

*franciscans*

# CELEBRATE



Sisters of St. Francis ~ Oldenburg, Indiana

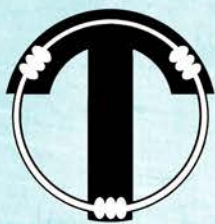
Spring 2023 Vol. 53 No. 1







franciscans  
**CELEBRATE**


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## MOTHERHOUSE

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**ON THE COVER:**  
The Ukraine flag as it hangs  
above the main entrance to  
the Motherhouse.  
Photo Credit: Beverly Wilson

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Dear Friends,

Spiritual writer S. Joyce Rupp has set the tone for springtime ecstasy in her prayer-poem, "Awaken Me". She proclaims to the triumphant Jesus,

*"Risen One,  
come, meet me  
in the garden of my life . . .  
Send me forth  
as a disciple of your unwavering love,  
a messenger  
of your unlimited joy . . .  
Awaken me!  
Awaken me!"*



This jubilation resounds in the hearts and lives of our Community, as followers of St. Francis. The desire to be opened up, reborn and awakened to God's marvels in our lives and in our springtime world is living and active! As you read the pages of our spring Celebrate, you will notice the deep gratitude, dedication, and delight in what God has done in and through us. Read the account on p. 5 of God's marvels in the life of our S. Rachel West, who served as teacher, caregiver, activist, researcher, and archivist—and who continues today to be totally engaged in her daily life. Join us in learning and celebrating our rich connections with Native American people in Montana, as S. Mary Ann Stoffregen opens our eyes to the beauty and goodness of the Crow and Northern Cheyenne. Explore the photography of S. Noella Poinsette (p. 7) as she uses her gifts to awaken us to the plight of the marginalized, and even more, to their beauty and strength. Marvel with us at our Associate Jubilarians (p. 16) who have walked the Franciscan way with us for 15 and 25 years, bringing their blessings to share with this Community and the world. Discover the generosity of Diane and Ralph Brueggemann (p. 4) and an anonymous donor (p. 20), whose loving support assists our Sisters in daily life and ministry. Celebrate with us our Sisters who have most recently awakened to the fullness of life in God (p. 22).

We thank you, our friends, for walking through this garden of life with us. Together, may we be more fully awakened to the love and majesty of the Divine!

In springtime joy,

*Sister Delouise Menges, OSF*  
S. Delouise Menges  
For the General Council

# Who We Are...



"We, the Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, Oldenburg, are women of prayer, committed to the Gospel values as lived by St. Francis and Mother Theresa Hackelmeier.

From our life in community we are sent to extend the mission of Jesus through our presence and service.

Enlivened by a spirit of justice, reconciliation and peace, we collaborate with others in responding to the needs of the world."

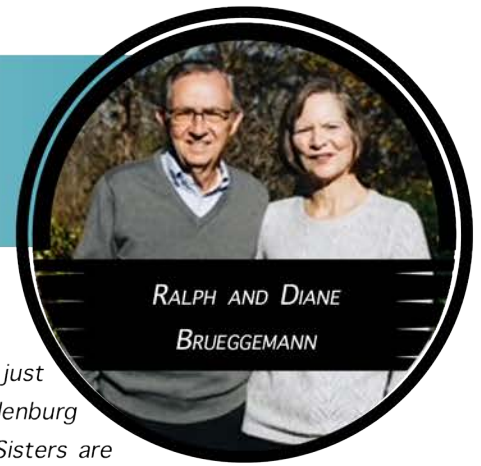


We fulfill these words by being women of prayer in the ministries we do and the places where we are present. Since Vatican II opened the doors to the many needs of the world, we minister in education, parish ministry, social service, healthcare and social justice.





# Meet the Brueggemann's...



Some of our most faithful donors were introduced to the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg at an early age because they had relatives who were Sisters. One such individual is Diane Brueggemann (nee Schuman). She grew up in St. Leon, Indiana, just eighteen miles from Oldenburg, where she was taught at St. Joseph School by Oldenburg Franciscans in first through eighth grades. However, her earliest memories of the Sisters are of visiting her Dad's two sisters, S. Inez and S. Paulita Schuman in their various places of ministry.

Diane states, "Sister Inez and Sister Paulita were always a wonderful influence throughout my life. Both of their lives were devoted to serving others in school systems and in missionary service." S. Paulita taught in schools in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio and was a missionary in Papua New Guinea for 25 years. S. Inez taught in Ohio and Indiana schools and served as a principal for 29 years before serving the Community as an Assistant in the Treasurer's Office for another 18 years.

In the 4th grade, Diane was taught by the Sisters to play the piano, a skill she shared at school events, weekday Masses and later on Sundays throughout high school.

After nine years of service in the US Navy and five years as a civilian at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, Diane returned to the area and met Ralph at a job fair in Cincinnati. They were married on August 19, 1995 and have three sons and five grandchildren. They live in Cincinnati where Diane retired from being Technical Manager for University of Cincinnati Public Safety. Ralph was in management at UC Medical Center and at Children's Hospital Medical Center. He continues to teach part time in the UC College of Engineering and Applied Science. Not to be outdone by Diane, Ralph is now studying piano at the UC College-Conservatory of Music.

Both Diane and Ralph value education and community service. They like to help others in any way they can, by finding various volunteer opportunities. At present, Diane is serving on the board of the Character Council of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, whose mission is to foster character development in children and adults as a foundation for success. She is co-chair of their Heroes of Character Celebration which is held each year to honor adults and students who have been nominated by their peers as upstanding citizens and people of character.

Ralph formerly served on the board of a nonprofit that provided ADA certified service dogs for children with disabilities. Ralph is passionate about and heavily involved in working with nonprofits to encourage accelerated sustainability for climate change mitigation among everyday people. Both Diane and Ralph do what they can to promote world peace, climate change mitigation, elimination of poverty and homelessness, and better education for all. These are issues and causes to which we Oldenburg Franciscans also have a strong commitment.

As if these involvements are not enough, both Diane and Ralph have run marathons in the past to support the Leukemia Society. They currently run in 5K and 10K races to promote other worthy causes. Ralph and Diane choose to contribute to the Sisters of St. Francis because they admire the Sisters' faithful service and unconditional devotion. They recognize that the Sisters have spent their entire lives working to help others. They hope that by their support of the Sisters, Franciscan values will continue to be promoted and others will adopt these values leading them to lives of selfless service. "Peace of mind is attained only through self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to do the best of which you're capable.

We are grateful to Diane and Ralph for their faithful support of the Sisters of St. Francis over the years. We hope to continue partnering with them in responding to the needs of our world and following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

# Sister SPOTLIGHT

*S. Rachel West, as told by S. Rachel*

I was a 'depression baby', born in Waukesha, Wisconsin, two months before President Roosevelt's 'New Deal'. Both my parents went to college, a little unusual at that time. All of us loved to read, and family evenings at home would often find us all reading books, magazines, or newspapers.

The Second World War made a big difference in the lives of my family. My dad, a World War I veteran, was commissioned as an officer in the Army Air Corps, and was stationed for three years in San Antonio, TX, where the family moved to be with him. I attended Amo High School, falling in love with basketball, as well as with movie stars, blues music, and continued my love of reading. Jane Austen and Joseph Conrad became my favorite authors.

I enrolled at Marian College. Sister Mary Carol Schroeder noted that I was interested in religion and gave me books to read that were a real awakening for me. My college years were not always happy (my father died when I was a sophomore), but they were grace-filled in terms of my budding vocation to religious life and teaching.

I entered the convent the September after graduation from Marian and received the name Sister Audrey. I have good memories of Sisters I lived with and students I taught at St. Mary Academy, Holy Trinity, Indianapolis, O.L.A., St. Mark's (Indianapolis), Streator, IL. and Rex Mundi H.S. in Evansville.

I began graduate work in history at I. U. Bloomington the same year I started teaching at Rex Mundi H.S., where I was told I was to teach French One, and eventually Two. I was ill-prepared to teach French, but with God's help I got through these classes; fortunately for me, I also taught some U.S. history. After spending four happy years there, while continuing my Master's work in summers and during the year as correspondence, I was sent to continue doctoral studies in history (full time) at I.U. I spent three months traveling to East Coast libraries, collecting information for my doctoral dissertation, a study of the U.S. State Department in 1913-1914. (Later with considerable alterations in the book length dissertation, it was published as a book, *The Department of State on the Eve of the First World War*.)

I began teaching American history at Marian in January, 1970. Political science was added to my teaching load the following year. I enjoyed living with the large Sister community at Marian.

In the summer of 1982, while preparing to teach African history and political science, as well as Global Studies, I received a grant to study and travel with a group of other college history teachers to Cameroon, in Africa. I was becoming more and more interested in justice and peace issues. I was a member of the first Community justice and peace committee, a state coordinator for Network Catholic Social Justice Lobby, and I was already submitting articles for the Community newsletter.

After the Africa trip and discernment, I decided to leave college teaching to go into peace and justice ministry on a full time basis. After a year in D.C., as an intern with Network, I joined the staff of Groundwork for a Just World, an intercommunity justice and peace center based in Detroit. One of the major high points of my ministry there was a visit to the Nevada Desert Nuclear Test site.

In 1989 I left Groundwork with the intention of resuming college teaching, but God had other plans. My oldest brother, Quentin, who had retired from banking in New York City and was now living in Buffalo, NY, became ill with cancer. Since he was unmarried and had no one to take care of him there, the Council gave me permission to move to Buffalo to be a caregiver. After seven often grueling months of home hospice care, he died in the summer of 1990.

I returned to the Detroit area shortly afterwards and accepted a position teaching history. A year later I moved back to Indianapolis and participated in a class in Black History and Race Relations at the Christian Theological Center. I also began looking after my elderly mother who was experiencing ill health.

During a sabbatical, I enjoyed a 3-week sojourn at Pendle Hill, a Quaker Center for Study and Contemplation in Pennsylvania, just outside Philadelphia. I continued to serve on the Franciscan Federation Justice and Peace Committee which I had joined in 1986.

In 1992 my Community appointed me the first director of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. I learned a great deal about other countries,

"I could never give back to this Community, much less to God, what they have given me -not even in another lifetime."



as, together with Srs. Marya Grathwohl, Evelyn Forthofer, and Carmen deBarros, I visited Cuba, and later traveled to Mexico with classmate and friend Sr. Susan Eifert. Both trips were connected with the work of the JPIC office. Visits, sometimes extended, to Tohatchi, NM, and to the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana, also greatly stretched my horizons.

My mother died in 1999, and in 2000 I resigned as director of the JPIC office. I was gifted with a personal sabbatical, and as luck would have it, my name was drawn for the Assisi trip. Together with Sr. Therese Wente and her sister, we made the pilgrimage in September 2000.

Shortly after we returned, I began a year as a resident student at Pendle Hill, living and praying with Quakers. This was an unforgettable time; in the words of Quakers, "it spoke to my condition".

Returning to Marian Convent West in the spring of 2001, I accepted a position restoring Marian's archives. I greatly enjoyed this work of putting the archives in accessible order, as it gave me an opportunity to explore the college's history from the original written records and photographs. After retiring from this position in June 2010, I moved to the Motherhouse and served as the Congregation's archivist for the next seven years.

Today I serve in retirement. I continue to enjoy reading, keeping up with politics, college basketball, PBS news, all kinds of music, choir, outdoors and Community friends. I appreciate the time for prayer.

I could never give back to this Community, much less to God, what they have given me -not even in another lifetime. As for my life as a whole, a 19th century Quaker woman wrote "Live up to the light thou hast." I hope I have done this and, with God's help, keep growing into the Light.

## Awards Received:

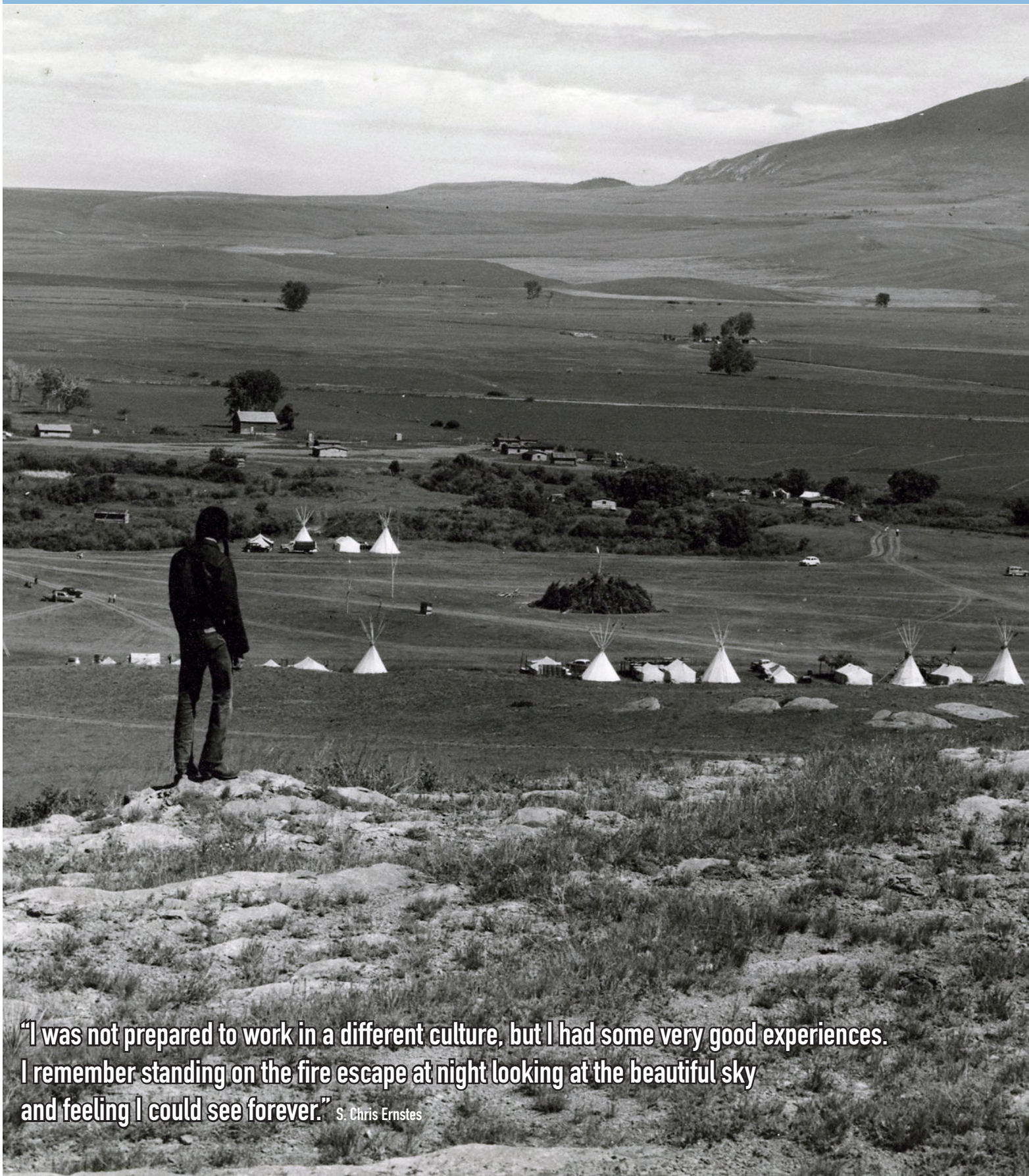
Groundwork for a Just World Peace Testimonial Award (Detroit, Michigan), 1995.

Francis and Clare Award for Distinguished Achievement in Peace and Social Justice (Marian University Alumni Award) 1996.

Franciscan Peacemaker Award (Franciscan Federation, St. Louis, MO) 2002.



# MONTANA MISSIONS – EDUCATING,



**“I was not prepared to work in a different culture, but I had some very good experiences. I remember standing on the fire escape at night looking at the beautiful sky and feeling I could see forever.”** S. Chris Ernestes



# LEARNING, CELEBRATING, FRIENDING

By S. Mary Ann Stoffregen, OSF



Before 1934 our Sisters had supported Indian missions in Montana with donations. Then came the fateful thank you letter to Mother Clarissa from Jesuit Father Thomas Grant, pastor of missions on the Crow Indian Reservation. It ended with, "I wish I could get your Sisters for Saint Xavier and Pryor for our schools. I would like Franciscan nuns in the diocese. The bishop would also welcome you." That wish came true in June 1935. Sisters M. Odo, Agnetis, Immaculata, and M. Barbara, accompanied by Mother Mary Clarissa and Sister M. Pia stepped from the train in Billings, facing a grueling 75-mile car ride to their mission home.

Wanting the Sisters to become acquainted with local children, the pastor Fr. Owens almost immediately sent them in two's to teach at Vacation Christian Doctrine schools in Crow Agency and Lodge Grass/Wyola. By September they were back at St. Xavier, opening school with 52 pupils, including 20 boarders. In 1936, three additional Sisters arrived and the school at Pryor opened with 36 pupils.



1937 St. Xavier-Pryor Faculty



St. Xavier Mission Building was built under the direction of Saint Mother Katherine Drexel. This building burned down.



Our earliest service in Montana was **education** and our Sisters gave themselves wholeheartedly. Father Laux, S.J., pastor at Pryor in 1938, quotes the County School Superintendent, “This Sister Madeline, Father, is an excellent teacher in every respect. Her discipline is marvelous, and she has a knack of being able to evaluate the capabilities of a child almost instantly. ...she is beyond a doubt the best teacher in the county. You have two excellent teachers.” (*Sister Conrad Marie was the other.*)

Meanwhile, the early missionaries were **being educated** as well. Letters from Sister Odo in Montana to Mother Clarissa in Indiana are filled with new insights about the Crow people -- centrality of family, warm hospitality, spirituality, naming practices, beliefs about animals... The Sisters were also learning about the land – the beauty of the big sky, vast distances, intense heat and cold, the annoyances of grasshoppers, locusts, wasps, snakes, and mice.

Our Sisters worked with Jesuit priests until the mid-60’s when the Franciscan Capuchins, who were already serving on the adjoining Northern Cheyenne reservation, were asked to also staff the missions among the Crow people. In 1982, at the request of Capuchin Father Dan Crosby, director of St. Labre Mission, Sisters Claver Ehren and Marya Grathwohl began parish ministry in Lame Deer with the Northern Cheyenne. Marya was also charged with lay ministry development on both reservations and Claver pulled together the Catholic population of nearby Busby into a viable parish.

It was through the dreams of women of both tribes expressed to the Sisters that Prayer Lodge came about. It began as native women talked of how they often had felt drawn to religious life, but either had no encouragement or felt they could not go so far from home to test their call. As the conversations continued, women expressed their desire to “have a safe place to gather with other women and to discern where God was leading”. That place opened in 1992 and saw women, and sometimes men and children, from both reservations come for prayer, learning, and sharing their joys, sorrows, gifts, and growth.

Throughout the years, **celebration** has been woven into the relationships between Sisters and native peoples. Early on Sisters wrote of Penny Socials and Beano games with the children. Gradually we learned and experienced the joys of Pow Wows and Hand Games. Eventually Sisters were introduced to the sacredness of the Sweat Lodge, Fasting and Sun Dance. On the other hand, Catholic services of the liturgical year were introduced and celebrated with native cultural touches. Baptisms, Communions, Confirmations were special days, their numbers often noted in letters and school records. Corpus Christi celebrations drew crowds from all the missions and continue to be held with great solemnity and sharing.



1944 Crow Agency Summer School  
Crow Agency, Montana



1993-94 Sister Mary Paul Larson’s  
Seventh Grade Homeroom  
St. Charles Mission School, Pryor, Montana



Sweat Lodge



Associates and Prayer Lodge  
Board Members



**Friendships** between Crow and Northern Cheyenne peoples and Sisters have grown throughout the years. Getting to know families of students helped early Sisters understand and appreciate customs and behaviors that were new to them, such as, it is disrespectful for a child to look an adult ‘in the eyes’. Social time after Sunday Masses has been a great help for Sisters and native folks to visit and bond. ‘Stopping in at the convent’ was common before Sisters had permission to visit homes. Often the convent phone was the only one available for long distance calls, a vital link when there was illness or death in the family.

As friendships grew, Crow and Northern Cheyenne sometimes honored a Sister by bestowing on her a “new name” in the native language or by ‘adopting’ her into their family. Tekakwitha Circles in the parishes and the national conference (for Catholic Native Americans to learn their faith and pray for the canonization of the first Native American Saint) provided other ways for friendships to deepen, especially when it involved traveling together. Visits to Oldenburg also became special for Sisters and their Crow and Northern Cheyenne friends. Oldenburg’s multi-year program “Widen the Space of Your Tent” continued to nurture relationships with our native friends.

Pilgrimage Retreats to Montana allowed Associates and Sisters to experience Big Sky Country itself and the spirituality of our friends formed by its land. To Native Americans it was affirmation that they possess what is so precious that others are willing to travel thousands of miles and put up with a lot of inconvenience to be part of it. In 1988 our first Native American Associates signed their agreements, a giant step in friendships with the whole Franciscan community. Prayer Lodge and the many collaborative efforts that led to and marked it stands as evidence of the friendships built between Sisters and the people of Montana.



Pow-Wow's



Naming ceremony for S. Mary Ann Stoffregen by Tom Rockroad



Celebration at the Prayer Lodge



View from Prayer Lodge



1987 Corpus Christi



# MONTANA MISSIONS – EDUCATING, LEARNING, CELEBRATING, FRIENDING

## WHAT IS OURS TO DO TODAY? ALLYING

Today good memories abide; Associates stay in contact as they can; friendships continue. But we are in a new place. In May of 2021 the world was shocked by the announcement that ground-penetrating radar had found the remains of 215 Native American children who were students at the Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, Canada. For many, this was the first introduction to the terrible history and impact of Native American boarding schools in Canada and the United States.

Canadian Theologian Brett Salkeld writes of the boarding schools, "...though there were undoubtedly good, dedicated, and competent people who worked in the system, and who achieved real goods in their work, the system itself was fundamentally evil. Its primary goal was not education in itself, but cultural annihilation. ... Rather than serving the marginalized, we participated in a system perpetuating marginalization."

Both the American Bishops and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious have committed to discerning how to engage in truth and healing work with Native American communities over historical Catholic involvement in Native American boarding schools. Our own involvement began with the request from LCWR to make our Montana archives available as data is collected to begin the truth-telling and healing process in this country. Then our archivists, leadership and interested Community members took part in *Truth and Healing: a four-part virtual series for Catholic Religious on Native American Boarding Schools*. Each session was followed by prayer and discussion. Out of this experience ten of us continued to meet to ponder the

question, **"Given our history (at St. Xavier, in the Montana missions, as American descendants of settlers), what is ours to do?"**

Our answer began with education. We realized that there are many things we don't know. We realized that what we learned in U.S. History courses was woefully inadequate and told from the point of view of the colonizers. And most of us knew almost nothing of current Native American issues. We came up with a list of topics, (ranging from Doctrine of Discovery to Treaties and Sovereignty, to U.S. Indian Policies) that we wanted to research. Each of us chose a topic and wrote a one-page article for *Community News*, helping to educate ourselves and the Community.

At the same time, our study has led to action. We are more able and willing to respond to calls for advocacy on Native issues such as pipelines that threaten water on reservations, weakening of the Indian Child Welfare Act, legislation that concerns Indian land base. We continue to recognize how racism affects Native peoples in multiple ways. We have also joined *The Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition* and signed onto petitions calling on Congress to pass the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act (S.2907/H.R. 5444).

Early on, our group agreed it was important to know more about Native Americans who inhabited these lands before us. We were able, through Oldenburg Franciscan Center, to arrange a presentation by Diane Hunter, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, entitled *Myaamiaki (Miami People): A Living People with a Past*. Twenty-one Sisters and friends learned together

about Miami history and culture. Diane also helped us formulate a Land Acknowledgement which we adopted in November 2022 by which we continue to remind ourselves and others of the history of our place on this continent. It reads: **"We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the Miami (Myaamiak), Shawnee, Delaware (Lenape) and other indigenous people."** We are committed to using it at Community gatherings and in our written publications.



Another area where we have joined people across the United States and Canada is the Red Dress Project. As a reminder of missing and murdered indigenous women we wear red on the 12<sup>th</sup> of each month. This is a time of special prayer for these women and their families and friends. The 12<sup>th</sup> of the month was chosen because it helps us remember that we have replaced the celebration of Columbus Day in October with Indigenous Peoples Day.

In February the Oldenburg Archives staff announced that the bulk of our materials from the Montana Missions is now available to the public at <https://www.forever.com/app/users/osf-archives/albums/montana-missions>

In the future our group, who now call ourselves Native American Allies, will continue to explore directions where we are called in the process of truth and healing.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
**S. NOELLA POINSETTE**



*"GOD BREAKS THE HEART  
AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN  
UNTIL IT STAYS OPEN."*

-Hazrat Inayat Khan

*"Like the orphans, widows and  
strangers who were the most  
marginalized in Jesus's day;  
that is how I've seen refugees  
for many years."*

*"I have been blessed by the  
hope, resilience and the  
profound appreciation of life  
that resides in these refugees  
amidst the struggles."*

*"I feel very blessed to have  
been able to minister as a  
compassionate presence  
honoring their dignity, and I  
pray that my heart will  
be broken open again."*

S. Noella Poinsette, OSF

Noella was gifted her first SLR camera after volunteering as a musician. Ministry then took her to teaching on the Pine Ridge Reservation where she photographed South Dakota vistas, Native Americans and Red Cloud Students. She spent time in Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala) and volunteered

in ministry at the U.S. / Mexico border. Hearing stories of the struggles and joys of these people and experiencing some of it with them inspired, challenged and delighted Noella. It also fostered internal conflict because of the barriers standing in the way for others who hope to share the dream of freedom.

Noella explains, "My camera has often led me to see what I would otherwise have blindly passed by. It's been a way of calling me into a greater appreciation of nature, calling me to a quiet that is prayer; a silence in which I'm attuned to my spirit, the God within and around me."





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*"I was in Guatemala twice. My first visit was a month spent with missionaries. The second visit I studied Spanish for six weeks. I heard about a sister school where the people were a community working diligently together to improve the lives of their children. I wanted to be with them."*

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Manuela is a young indigenous woman (Mayan) of Guatemala whom I met while staying a week at a convent in a Guatemalan city. Her husband had been in a tree cutting a limb for firewood when he fell. She got him to a small city hospital where they were unable to treat him. Then somehow she got him to the capital where they waited three days in the ER; others were treated but not him because he was seen as less than, a Mayan.



What lay in their future? How would she care for him, a paraplegic now, and their two young children? All I could give her was my heart, my listening, my compassion; I longed to take away the sadness, the pain in her eyes, her being as she walked the via crucis.



Pictured on the left is a Guatemalan family I befriended in Nueva San Jose - the Cario family. Luiz Cario was away six days a week working at a coffee plantation. Twenty-five families had worked with others on a plantation where the owner, an elderly woman, had been good to them by their standards. When she died, her son took over and did not pay the workers. They lived scavenging in the woods but many of the elderly and the youngest died from lack of food. Finally, after two years with the assistance of the Catholic Church, the owner relented and paid back wages. These twenty-five families left and bought land that was depleted, but it was a place to live and survive on their own.



Herson (8) and Miguel (5) were my 'play buddies' everyday when I wasn't in class or studying Spanish. One day Herson made me a bow and arrow like his out of twigs and string; another day it was a kite made from a plastic bag and twigs. Veronica had a rag doll. A few months later at Christmas with my family I was struck by the abundance of toys and clothes my nieces received while these children had only one toy apiece - but they shared in an abundance of joy - love - gratitude. Te echo de menos.



# S. PHOTOGRAPHY BY NOELLA POINSETTE

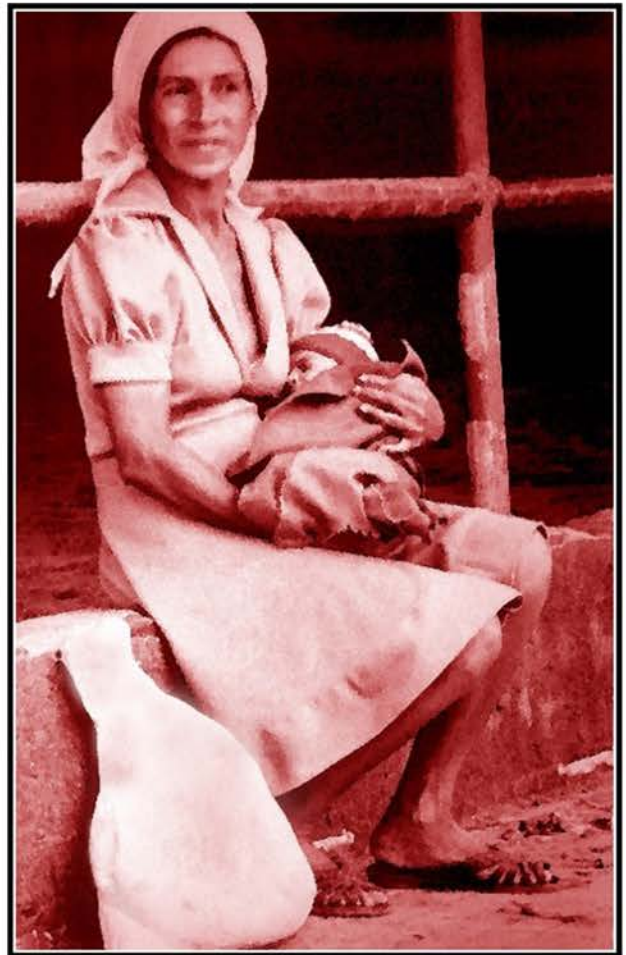


In 1983, Sister Carmen de Barros and I were invited to go to Nicaragua. For decades the people had lived through the crucifixion of the Somoza dictatorship. The Sandinista revolution was four years old; it felt like being in the Acts of the Apostles by the way the people and government cared for each other. A prison had unarmed guards where no one escaped. Teachers amazed us with their creativity in boiling leaves to make "crayons" for the children because the U.S. had imposed an embargo. Unfortunately, in recent years the vision of Sandinista has been betrayed.

*"After hearing firsthand stories from refugees, Sr. Carmen de Barros and I were invited by leadership to participate in a liberation theology study tour in Nicaragua. This was my first experience south of our border and there I fell in love with the people."*



In visiting Central America, meeting with ordinary people, listening to their stories (their heartbreak and their joys) has always opened my eyes and my heart to the goodness of those who are often ignored or dismissed by those of us with more of the earth's abundance.



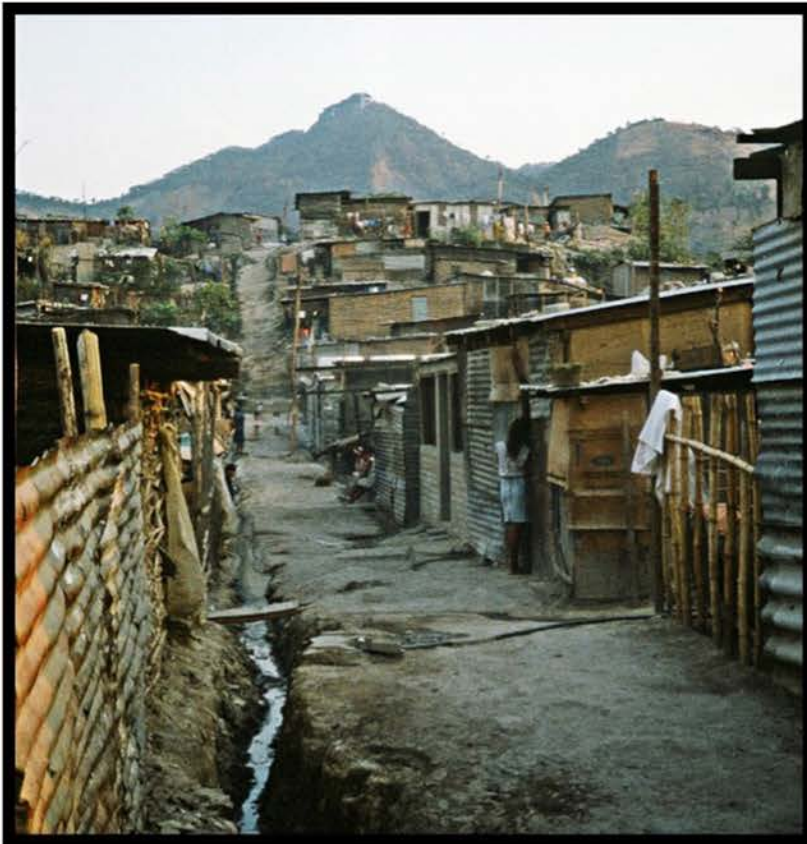
*"The Madonna and Child photo with a cross behind them prefiguring the future is one of my favorite images."*



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"In 2019, I was part of a delegation to Honduras to learn from the people why so many were coming to the U.S. There are many reasons: repression, violence, death from government forces, loss of land and so the loss of ability to feed their children."

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In El Salvador, these are the homes of people who claimed land on top of a garbage dump. No other land was available for them in the city where they had moved to find jobs.

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"I was in El Salvador in 1991, shortly after the 10th anniversary of the government murders of three Sisters and one lay missionary. I was part of a delegation of 16."

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Miguel and his family had fled during the height of the killings in the '80s, eventually returning with others to their village of Aguilar. As I roamed the village alone one day, he invited me into his home consisting of one small room. I felt very welcome and enjoyed our conversation.





# S. PHOTOGRAPHY BY NOELLA POINSETTE

**"God breaks the heart again and again and again until it stays open."**

-Hazrat Inayat Khan

These are our sisters and brothers, just like those whom we know and love in our families - just like those at our southern border - just like the Ukrainians we are all praying for in the midst of their suffering.

Saint Oscar Romero said, **"there are many things that can only be seen through eyes that have cried."** Tears are a gift calling us to reach out in compassionate love to bandage wounds, to heal scars of exclusion and indifference.



## Who can we reach out to?



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES: [support.crs.org](http://support.crs.org)



KIDS IN NEED OF DEFENSE: [supportkind.org](http://supportkind.org)



JESUIT RELIEF SERVICES: [jrsusa.org](http://jrsusa.org)



NETWORK: [networklobby.org/issues/immigration/](http://networklobby.org/issues/immigration/)



HOPE BORDER INSTITUTE: [hopeborder.org](http://hopeborder.org)



KINO BORDER INITIATIVE: [kinoborderinitiative.org](http://kinoborderinitiative.org)

Kino Border Initiative  
Iniciativa Kino para la Frontera



*May we together open our hearts to be broken open over and over and over again; it's the way of the cross.*



# Associate

CELEBRATING **25**  
YEARS



**Patricia Browne** In 1957 I became a student at Immaculate Conception Academy as an Aspirant. Though I soon discerned that God was calling me to a different way of life, He had planted the Franciscan spirit in my soul and the Oldenburg Sisters in my heart. Twenty-five years ago, Judy Hillman invited me to explore the Associates. Being an Associate unites me spiritually with the Sisters and also with a group of women and men whose hopes and aspirations reflect that same Franciscan charism. To know that everyday my prayer is united with those of the Sisters and other Associates brings me much comfort, joy and encouragement. I am very grateful for this gift that God sent to me through a lifelong friend 25 years ago.

**Becky Ducker** The love I experienced from the Oldenburg Franciscan Sisters I passed on to all those I have met over the years. Associate, Pat Lerche (deceased), showed me a new way of being a child of God. She showed me what my faith really means to me. This was put into practice through the years. I volunteered at the local nursing home and worked with shut-ins. I became a better person having met the Oldenburg Franciscan Sisters and Associates.  
Thank you, God!



**Ethel Yazzie** Ethel signed her Associate Commitment in 1998 in Naschitti, New Mexico. S. Barb Hileman was her contact person. Ethel, in her call to the Franciscan Charism, went on to pursue her evangelization calling by attending Lay Ministry classes. She was commissioned in 2011 by Bishop Donald Pelotte, S.S.S. Ethel continues to enjoy meeting with Associates in New Mexico and appreciates faith sharing and the opportunity to pray together. When she thinks about the Sisters in Oldenburg, a sense of peace and harmony surrounds her.





# Jubilarians

CELEBRATING **15**  
YEARS



**Chris Bruns** My Associate Relationship has supported my desire to live and share the values of the Sisters of St. Francis with others by demonstrating gratitude and reverence for all of God's creation. This community of Sisters and Associates continues to guide my spiritual growth through monthly book discussions, workshops and Mass.

*"The deeds you do may be the only sermon some persons will hear today."*

-St. Francis of Assisi

**Jim Bruns** My wife Chris and I have been active at our Associate Ciara group for many years. I value the texts, spiritual and intellectual, and the sharing of Sisters Claire and Janet and our new member S. Susan, as well as our lay Associates. S. Claire, S. Janet and Jerry Lanning's recommendation letters were instrumental in my acceptance at Fr. Richard Rohr's Living School. I couldn't have been accepted and finished without Chris' help and their encouragement. I volunteer for S. Olga occasionally at the Franciscan Center, having started volunteering for S. Janet in 1999. S. Olga is my Spiritual Director, but all Sisters mentioned have guided me over the years in similar roles assisting my growth in Centering Prayer, Scriptures, volunteering in martial-arts and ecological spirituality. Their spiritual guidance has been nothing short of extraordinary for my spiritual and mental growth, and to have the courage to share all with others. Thank you all and God bless.



Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, are rooted in the Gospel and in Franciscan values, mindful of our call to be a presence of Jesus Christ, especially to those who are powerless, who are poor, who are oppressed.



# Associate

CELEBRATING **15**  
YEARS



**Dorothy Burkhart** I loved volunteering as an Associate at the Convent. I worked in the library but mainly visited sisters in the infirmary. I found it peaceful and spiritually fulfilling to spend time with the Sisters. I am so thankful for the friendship and witness of faith.

*For it is in giving that we receive.*

-St. Francis of Assisi

**Evy Christopher** Being an Associate is very important to me. It has given me tools to become closer to God and being more aware of my mission on earth. I am praying to God to continue helping me to be an asset to the poor and to the Sisters of St. Francis. I love being an Associate even though I can't be as active as I once was. I have been nourished by my friendship with the Oldenburg Sisters and Associates.



**Gerry Deller** Being an Associate for the past 15 years has brought me closer to the Oldenburg Sisters, many of whom I know and so cherish their friendship. As an Associate, I have learned to open myself more. I do this by giving back to those in need and deepening my prayer life, especially in Franciscan Spirituality.





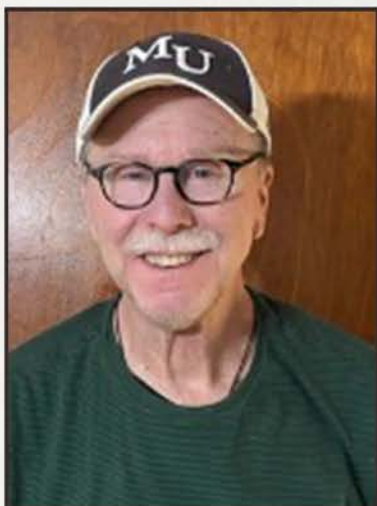
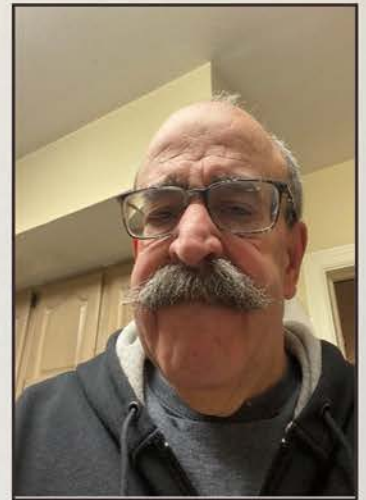
# Jubilarians

CELEBRATING **15**  
YEARS



**Ruby Douthet** My favorite part in reading the life of St. Francis is when he is told to rebuild God's church and he realized that God's church is not the buildings but the people of God. Francis was to bring them closer to God. As an Associate I know God is calling me to do the same and I have my Associate family here to help me.

**Joseph Santillo** My relationship with the Sisters has been an important part of my life for the past 15 years. They have been a constant example of how to live my life with humility, great joy and service to others. They also inspire me to keep my faith an important part of my life. I appreciate the gift of the Sisters, my friends and my family. I am fortunate to have S. Ruth Mary as my contact person in Oldenburg, but more importantly as a trusted friend, advisor and someone who helps keep me well grounded. I've learned so much from the Sisters and everyone in Oldenburg over the last 15 years, and I look forward to the relationship continuing to help me grow over the next coming years.



**John Shelton** My intention is to reaffirm my permanent commitment to the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg as an Oldenburg Franciscan Associate. My spiritual commitment mirrors the words of St. Clare to St. Agnes of Prague: "What you hold, may you always hold. What you do, may you always do, and never abandon." As I stated in my permanent Associate statement in 2017, I commit to humbly follow Christ by loving Alice and my family, continuing my service at St. Pius parish in the Indianapolis Archdiocese. I will share (1) my spiritual direction ministry and (2) the good news of the Associate program of the Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg, Indiana.



## ON OUR WISH LIST IS A SIX-PASSENGER GOLF CART

We would use it to transport Sisters and guests who have difficulty walking to our cemetery for funerals. The Sisters could also be taken on rides around our beautiful campus.



A generous donor has agreed to match any donations we receive for a golf cart. If you would like to contribute to this special project, please make your check payable to the Sisters of St. Francis and use the enclosed envelope (check the box that says 'other' and write golf cart in the comment area) or give through our website: [oldenburgfranciscans.org](http://oldenburgfranciscans.org). Again, please write in the comments section that it is for the golf cart.

**WE THANK YOU AND THE DONOR PROVIDING THE MATCH.**

TO BE FEATURED IN OUR SUMMER CELEBRATE:  
OUR SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

# 2023 Jubilarians

80 Years

S. Patty Campbell

75 Years

S. Jean Michael Sauntry  
S. Marie Cecile DiTullio

60 Years

S. Jan Kroeger  
S. Jackie McCracken  
S. Diane Mersch  
S. Elaine Merkel

40 Years

S. Marge Wissman







# Oldenburg Franciscan Center

Retreat ☺ Renew † Rejoice! ♥

## upcoming programs...

### THE TEACHINGS OF MEHER BABA THE SILENT MASTER

with Patrick Murphy Welage (Retired Professor of Theology, Philosophy, and Theatre Arts at Xavier University)

Saturday, May 6, 2023

9:30 am - noon

\$40/ \$60 CEU's - includes light refreshments



We will explore the teachings of Meher Baba of India (1894-1969), who claimed, "I have come not to teach but to awaken." Baba maintained silence for the last 44 years of his life, yet he traveled the world to spread his message of love and to bring together all religions "like beads on a string." Baba also gave the message of "Don't Worry, Be Happy," as a directive to his disciples in the 1930's, long before the Bobby McFerrin song! Come learn about this celebrated spiritual master and what he has in common with St. Francis!

### LAUDATO SI' SPIRITUALITY Challenges and Opportunities

presented by Carolyn Cromer

Saturday, May 20th, 2023

9:30 am - 11:30 am

\$30/ \$45 CEU's



Join us as we explore Pope Francis's call to integrate integral ecology into our daily lives and heal God's creation. We will learn how the Sisters of Charity from Nazareth, Kentucky are navigating through these challenges and striving to serve their mission to care for Earth, as well as share our own stories of how we are deepening our spiritual commitment to live in a way that holds all of life as sacred.

Join us in person or via zoom!

### "WIZARD OF OZ": Struggles in the Soul's Journey to God

Presenters: S. Olga Wittekind, Ph.D & Claire Sherman, Ph.D

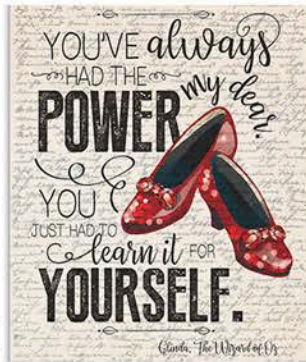
Saturday, June 10, 2023

9:30 am - 11:30 am

\$30 / \$45 CEU's

"The Wizard of Oz" tells the story of Dorothy and her trusty canine companion Toto who, along with their house, were whisked away by a passing cyclone to the magical Land of Oz.

Along the way, Dorothy and her party of friends fought against the temptation of the dark side as they journeyed the Yellow Brick Road in search of the Wizard of Oz—who she was told would help her get back home. From start to finish, "The Wizard of Oz" tells the story of humanity's struggle against the dark forces of the world, the journey of the soul, and what humanity must achieve to advance spiritually and return to God, the Source.



presented in person and via zoom

### Coffee Talks

10:45-noon Freewill Donation

"Images of Holiness:  
Individuals Who Changed the 20th Century!"



May 7th: Quaker 'Her'story:  
Women of Faith Sharing God's Light  
with Katherine Murray



June 11th: Annie Dillard  
with Mary Ann Stoffregen

Join us in the Convent Chapel at 9:30 am for Liturgy!



### A DAY OF QUIET RENEWAL

FRIDAYS:

9:00am-4:00pm

May 5

June 9

To register for programs  
visit our website:  
[oldenburgfranciscancenter.org](http://oldenburgfranciscancenter.org)  
call us at 812.933.6437, or  
email us at:  
[center@oldenburgosf.com](mailto:center@oldenburgosf.com)

### Contemplative Prayer

WITH S. OLGA WITTEKIND, OSF

WEDNESDAYS:

2:00pm-3:30pm

May 3

June 7



# Resting in God...



**S. MARY CLAIRE HAUSFELD, OSF**  
07-22-1949 ~ 08-19-2022

Mary Claire was born on July 22, 1949 in Cincinnati to parents Celeste "Sally" (Holthaus) and Paul Hausfeld. Being the second of eight children and the oldest girl, Mary Claire was in a position to welcome and encourage the younger ones, and she treasured her strong family connections all her life. Her education at St. Clement School and Our Lady of Angels High School, St. Bernard, Ohio, exposed her to the Oldenburg Franciscans and helped shape the early days of her vocation.

From Diet Kitchen service, to Diet Kitchen Manager, to Coordinator of Central Food Service, Mary Claire spent 42 years preparing meals for Sisters and students at the Motherhouse. Cooking was not the only enterprise to which Mary Claire devoted her life. When her health concerns brought her kitchen time to an end, she found other beneficial ways to be of service to others. One notable long-term outreach was the care-giving and companionship which Mary Claire provided for Peggy Schuckman, sister of our S. Pat Bietsch.

Mary Claire involved herself in other Community projects. One of them brought her to Beattyville, Kentucky, where she joined with nine other Oldenburg Franciscans in a Habitat for Humanity "build" as part of the vital cooking staff for the Habitat building crew. In addition to serving as receptionist at the St. Clare Hall desk, participating in the Community vocal choir, and involvement in Community activities, Mary Claire remained a faithful friend to classmates, housemates, and those whose paths had crossed her own in life. She enjoyed visiting and joking with Sisters and Co-workers alike, finding grace and life in the present moment.



**S. ROSE O'BRIEN, OSF**  
09-16-1930 ~ 08-30-2022

Rose was born in Covington, Kentucky to James and Elizabeth Hery O'Brien, parents of Irish descent. During both elementary and high school years Rose took part in band, orchestra, and chorus. After high school she asked whether she might enter the Franciscan Order.

The first eleven years of Rose's teaching career took her to schools in Bloomington, IL and Kansas City, after which she returned to elementary schools in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for the following twelve years. Earning a master's degree in theology then opened a new ministry path in Rose's directing religious education programs.

Rose's next educational venture took her to Cincilingua. Her time at this school was punctuated by a year spent in Guaymas, Mexico. A final educational ministry found Rose taking on GED instruction and beginning an English as a Second Language program at Lower Price Hill Community School where she was honored with the first annual "Carl Ingle Award".

In ending an autobiography which she wrote as part of an application for an ongoing education program, Rose wrote, "Lastly in my life I think that I have most enjoyed being creative and doing creative things." As examples, she cited writing short stories, playing guitar, organ, and piano (even without music), sharing her original musical pieces, and participating in choral groups. At Oldenburg Rose enjoyed taking part in group activities, game days, parties and trips. She especially loved singing in the choir, and delighted in having the choir sing some of her own music.



**S. THERESE TACKETT, OSF**  
10-22-1931 ~ 09-12-2022

Therese Ann Tackett was born in Bluefield, West Virginia to Shady and Nannie Tackett on October 22, 1931. Therese attended the Sacred Heart parish elementary school for grades one through nine, Beaver High School for her sophomore year and became an aspirant at the Immaculate Conception Academy (now Oldenburg Academy) for her junior year.

For her first 28 years of active ministry, Therese served in elementary schools in Indiana, Ohio, and Missouri as both teacher and principal. An internship opportunity for high school retreat work sent Therese to Marathon, Wisconsin for a year. She went on to minister as guidance counselor at Immaculate Conception Academy, Oldenburg, where she also worked with Batesville High School and St. Louis Church in Batesville to provide education programs for drug and alcohol awareness.

In 1983, Therese became the Director of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Evansville. Therese's next ministry brought her to the Motherhouse, where she served as Co-director of Personnel Services and Director of Life Development. When the opportunity arose to minister in Appalachia, Therese embraced it as she became the Director of Wallins Fellowship Center at Wallins Creek, Kentucky. Therese provided services to the poor.

In 2003, Therese returned to Evansville to become the Kitchen Coordinator for Kids' Café. From there, her ministry to the underserved carried her to the Lower Price Hill Community School in Cincinnati, serving as the lead GED teacher and Adult Basic Education instructor.





**S. JEAN SORA , OSF**  
05-04-1925 ~ 12-26-2022

Mary Louise was born to John and Mary Sora in Middletown, Ohio, as the tenth of eleven children. Her parents were born in Naples, Italy.

S. Jean's love of music began at an early age. She began piano lessons in the second grade with Sister Carletta at St. John's in Middletown. Not long after, she was allowed to go to the choir loft and play the right hand of "Silent Night" as Sister provided the left hand and pedals. Music continued to be her main interest throughout grade school and high school.

S. Jean spent time at St. John and Holy Family, Middletown as a Parish Minister in addition to being organist and choir director and directing a Hand Bell Choir. While she was there, she celebrated her 50th Jubilee and soon after taught herself to play the harp.

S. Jean was named Religious of the Year by the Ohio Knights of Columbus. S. Jean held bingo twice weekly where she also distributed food and clothing as needed and even counseled some people. In the parish she organized a "Young at Heart" group for people over the age of 50. According to her, this was a "wonderful, fun" group of 120 members. She enjoyed cooking for their luncheons, going on trips and playing cards.

Our own Marian University honored S. Jean with the Mary McNulty Young Award for Distinguished Achievement in Community Service. S. Jean said, "It is important that people see a difference because we're here." Wherever S. Jean was, people certainly did see a difference.



**S. CARMELA WHITTON , OSF**  
02-03-1933 ~ 02-26-2023

Virginia Whitton was born in Cincinnati to Norma and Alton Whitton just over ninety years ago. Shortly after her mother died when Virginia was two years old, Mr. Whitton put their three children in an orphanage until he remarried. At that time Virginia's stepmother added her own three children to the new family unit.

Virginia loved her school days, first at St. Catherine's in Westwood and later at the Academy in Oldenburg. After entering the Sisters of St. Francis in 1952, she completed a bachelor's degree from Marian College (now University) and a master's in elementary education from St. Mary College in Leavenworth, Kansas. She later pursued graduate work in theology at St. John Seminary in Plymouth, Michigan and in spirituality at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

Early ministry days found S. Carmela teaching in intermediate and junior high grades in Indiana and Ohio, and then serving as principal at St. Mark School in Indianapolis. Following these years spent in the field of education, Carm's efforts turned to pastoral pursuits.

In 1976 the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan made plans to appoint a Delegate for Religious. Repeated requests from individual Sisters helped her sense "a gentle call" to this ministry. Having completed six years as Vicar for Religious, Carm was elected to Community leadership on the General Council. Remaining time in active ministry found Carmela serving as secretary for Project ENCOR in Cincinnati and then returning for nineteen years to parish work in Michigan.

## Memorialize A Sister

***Sending a Memorial donation in memory of one of our late Sisters is not only a thoughtful gesture, it also helps our Sisters continue their ministry serving God.***

**Donations may be directed in several ways...**

### **RETIREMENT FUND**

To help care for Sisters over 70 years of age

### **LITTLE PORTION FUND**

To assist with the Sisters' mission activities

### **SPIRITUALITY CENTERS**

To support the Oldenburg Franciscan Center and the Nia Kumba Center in MO

### **ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP**

To support the Associate Relationship Program of the Sisters

### **HISTORICAL BUILDING FUND**

To assist with utilities, maintenance and repairs of our historic Motherhouse

### **UNRESTRICTED**

To help the Sisters where funds are needed most

### ***To Show Your Support:***

Mail the enclosed envelope  
(PO Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036)

Donate online:  
[OldenburgFranciscans.org](http://OldenburgFranciscans.org)





SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS  
PO BOX 100  
OLDENBURG, IN 47036

*We hold you in prayer...*

**My God**, you have  
created this beautiful  
world for us to enjoy.

Each day this time of year,  
we look forward to seeing  
something new that is  
awakening from its  
long winter sleep.

God, thank you for  
so many wonderful  
and exciting days.

*Prayer written by S. Cleo Werner, OSF*

