



Associate Program

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

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Pax et Bonum

The Associate Alliance



Easter ~ A Season of Hope

Easter Prayer

The veil of darkness
transformed to the brightest light.
The most dreadful end
became the most beautiful beginning.
The depths of despair
fade to reveal hope everlasting.
The curse of death
defeated by eternal life.

This Easter let us walk our own Emmaus journey and allow Jesus to touch our hearts and minds. Let us ask Jesus to help us to see Him risen and alive around us and in every person we meet. Let us ask Jesus to take away our blindness that we may see His truth; to heal our deafness that we may hear His voice; to allow us, like Thomas, to touch His wounds and believe!

Shape us, o Lord, into people of the Resurrection. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Celebrating Freedom and Hope

Jeanne Williams, osf

As we began this season of Lent just a few weeks ago, we were reminded by the prophet Isaiah of the word of God to us: "Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"

This beautiful reminder calls us once again to a Lent that is not so much about "giving up" a favorite food or avoiding something we love to do, but it is about the invitation to freedom. God is inviting us to do whatever we can to enable others to experience freedom from oppression, violence, and marginalization. God is inviting us to personal, inner freedom from selfishness, judgments, fear and hopelessness. While doing what we can to right the wrongs of the world, we also need the willingness to surrender freely to the reality of our lives as they are in the present moment, believing in faith that this is precisely where God is for us at this time.

The contemporary theologian and author Cynthia Bourgeault reminds us that "hope is never about outcomes." Soon we will celebrate Easter, the feast of hope and new life. Easter hope is born of the embrace of the cross, of dying to our own agenda as Christ did. As we allow ourselves to fall into the ocean of God's mercy and experience the embrace of God's love, whatever the circumstances of our lives, we will know the joy of new life - one filled with Easter hope!

God is annoying because ...

*He's willing to allow me to go my own way ~
even when He knows I'll end up in trouble.*



Free the Girls

Kathy Doyle



What if you could help bring freedom to survivors of sex trafficking with something surprisingly simple?

Trying to answer the question, "What are we freeing them to?" the founders of "Free the Girls" envisioned a unique model that would provide economic freedom for the victims of sex trafficking. The program helps formerly enslaved women set up micro-businesses selling second-hand bras. Why bras? There is a strong demand for used clothing in poor countries and bras are especially valued. They are easy to store but complex to make and they don't compete with local goods. Setting up shop can be as easy as hanging out a half-dozen bras from an open umbrella in the marketplace, which my brother actually saw while travelling in Costa Rica.

Free The Girls operates in Mozambique (the first program was in 2011), El Salvador and Costa Rica, where import laws allow bras to enter as clothing and not as underwear, which cannot be imported. Four bras provide a living wage for a woman in El Salvador. Two hundred bras supply a half month's inventory for a woman in Mozambique. In some areas, bras are considered a status-symbol and command top dollar. Women in the program provide for themselves and their families and no longer worry about their future. A recent report noted that some are even enrolled in school/college. Children are getting health care and many go to school, even private schools. Homes and land have been purchased

When I read about this program, sponsored by a local church, I mentioned it to the members of the book club in my 55+ community and volunteered to be the collection site. In early March, I dropped off 141 "gently-used" bras! The organization hopes to expand to other countries by inspiring more "everyday abolitionists." There are drop off locations in all the states where our sisters and associate communities are located in the U.S., except North Carolina. For Associates in Jamaica and Brazil who may be inspired, perhaps you could suggest an agency to work with or even do it yourselves?

Check it out: <https://freethegirls.org>

Lenten Lunches Prepared by North Carolina Associates

Betty Parbst

The North Carolina Associate Community took on the task of preparing lunch on Ash Wednesday for a local Lenten Lunch program. They fixed up 100 egg salad sandwiches, 50 pimento cheese, and 50 ham and cheese sandwiches, which joined a bag of chips, and a cookie in a white paper bag. Bananas and oranges were also provided for the 180 people who attended.

After lunch, all prayed, sang hymns and listened to a short reflection on scripture given by the pastor of a nearby church. It is a great ecumenical time.



The North Carolina Associates

Recommitment in Tampa, FL

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Sheila Vincent

With music and prayer, the Tampa Bay Associates celebrated their recommitment ceremony in the Chapel of St. Elizabeth Convent. The words of commitment by the Associates echoed in that sacred space and were affirmed by the many sisters in attendance.

Good food and fellowship followed in the dining room.



Associates with Co-Director Jeanne Williams, osf



Sisters and Associates of Tampa Bay, FL

"We will seek to know and live the charism of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. We promise to join you daily in spirit and prayer, taking part in local meetings, sharing prayer and our living of the Gospel, and reaching out in service to others in the spirit of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany."

(part of the Associate commitment prayer)

Festivities in Pires do Rio

Claudio Alves de Oliveira

The Associate Community of Pires do Rio gathered at the house of José Matias to pray the rosary in thanksgiving for his 94 years of life. It was a moment of much faith and devotion, with the presence of not only the Associates, but members of the local Vincentine group, members of the Catholic League of Goiandira (of which José Matias is one of the founders), friends, and family, including his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren!

José Matias is a wonderful example of an honest man, a tireless worker, who has done - and continues to do - a lot for the needy families of Pires do Rio. Our Associate Community felt honored to participate in this important moment for him and his family. May Jesus and Mary grant him many years of life, with faith, health and peace!



Meeting in Pires do Rio

Claudio Alves de Oliveira



At our monthly meeting in March, we celebrated International Women's Day, receiving a lovely gift from Associates Ivanir Martins Vilela and Maria Ivonir: a linen tray cloth, brought from Fatima (Portugal).

We then had a lively discussion based on the 2019 Fraternity Campaign theme "Fraternity and Public Policy." The focus was "**You will be saved by being righteous and just.**" (Is 1:27). This was the message sent by Pope Francis to the Catholic Brazilians. (see p. 5). The campaign has an objective of "stimulating participation in public politics, guided by values of the Word of God and the Social Doctrine of the Church, in order to benefit citizens and the common good, signs of true fraternity."

The tradition of Francis is a politic of reconstructing community. Franciscans are called to be decisive and to be on the side of the people. Franciscan values should guide us: justice, peace, integrity of creation, and living out the Gospel. We all learned a lot from our discussion and recommend it as a topic for other Associate communities.

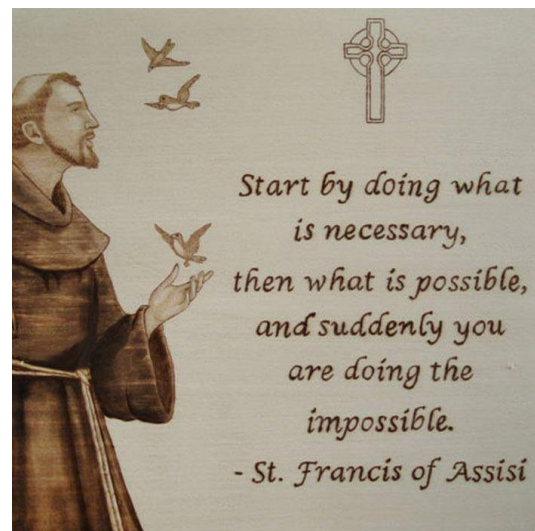
As a result of our discussion, a number of Associates decided to attend and participate in the March 12 meeting of the Municipal Chamber of Councilmen, in keeping with the "Fraternity and Public Policy" theme. Congratulations to our Associates, who showed initiative and demonstrated a good example of participatory citizenship.



Maria Ivonir, Ana Maria, Terezinha and Maria Creusa at the Chamber of Councilmen's meeting

If your Associate Community is interested in using the Fraternity Campaign as a guide for Lenten conversion, a personal, community and social journey that personalizes the saving grace of God, there is a small booklet written which provides five topics for study and reflection:

1. Lent and Fraternity, a favorable time of grace (2 Cor 6:2)
2. Strengthening the people and the fraternal common good
3. Participation and public policy
4. "You will be saved by being righteous and just" (Is 1:27)
5. Fraternity, citizenship and the common good
6. Celebration of the Via-Sacra (Stations of the Cross).



Meet Cathy Walters ~ Associate from Allegany, NY

At a time in her life when she was seeking to strengthen her faith, Cathy felt blessed to meet Sr. Kathleen Honc. They prayed together and Cathy was gently led back to practicing her faith more.

She was then introduced to the Allegany Associate community, where she found people who were focused on giving. Community service has been her passion for a while, so Cathy is trying to live out her faith by volunteering at the Olean Public Library where she works with teens, the Olean YMCA, St. Elizabeth Motherhouse, Remote Area Medical, and helping refugees through the Refugee Task Force, which provides resources for the Catholic Charities' Refugees Resettlement Center.

She is enjoying the opportunity to live a more faith-filled life that centers on service. She has also recently volunteered to be a Motherhouse "penpal" with one of the sisters living there.



Cathy Walters

Message from Pope Francis to Brazilian Catholics for 2019 Fraternity Campaign

Dear brothers and sisters of Brazil!

With the beginning of Lent, we are invited to prepare ourselves, through the penitential practices of fasting, almsgiving and prayer, for the celebration of the Lord Jesus' victory over sin and death. To inspire, enlighten and integrate these practices as components of a personal and community journey towards the Pasch of Christ, the Fraternity Campaign proposes to Brazilian Christians the prospect of "public policies".

Although what is understood by public policy is primarily a responsibility of the State, whose purpose is to guarantee the common good of citizens, all persons and institutions should be protagonists of initiatives and actions that promote "the sum of those conditions of the social life whereby men, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 74).

Aware of this, Christians – inspired by the motto of this Fraternity Campaign, "You will be delivered with justice and righteousness" (*Is* 1: 27) and following the example of the divine Master who "came not to be served but to serve" (*Mt* 20: 28) – should seek more active participation in society as a concrete form of love for their neighbour, enabling the construction of a fraternal culture based on law and justice. In fact, as the Aparecida Document recalls, "it is the lay people of our continent, conscious of their call to holiness by virtue of their baptismal vocation, who have to act in the manner of a leaven in the mass to build a temporal city according to God's plan" (505).

In a special way, those who are formally dedicated to politics – to which the Pontiffs, ever since Pius XII, have referred to as a "noble form of charity" (see Pope Francis, *Message to the Congress organized by CAL-CELAM*, XII/2017) – are required to live "with passion their service to the peoples, vibrating with the intimate fabric of their ethos and their culture, in solidarity with their sufferings and hopes; politicians who put the common good before their private interests, who are not intimidated by the great financial and media powers, competent and patient in the face of complex problems, open to listening and learning in democratic dialogue, combining the search for justice with mercy and reconciliation" (*ibid.*).

Reflecting and praying on public policy with the grace of the Holy Spirit, I hope, dear brothers and sisters, that this year's Lenten journey, in the light of the Fraternity Campaign proposals, will help all Christians to keep their eyes and heart open so that they may see in their brothers most in need the "flesh of Christ" Who hopes "to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us" (*Bull Misericordiae vultus*, 15). Thus the renewing and transforming force of the Resurrection may reach everyone by making Brazil a more fraternal and just nation. And to confirm you in these intentions, entrusted to the intercession of Our Lady Aparecida, I cordially send to each and every one of you my Apostolic Blessing, as I ask you to pray tirelessly for me.

Associate Meetings Around the World



The South Jersey Associates enjoyed their March meeting and St. Patrick's day luncheon, hosted by Peggy Madison. L-R: Sr. Pat Sheeran, Carol Ciesielski, Peggy Madison, Edna Suckow, Sandi Klose, Jeanette Poole, Jane Kopas, Robin Roche. Seated is Barbara Angeline, Chris Moll, Pat Simmons, Maddie Foley, Laretta Chiarini, and Mary Jacques.



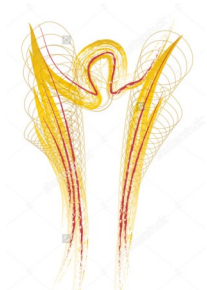
New Jersey: Six Muslims joined the Easton Assembly for the Interculturality session. In addition to their presentation, they gifted the group with Turkish Delights and they, in turn, were presented with a copy of the DVD "The Sultan and the Saint."



The Jamaican Associates attending their retreat.



Pires do Rio Associates: Maria Ivonir, Iolanda Costa, Alderiza de Fátima, Maria da Maria Gloria Rezende Silva, Maria Aparecida Vieira Miranda. Luhelel, Neila Cirino, Ivanir Martins Vilela, Claudio Alves de Oliveira .



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