essence of such a personal conviction stems from the awareness that no one can substitute for me in the task of my personal Franciscan formation and personal choice. The process of ‘ecological conversion’ is required of us today. May we allow God to work the wonderful mystery of love and mercy within us so that we might remove the obstacles that deafen us to the cry of the Earth and the cries of the poor.

“Let us begin again for up to now we have done little or nothing.”



*Responding to God's invitation to love is the first step toward holiness.
Claim your potential for moral and spiritual growth, courage and action.*

- Ilia Delio

Reflection on a Franciscan Image

Sheila Vincent



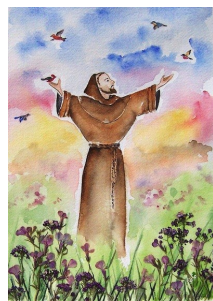
During the last meeting of the Franciscan-Clarian Spirituality Committee, a part of the day was used for members to show a favorite Franciscan-Clarian picture and share what it means to them. The sharing was inspirational and revealing. The question arose as to how this experience could be shared with our sisters, associates and partners in ministry.

To initiate this dialogue, I invite all associates to send me a favorite picture of Clare and/or Francis and share their prayer experience about it.

I'll start! The picture above has a special meaning for me as it shows Francis with a dog, a cat and birds - all of which I have as pets and who I ask St. Francis to watch over every day. It also shows beautiful mountains in the background ... and the mountains of western North Carolina have always been a spiritual place for me. My dog and I have shared many "spiritual pilgrimages" walking through the woods and waterfalls of the Blue Ridge mountains! There is a saying: "there may be limited wi-fi in the mountains but there is definitely a wonderful connection!" That is exactly how I feel. To quote Lord Byron: "Are not the mountains and skies a part of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

There is also a small church in the top right corner of the picture - even though there are very few Catholic churches up in this Baptist and Methodist enclave, it reminds me of where my faith is rooted.

See? It's that simple! Won't you share your Franciscan image?



You are the Good,
every good,
the highest good,
the Lord God,
living and true.
You are love, charity.
You are wisdom.
You are humility.
You are patience.
You are beauty.
You are safety.
You are rest.
You are joy
and gladness.
You are our hope.
You are our justice.
You are temperance.
You are all our treasure
overflowing.
You are beauty.
You are meekness.
You are our protector.
You are our guardian
and defender.
You are strength.
You are refreshment.
You are our hope.
You are our faith.
You are our charity.
You are all our
sweetness.
You are our eternal life,
great and wonderful
Lord,
God All-Powerful,
merciful Savior.

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

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