



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS  
OLDENBURG, INDIANA  
FALL 2021 Vol. 51 No. 3

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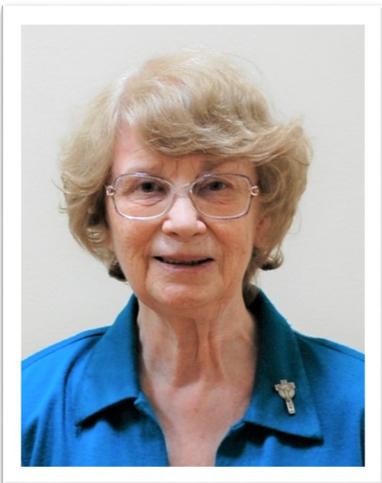
S. Kathleen McCarthy, OSF  
S. Rosaire Bishop, OSF  
S. Helen Eckstein, OSF

# Celebrate

*Take care of  
brothers and sisters  
who are weaker ...  
the elderly, the sick,  
the hungry,  
the homeless and  
strangers,  
because we will be  
judged on this.*

POPE FRANCIS





**S. ANNETTE GRISLEY OSF**  
Councillor

# IN EVERYTHING Give Thanks

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Dear Friends,

As we enter the season of fall, our thoughts turn to the holiday of Thanksgiving. We thank God for the blessings of the harvest, our faith, our country and the freedoms we enjoy.

Giving thanks is mentioned in the Bible at least **140 times**. Giving thanks is our response to the goodness and mercy of God. Sometimes that goodness and mercy is so overwhelming that we forget to give thanks.

One way that we give thanks for one another is sharing the Eucharist as we see on the cover. **S. Alacoque Burger**, one of our Sisters who ministers to our Sisters in our St. Clare Hall Health Care Center gives Holy Communion to **S. Irene Hoff**.

We give thanks for our donors. **S. Maureen Irvin** begins this issue by telling the interesting story of how a couple came to journey with us and then became donors. We end this issue with a prayer of thanks for all our donors composed by **S. Elna Stemann**.

**S. Michelle Corliss** explains the Pastoral Care ministry that she shares with **S. Evelyn Forthofer** and **S. Alacoque Burger** in caring for our Sisters in St. Clare Hall Health Center. **S. Jane McConnell** at a Catholic hospital in Evansville and **S. Ann Vonder Meulen** at the Mercy Sisters in Cincinnati, minister in pastoral care also. We give thanks for them.

Compassion for those who are ill is a Franciscan characteristic that does not get a lot of attention. **S. Barb Leonard** leads us to a better understanding of this call as seen in the lives of Francis and Clare.

Life on a Navajo reservation is hard but the people there give thanks for their faith in God and help one another. **Sisters Kathleen Branham** and **Olga Wittekind** along with Associate-to-be **Beverly Wilson** relate their experiences visiting **S. Marlene Kochert** in Tohatchi.

**Associate Co-Directors Carolyn Meyer** and **Jane Schaefer** describe a day of celebration with and for the Associates. We give thanks for the signing of commitments by four new Associates along with the permanent commitment of one Associate and the recognition of many Associates celebrating jubilees.

We are now able to live stream and we give thanks to the many who contributed to make this project become a reality. Sharing the Eucharist makes us one in Christ.

Our Fatima Shrine is a place of prayer for so many people not just the Sisters. We are seeking your support in restoring its beauty. We give thanks for your gifts that will make that restoration a reality.

Praying for those who have died is a spiritual work of mercy. At this time, we especially give thanks for the lives of **Sisters Kathleen McCarthy, Rosaire Bishop** and **Helen Eckstein**, and share with you their lives which enriched so many.

May we always give thanks for the many blessings that we have received.

In grateful prayer,

*S. Annette Grisley*  
S. Annette Grisley, OSF  
For the General Council

**COVER PHOTO:**

S. Irene Hoff, OSF, seated  
S. Alacoque Burger, OSF



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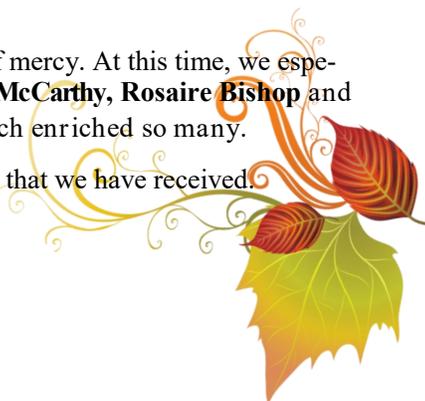
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Bob & Lois Smith

The Sisters of St. Francis are fortunate to have many friends and benefactors from all over the United States, and a few from around the world. Among them are Bob and Lois Smith, who live in Greer, South Carolina. Bob attended St. Peter's Grade School in Chillicothe, Ohio. There he first encountered the Sisters of St. Francis. He fondly remembers Sisters Mary Carl Mueller, Francis Regis Henckler and Eustella Wuest, who were his teachers and S. Cajetan Conner, his sister's (Susan) favorite teacher.

From Chillicothe, Bob moved to the South Bend, Indiana area to attend Notre Dame where he received his BS and MBA degrees. It was there that he met Lois during graduate school. They were married in the Log Chapel (the original Church) on Notre Dame's campus. Bob and Lois have been blessed with four children and five grandchildren.

Once, while visiting with Mary Golichowski, (Lois's first cousin and also one of our donors), Mary discussed her visit to the Motherhouse in Oldenburg. So, on their return from a stay at the Golichowskis, Lois and Bob also visited the Motherhouse and decided to become financial supporters of the Sisters. Bob says, "It is out of gratitude for my wonderful teachers at St. Peter's, but also out of empathy for the needs of retired religious today. We feel an internal obligation to help."

Bob feels privileged to have been educated by Sisters from three different orders during the first twelve years of his schooling. He was taught by the Dominican Sisters of Nashville in grades 1-5 in Oak Ridge, TN, the Oldenburg Franciscans in grades 6-8 at St. Peter's and the Sisters of Charity (Cincinnati) at Bishop Flaget High School, both in Chillicothe. Lois taught with the Felician Sisters at St. Adalbert's in South Bend, early in her teaching career. Today, Lois and Bob help support the Felician Sisters and their missions in Haiti and in Kingtree, SC.

Both Lois and Bob are retired. Lois spent many years as a teacher of middle school students and those with special needs. She earned degrees and had special training to work with hard of hearing/deaf students, as well as those with learning and emotional disabilities. Bob was a Marketing Director and also worked in finance for the Cryovac Division of W.R. Grace Corporation for 35 years.

# Journey with Us

## BOB & LOIS SMITH

AS INTERVIEWED BY S. MAUREEN IRVIN, OSF

"It is out of gratitude for my wonderful teachers at St. Peter's, but also out of empathy for the needs of retired religious today. We feel an internal obligation to help."



Bob Smith

In October of 2007, the Smiths traveled on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Because of that experience, Bob became a Knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, a Vatican order. The primary function of the order is support of the Archdiocese of Jerusalem, including orphanages, schools and medical clinics throughout Palestine, Israel, Jordan and Cyprus, Bethlehem College, the seminary in Jordan, many parishes and holy sites throughout the Holy Land.

Bob served in the army in Viet Nam and retired from the Army Reserves as a full colonel. One of their sons is also retired as a colonel in the military. In 2007, Bob was ordained as a permanent deacon. He ministers at their home parish, Prince of Peace, in Taylors, SC. He also occasionally serves as deacon for a Maronite Rite Catholic Church, St. Rafka, in Greer.

When asked about a philosophy of life that guides him, Bob shared that the many communities he is a part of help define his life. These include, of course, his family and his parish(es), but also his deacon class, those he served with in the military, and his co-workers from Cryovac. Other communities include students from the schools he attended; altar servers, students and Boy Scouts from his current Parish; and those in the local Notre Dame club. In addition, he includes those in the nursing homes he visits, those participating in his sacraments and sacramentals (marriages and annulments, funerals, Baptisms, novenas and Benediction, stations, blessings, etc.) and other groups with whom he is active. Bob believes that if one is judged by the company one keeps, he is in pretty good standing, based on these supportive and nourishing Communities.

The Sisters of St. Francis are grateful to Bob and Lois, to Mary Golichowski, and to all of our faithful donors. You share in our Franciscan mission, our ministries and the care of our senior Sisters. We are blessed by your partnership with us.

# What Is It That You Do? Pastoral



S. Michelle Corliss, OSF, Pastoral Care Minister, meets with St. Clare Hall resident, S. Mary Louise Werner, OSF to view one of S. Mary Louise's lap quilts.

## That is the million-dollar question.

How do you describe a job that involves being Dollar Tree's most valued customer while at the same time having the compassion of a saint when someone needs comfort during a spiritual crisis all in one day?

There is no easy way to explain what it's like to "go to work" with a clear plan in the morning and then find yourself scrapping the whole thing an hour after arrival.

It is a ministry that stretches you beyond what you ever thought you were capable of doing or being for that matter.

It's the greatest job in the world, and the hardest depending on the hour of the day.

Pastoral care requires great flexibility, a good sense of humor, and the ability to share someone's heart and soul at a moment's notice. It means laughing over stories about experiences of years gone by, and finding yourself with one of the Sisters in the emergency room moments later dealing with a serious health issue that may change her life. Dramatic? Yes. No day is like another—ever.

There are many ministries that call for pastoral skills, but there are five of us "officially" in pastoral care ministry at the moment. S. Evelyn Forthofer, S. Alacoque Burger, and I, S. Michelle Corliss, are the pastoral care team at St. Clare Hall Health Center at the Motherhouse in Oldenburg.

S. Jane McConnell is in pastoral ministry at a Catholic

"Being pastoral ministers helps pain, joy and C many faces, an meet each with deserved respect Every day we a of Sisters who their lives sacrific giving to the p served only to selves faced wit to receive. It's reality for them

S. MICHELLE CO



S. Agnes Wilhelm, OSF, standing, leads a group of St.

# Pastoral Care Ministry

BY S. MICHELLE CORLISS OSF

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ORLISS, OSF

hospital in Evansville, IN, and S. Ann Vonder Meulen is with the Mercy Sisters in Cincinnati, OH. Each place has a different perspective on how pastoral care is done, but we share the same purpose and mission. We compassionately reflect back to those we serve the God we see in them. That happens in a variety of ways.

We are called to meet the needs of those we serve: from the ordinary things like a new pair of socks or a wheelchair ride outside to the garden, to listening compassionately to their deepest stories about how God works in their lives. We listen to their jokes, their fears and how God has graced them.

It sounds confusing; sometimes it is. On those days it is like holy ping pong walking down the hall and realizing what is expected in this ministry.



S. Evelyn Forthofer, OSF, Pastoral Care Minister, prays the rosary with S. Marie Camille Schmaltz, OSF.

It ranges from singing songs to lighten the stress of someone who's reached their limit about the pandemic, to walking the grounds or a quick trip to Dairy Queen. Then around the corner you encounter someone deep in a crisis of faith or facing aging or illness issues, or in the process of dying.

Such a ministry is not for the faint of heart.

**It calls for teamwork** and relying on others involved in all aspects of the care of the Sister or patient, depending on where you minister.

**It calls for trust** that God will speak through you at the right moment or that you will have the humility to be silent and honor the person God shows you when they share their joys or fears.

**It challenges you** to lean into God and be calm, compassionate and caring in the deepest moments in someone's life journey.

We are sharers in the humorous moments, protectors when something scary or threatening happens, contact persons/facilitators between family and Sister, and companions when God challenges a Sister to let go of her independence or handle more limitations that come with being ill or an issue of aging.

**We are holders of life and soul in the last moments of someone's life.**

**It is holy work.**

*Continued on Page 6*



Clare Hall Sisters in playing Bingo.

"We are called to be genuinely caring, understanding and compassionate to the ones we support and to whom we minister."

S. JANE MCCONNELL, OSF

It is a challenge to "be there" in all these times, but that is what we are called to be and to do. The Sisters evolve day to day and we learn to do the same. What getting her a cup of coffee solved yesterday won't solve her crisis of not being able to walk today. The story that soothed a depressed spirit no longer works, and only faith that God will be with us in that moment can get us both through.

"I find singing to be one of the best ways to relate with those who have dementia and can't get "out".

S. ANN VONDER MEULEN, OSF

Being pastoral care ministers helps us see that pain, joy and God can have many faces, and we can meet each with deserved respect. Every day we are witnesses of Sisters who have spent their lives sacrificing and giving to the people they served only to find themselves faced with learning to receive. It's a different reality for them. This vulnerability may be new to them, and our ministry is to walk with them, be vulnerable ourselves, and to go through it together. We are witnesses that their lives mattered when they were more able. We are witnesses that these new places of difficulty or limitation are just as valued and honored by us and by God. That's not an easy place to be, but it can be one of dignity and acknowledgement of their worth in this place they find themselves. It's our job to be there.

"I reflect on the importance of seeing the Sister as a complete person, and letting her lead the way."

S. ALACOCQUE BURGER, OSF

This is why we do what we do. We learn more than we give. Whether Sister or co-worker, each day we are called deeper into reliance on God, to meet God in them, and to be gentle,



S. Evelyn Forthofer, OSF joins S. Helen Eckstein, OSF and S. Dominica Doyle, OSF for a visit.

*Photo taken one week before S. Helen passed away.*

humorous, prayerful or silent. It is difficult to explain when your ministry involves people's hearts, but we are ministers entrusted with people's sacred souls and through it all we laugh, we cry, we fail, and we try again.

It is a call to serve in this way, and it calls us to our knees in gratitude. And so often we are asked,

**"What is it that you do?"  
It's still the million-dollar question.**

"There is a great need some days to lean into this God we trust, going deeper into God, in order to listen with our hearts as the Sisters go deeper into theirs."

S. EVELYN FORTHOFFER, OSF



S. Michelle Corliss, OSF and S. Therese Tackett, OSF

# *Candle in the window ...*



*Candles have been a traditional part of Christmas for centuries. Even as the presents are tucked under the tree and children nestle down for the night, candles are placed in windows all over the world.*

“And a candle in the window,  
a flame against the night

There's a candle in the window,  
it's like God's perfect light.

It doesn't take a lot of money to know what riches are ...

Just a candle in the window ... and Christmas in your heart.”

*Lyrics by Alabama*



To ensure our Sisters' safety, only battery-operated candles will be used.

A lit candle was often placed in the window as a means to remember a family member who was away or who had passed. It was also seen as a silent prayer for the safe return of the absent person and a sign that someone remained at home tending the fire and waiting. This is a touching tradition that helps families remember loved ones during the busyness of Christmas.

Windows bright with candle light symbolize different religious traditions for those of various faiths. For Christians, a candle is lit to represent the Star of Bethlehem, guiding the Magi to the stable where Jesus was born.

The tradition of burning a candle in the window has survived for centuries and is something many families around the globe continue to do. The prevailing tradition of the burning candle now survives as a sign of welcome to those in need.

As the Sisters of St. Francis prepare our convent for Christ's birth, we invite you to light a candle in a Motherhouse window in memory of a loved one. I think you will agree that it has been a challenging year, and anything we can do to brighten this Christmas season will be appreciated, especially by those who may not be able to gather with family and friends.

***For a donation of \$50, a candle will be lit in a Motherhouse window in remembrance of your loved one. Its glow will help to warm the hearts of all who travel through the 'Burg beginning in December and continuing through January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Epiphany, and the anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg.***

We will light over 200 candles to adorn the Motherhouse windows along Main Street, and you can join us in this festive effort to brighten the Christmas season while remembering a loved one!

***Please consider sending your \$50 donation and the name of the loved one you wish to have remembered today!*** *You can use the enclosed envelope!*

Thank you for your consideration, and know that our Sisters are home tending the fire while holding you and yours in prayer during this Christmas season!

*Christmas Blessings,*

*Sue*

Sue Siefert

Director, Office of Congregational Advancement  
SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

# A FRANCISCAN VIEW OF CARING FOR THE

By S. Barbara Leonhard OSF

Many people think of care of creation, simple living, joy, and a concern for the poor as hallmarks of Franciscan spirituality.

When one reads the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare, their Rules and letters, another theme also emerges: care for those who are ill.

The story of Francis's early experience with the leper is familiar to many. This encounter was life-changing for him. As you probably know, Francis, like most people of his time, greatly feared coming into contact with lepers. They were separated out and required to keep a distance from others. When Francis was moved to embrace a leper for the first time, something changed in him. He began to care for them, and to see them as images of Christ.

Years later, when Francis was nearing his death, he wrote his *Testament*. In it, he attributes his conversion to these early experiences with the lepers: "The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them, and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body."

Francis was not unique in shying away from situations that made him fearful. Over the years, I have occasionally heard nurses or people in pastoral care name a particular experience that started them on their path. Admitting that they were not originally drawn to care for the sick, they named as a turning point their personal experience of the sickness of a parent or grandparent, or perhaps their own hospitalization. Describing the profound effect of a particular nurse or visitor's compassion, kindness or warmth, the person might add, "That's when I knew I wanted to be a nurse (or hospital chaplain)."

In the writings of Francis, it is clear that he understood the great importance of caring for the sick members of the community. In his Rule, Francis describes how the brothers are to live in relation to one another: "Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show that they are members of the same family. Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit! When any brother falls sick, the other brothers must serve him as they would wish to be served themselves."



There is a short collection of pithy sayings of Francis called the *Admonitions*. These sayings are known for their directness. Admonition 24 reads: "Blessed is the servant who loves his brother as much when he is sick and cannot repay him as when he is well and can repay him." Needless to say, there would have been no reason to write such an admonition had there not been some problems in the community regarding the time and attention that a sick community member might require. The Admonition serves as a reminder for those who are tempted to think that other things are much more important than gentle, caring presence to one who has become ill.

Clare of Assisi also had a heart for those who needed care. Although Clare and her Sisters lived in an enclosed Community, it was not unusual for people to bring their sick family members to the monastery door. Clare would pray for the sick and make the sign of the cross over them. Witnesses reported Clare having thus cured people of fevers, infections, and even mental illness. Within her community, Clare, like Francis, set an example of compassion for those who were ill. She regularly tended to those who were sick, even after she herself was no longer well. Sisters who lived with Clare were called upon to testify in the process of her canonization, just two years after Clare's death. One Sister after another

# HOSE WHO ARE ILL



“When Francis was moved to embrace a leper for the first time, something changed in him. He began to care for them, and to see them as images of Christ.”



remarked about her attentiveness to the sick. “She was certainly most diligent about encouraging and protecting the sisters, showing compassion toward the sick sisters. She was solicitous about serving them.”

At San Damiano, where Clare and her sisters lived, pilgrims today can see the room where they slept. When imagining all the Sisters in this one space, it is obvious that their close proximity would have made them aware of one another’s physical needs.

In her Rule, Clare showed particular concern for those who were ill. “Concerning the sick sisters, let the abbess be strictly bound to inquire with diligence what their illness requires both by way of counsel as well as food and other necessities, and let her provide for them charitably and kindly according to the resources of the place. Let each one confidently make her needs known to another.”

The section of the Rule describing the role of the Abbess illustrates Clare’s awareness of other needs in addition to bodily care. “She (the Abbess) should console those who are afflicted, and be, likewise, the last refuge for those who are disturbed; for if they fail to find in her the means of health, the sickness of despair might overcome the weak.” In a time when rules for religious communities tended to be quite exacting, Clare recognized the need to make exceptions for ill Sisters. Enclosed Communities at this time had strict rules of silence, but when Clare wrote her Rule for the Community, she added “In the infirmary, however, the sisters may speak discreetly at all times for the recreation and service of those who are sick.”

In Francis and Clare, we see people who responded to the needs around them. Francis recognized the painful isolation of those with leprosy and moved toward them as brothers and sisters who needed more than a few coins or a loaf of bread. Like everyone, they needed to be seen and valued. Clare, in caring for her sisters, and in caring for Francis for a time shortly before his death, recognized the need for prayer, conversation, and someone to lift their spirits.

We have probably recognized in our families that when someone is seriously ill, each person has a unique way of showing his/her care. One might be exceptionally good at taking care of practical concerns; another brings a touch of much-needed humor, and others have the gift of listening to the person’s fears and questions. We do not have to be hospital chaplains or nurses to bring a healing presence to people we visit in hospitals or nursing homes. For many of us, such settings make us a bit uneasy. We feel vulnerable, because we do not know what to do to make things better. This place of vulnerability is exactly what connects us to the person we come to see. It reminds us that we are not there because we have the answers. We are there to let someone know that she/he is remembered, held in prayer, and very important to us.

“Like Francis, many who first shied away from settings of vulnerability ultimately experience that what once was thought bitter can become sweet.”

# The Road Less Traveled in To



Archive photo of Sisters Marlene Kochert, OSF and the late Pat Bietsch, OSF

As shared by Sisters Marlene Kochert, Olga Wittekind, and Kathleen Branham, OSF and Associate-to-be, Beverly Wilson

Photos by: Beverly Wilson

S. Marlene Kochert shared the history of St. Mary Church in Tohatchi, NM. It was built and then dedicated in June 1920. A few congregations of Sisters ministered in the parish during the 1900s.

By the late 1980s, there were no Sisters in the parish when

Fr. John Mittelstadt, OFM arrived. He wanted Sisters for ministry but also knew how important it was to have Sisters among the people, especially since Navajo is a matriarchal tribe.

Knowing the Oldenburg community, Fr. John asked for two Sisters to come to St. Mary's. Three Sisters responded and were accepted. Sisters Dolores Wright, Jean Gabriel Jones, and Barbara Hileman arrived in May 1990, and became involved in the lives of the Navajo people and doing various ministries with and for them.

In August 1991, S. Alice Retzner and I arrived at Christ the King in Shiprock, NM, at the request of Fr. Bill Hart. He encouraged us to go to meetings, gatherings, and the sights in the area. This usually meant a two-hour drive one way in any direction. That was just fine with us! We learned where the parishioners lived and how far they traveled for church, groceries, school, gas, and such.

In early 1998, I was asked to come to Tohatchi to serve. By this time, there were six Sisters ministering in the approx. 3,000 sq. mi. parish and in three outlying missions: Sisters Dolores Wright, Jean Gabriel Jones, Barb Hileman, Mildred "Millie" Speed, Pat Bietsch, and myself. All of us were involved in various ministries from liturgies, Religious Ed., RCIA, adult formation, and youth groups. We transported children to school and helped families send their children to Catholic school. We worked in the Clothes Closet, food pantry, and were with the Tohatchi people in other ways.

It was a significant change from Shiprock to being at Tohatchi. At St. Mary's, things were going full force with two priests, a brother, six sisters, and four to eight lay workers/volunteers. We overlapped in our ministries and coordinated most things, especially when six to ten groups came for six to eight days in the spring and summer. These groups had a variety of experiences that accomplished what was needed.



Hogan Chapel

Now we have a food pantry and thrift store that serve anyone who comes. We have times when community groups come to our hall for meetings. We have funerals and prayer services for burials for parishioners and non-Catholics. We have a hogan chapel close by that we intend to use again for weekday Masses when we can open 100%. There are three hogans for volunteers. Hopefully, next year, or sooner, we can get back to Religious Education, home visits, outreach, and other activities.

We have five twin parishes. Saints Peter and Paul from Reading, OH, come to do Summer Bible School, and share with our youth group. St. Mary's in Greensburg, IN, has come for mission trips and takes up an Advent collection for us. St. Joan of Arc in Phoenix, AZ, has an "Adopt a Family" project that began when S. Millie was here and has multiplied over the years from helping 25 families to helping 100 families.

St. James in Fremont, CA, also goes all out for us. Fr. Dale drives out with a trailer for Thanksgiving Day. A special collection is taken up for us, and then the trailer is loaded with gifts they bought to send back---blankets, linens, clothing, toys, food, and other items. We also have faithful and generous donors who mail packages throughout the year. All individuals and groups are necessary to support our parish functions and ministry to parishioners and the larger community.

# Tohatchi, New Mexico

Today, things have changed due to just being one priest, one sister. In June, Brother Maynard, OFM, came back and was welcomed with open arms. He is Navajo and is looking forward to RCIA and other ministries. The latest news is that S. Miriam Kaeser, OSF will be here beginning in October. She will bring enthusiasm and many needed skills and experiences. So, with additional staff members, groups coming back next summer, and the ongoing help and prayers of donors, twin parishes, and friends, there is new hope and life coming to St. Mary's.

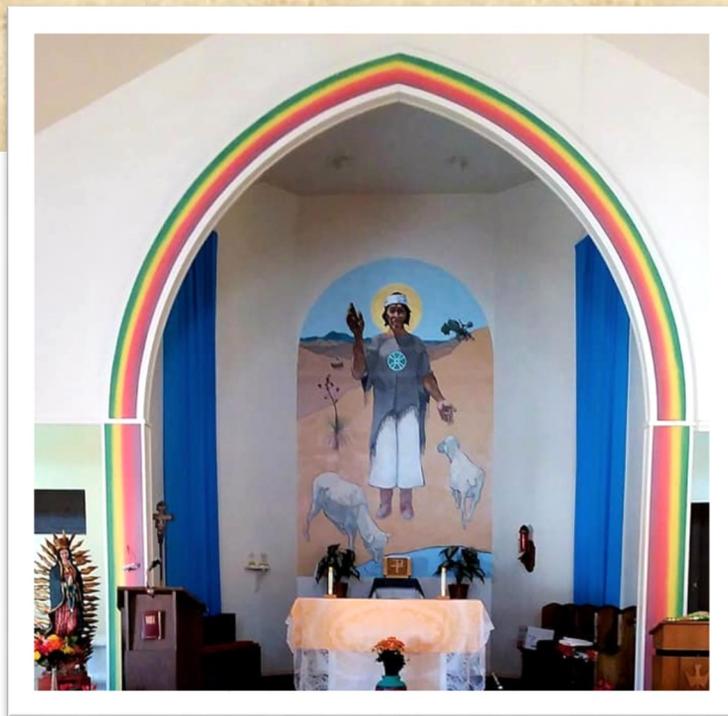
## *S. Marlene expresses her gratitude,*

*"Thanks, and praise God for good friends and times these thirty years among the Navajo people. Thanks to having Sisters of many communities here in the Diocese of Gallup, where we are truly sisters. Thanks to all the thousands of people of various cultures who have been part of my life. I am truly blessed!"*

S. Kathleen Branham was privileged to visit S. Marlene for seven weeks in 2006. Witnessing this incredible ministry in the past, she contacted S. Marlene and asked if several people from Oldenburg could come for about a month with the intent to serve in whatever capacity the mission needed. Sisters Kathleen and Olga Wittekind, Associate Tracy Thread, and our skilled photographer and soon-to-be Associate Beverly Wilson, arrived this summer.

On the early morning of May 29, Tracy and S. Kathleen began their cross-country journey driving to Tohatchi, NM, arriving late in the evening on May 30. Masks and social distancing were still in place, and people were still sheltering at home. New Mexico was under strict mandates while most of the country was already lifting its mandates.

S. Olga commented, "My first impression of New Mexico was the expectation of seeing the Lone Ranger careening down a mountain! The gorgeous, magnificent mountains speak of the glory of God, the Great Spirit. The Navajo Nation is the largest Reservation of any Native American group; mile after mile of the desert with incredible mountains. We saw cattle with their ribs showing from lack of water and vegetation. The cattle and horses have little feed from grass or shrubs. However, sheep seem to fair better. It was a blessing to see St. Mary's Church. The beautiful painting behind the altar is of the Navajo Good Shepherd with some of His sheep!" There is no daily schedule except morning prayer and daily liturgy with the community.



Good Shepherd painting in St. Mary's Church

A morning walk up the mountain became a favorite reflection space for Beverly. There were very few folks at Mass on the first Sunday. By the following Sunday, the Church had many more parishioners whom Fr. Dale welcomed so warmly! Everyone knows and loves S. Marlene! Her welcoming presence and beautiful voice as she leads singing at the Masses endear her to the people.

We served in the food pantry and clothing closet during the weeks when people called asking for assistance. You do what you need to do and be present to those you are serving, even if it includes taking someone to where they need to go or giving money for gasoline. We also cleaned and cleared out the back of the sacristy, small apartment, the parish hall, and Kateri Hall. S. Kathleen created a new Facebook page for [St. Mary Mission - Tohatchi, New Mexico | Facebook](#). She helped Fr. Dale create a Facebook site for himself so he, too, could stay in touch with the world. A Vocation event was held with Sisters Olga, Marlene, Kathleen, Fr. Dale, Brothers Maynard, and Alex who shared their vocation stories and broke bread with the Native women we invited. It was a "getting to know who we are as religious men and women" and promoting vocations of all types.

We attended a few high school graduation gatherings in the parish. One young woman's relatives gave her much advice in the Navajo language as she sets off for college in North Carolina. Her uncle, who attended Notre Dame, reminded her not to forget her roots! A 103-year-old woman was being baptized with her family and friends. S. Marlene was able to wait with the family as a relative helped a mother sheep give birth! After the arrival of the new lamb, everyone then proceeded with the baptism! Fr. Dale adapted the service with prayers that included the Navajo traditions of blessings with cedar. All is so beautifully experienced as God is in their midst!

# The Road Less Traveled ... continued



Broken down rescue in front of Associate Alice Manuelito's home

It wasn't all work as S. Marlene was a great tour guide. We visited sites of interest, including St. Michael's Mission and school, Shiprock, Mesa Verde National Park, Window Rock, AZ (the Navajo Capital), and Chaco Canyon National Park. Imagine being in the desert, 102 degrees, traveling down a dirt road for 20 miles, and finally get back onto a concrete highway. Then suddenly, breakdown! Yep, that was us. It was ironic to know that we broke down in front of Associate Alice Manuelito's home!

God indeed was watching out for us during this time. As we waited for AAA, S. Marlene and Alice sat behind the truck with lawn chairs and umbrellas while drinking water to stay cool. Beverly and Alice's husband, Sherman, went to the property to see the sheep and lambs. Sisters Olga and Kathleen remained in the truck, just talking, and trying to stay cool with windows down until we were rescued a few hours later by Fr. Dale and AAA.

S. Kathleen commented, "Witnessing the poverty on the Reservation and just how limited the resources are in this community is something many of us continue to struggle with. Equal opportunity does not exist on a Reservation when there are broken treaties from the past. Many Native Americans continue to live in extreme poverty, without running water, decent medical care, and just living day to day due to centuries of systemic racism. Many people had shared that the federal government was slow in responding to the COVID-19 crisis in their county, McKinley, and it cost many lives. I'm still appalled at how the Federal Government continues suppressing the first people of this nation and people of different colors and races."

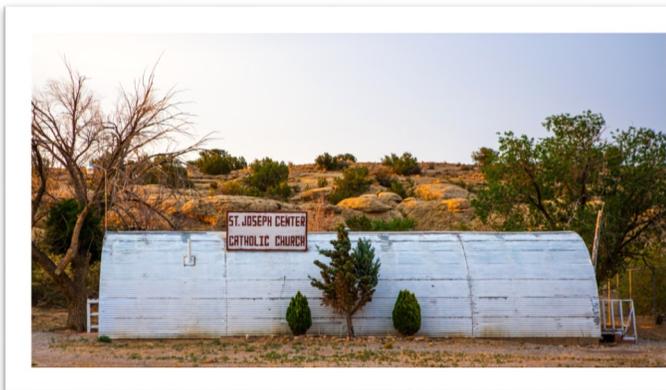
Beverly likes to experience and learn about different cultures. She commented, "After spending time in Appalachia and on the Navajo Reservation, I have learned so much about the different cultures in the United States. The drought the Navajos are living through causes limitations on their livelihood. It is difficult to raise animals, and plant life has become very scarce. Money is limited for the Native people. Navajos sell their possessions to get enough money to be able to purchase gas. There are not many jobs available



Associate Alice Manuelito and S. Marlene Kochert, OSF

on the Reservation, so many sell items such as jewelry or pottery to afford what they need. In addition to the ministry S. Marlene does, seeing St. Joseph Church started by S. Millie Speed spoke volumes about the Sisters' work. The Native people were given the land that the United States had no use for, and somehow the Native people found a way to make a living on it ...

My pictures demonstrate a FAITH. Faith that what is needed will be provided. Even a flower finds a way to bloom in the middle of the desert. I will remember the significance of the Sisters of St. Francis and the impact of their presence in Tohatchi."



St. Joseph Church

St. Mary's Mission continues to represent the Franciscan Values by meeting the needs of the people and upholding the dignity of the individual. No matter a person's situation, they provide spiritual guidance to all who enter through their doors and help bring peace, justice, and reconciliation to all those seeking it.

Care of Creation is not only something we hold dear as Franciscans, but it also is part of who the Native people are. The Great Spirit taught them many years ago that land is not owned, but is given as a gift and in taking care of this gift, it can be used by many generations to come. It is a tribute to the Great Spirit!



# Oldenburg Franciscan Center

Retreat ☺ Renew † Rejoice! ♥

## upcoming programs...

### HEALING YOUR POST COVID SPIRIT



SATURDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 18  
9:30 AM-11:30AM

### A DAY OF QUIET RENEWAL



10-29, 11-12, 12-10  
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

### EMBODIMENT OF THE DIVINE



SUNDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 26  
2:00 PM-4:00 PM

### WOMENS DAY: WOMEN OF CHANGE



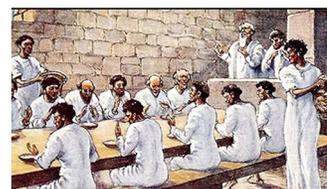
SATURDAY,  
OCTOBER 23  
9:00 AM-3:00 PM

### LANGUAGES OF LOVE



SATURDAY,  
NOVEMBER 13  
9:30 AM-11:30 AM

### WISDOM OF THE ESSENES



SATURDAY,  
DECEMBER 11  
9:30 AM-11:30 AM

### Contemplative Prayer

#### WEDNESDAYS:

October 6  
November 3  
December 1

WITH  
S. OLGA WITTEKIND, OSF

PROGRAMS CAN BE  
ATTENDED LIVE  
OR VIA ZOOM!

### Coffee Talks

October 17:  
*China*  
November 14:  
*Kenya*  
December 12:  
*He's Got the Whole  
World in His Hands*

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

# FRANCISCAN ASSOCIATE SIGNING AND JUBILARIAN



New Associates Angie Kelly, Cheryl Schnitzius, Portia DuBach, and LaTonya Turner

On Sunday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Motherhouse Chapel was filled with sunlight streaming through the stained glass windows as well as the light from faces beaming with joy. Sisters and Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg gathered for the annual Prayer Service welcoming new Associates and recognizing Jubilarians and a permanent commitment Associate.

Associates share the Franciscan charism and mission of the Sisters in their daily lives through prayer, service, and a commitment to simple living. Keeping their Mission Statement in mind:

*"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."*

Associates write personal statements that reflect their call to Franciscan living.

The prayer service reflected on the baptism of Saints Francis and Clare and their call to share and live the good news of the Gospels. This same call was

answered by Mother Theresa Hackelmeier and the Sisters and Associates who follow her.

The history of the Community was symbolized at the altar with items commemorating important aspects of this history.

Congratulations and welcome to:

- ◆ Angie Kelly  
Batesville, IN
- ◆ Cheryl Schnitzius  
Richmond, IN
- ◆ Portia Dubach  
Cincinnati, OH
- ◆ LaTonya Turner  
Zionsville, IN

During the Signing Ceremony each new Associate read her statements to the congregation before they signed them. They received their Associate pin from their contact person who has walked with them during their formational year as a prospective Associate.



*"Enter the  
Come to  
By God you  
by name yo  
to follow  
carry th  
Enter the jou  
as the fami*

# JUBILEE CELEBRATION

BY CAROLYN MEYER & JANE SCHAEFER, ASSOCIATE CO-DIRECTORS

We thank them for sharing their gifts and spiritual graces with us. Each commitment statement expressed ways they will participate in the Sisters' mission and prayer -

"... by raising up and reaching out to others as I share the values of St. Francis and St. Clare in my daily life while continuing to strive to live a simpler, more forgiving, respectful, and grateful life. I will open myself daily to a deeper and more intimate relationship with God through daily Mass and as I encounter Him in the familiar faces in my life." **Angie Kelly**

"... by sharing my gift of compassion for others, especially the elderly and those with dementia, to listen to God's words in my heart for guidance and to keep God first in my life." **Cheryl Schnitzius**

"... by being united to the same body through Jesus Christ in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare in the richness of the sacramental life of the Catholic Church.... to share my gifts and talents and to serve with JOY, never judging, always seeking good qualities as Jesus, Francis and Clare did....to care for creation and all that the Creator has given us as a reflection of God's pure LOVE for us....to prayerfully discern while trusting in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to lead me as I continue walking my journey to serve, as an Associate of St. Francis." **Portia Dubach**

"Using the Franciscan values to guide my life, I work each day in gratitude and appreciation for the life God has given me. And therefore, I am duty-bound by these values to help, serve, and make sure others know that their life matters."

**LaTonya Turner**



Associate Jubilarians as they receive the, *Blessing of Saint Clare.* Chris Warders, Carolyn Meyer and Virginia Gilbert



Permanent Associate, Jackie Schlichte

Associates renew their commitment annually, but after six years an Associate may make a commitment permanent.

As we celebrated our new Associates and our 2020 and 2021 Associate Jubilarians, we also recognized Jackie Schlichte as a permanent Associate. She expressed her call in these words,

"Through the Beloved Triune God's Love and Gifts, I commit to allowing Him to open my heart in surrender that I will live His Love obediently and always in the Name of Jesus. Glory to God." **Jackie Schlichte**



... journey.  
... the song.  
... are chosen,  
... you are called  
... the vision,  
... the cross.  
... journey of faith  
... ly of God."



# YEAR-END GIVING

By Sue Siefert - Director, Office of Congregational Advancement

The Sisters of St. Francis are grateful for the many contributors who donate to the community as a part of their annual year-end giving! Some organizations receive as much as 40% of their annual contributions in the final months of the year as donors express their gratitude.

For many, year-end giving also makes financial sense. Allow me to explain ...

## Christmas Spirit

As the Christmas season draws near, charitable giving increases. The Christmas season and its traditions are filled with messages of gratitude, generosity and a spirit of helping others who may be less fortunate, or who have helped you along the way. Inspired by the giving spirit, you may not only shop for gifts for friends and family, but direct your money to favorite charities as well. In addition, year-end giving offers you a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate to children gratitude and compassion for others. Choosing a charity together can be a bonding experience for families.

## Financial Benefits

Year-end giving can also have a practical purpose as well. As the end of a tax year approaches, you may be focused on your personal income tax planning. If you itemize deductions, a gift to a qualified charitable organization, such as the Sisters, may allow you to claim a charitable contribution deduction against your taxable income. If a gift is deductible, it will reduce your amount of taxes paid based on the income tax bracket you are in.

For example, if you are in the 33% tax bracket, you would enjoy a \$33 tax savings on a \$100 charitable contribution. It is important to note that donations can be subject to certain limitations and restrictions, thus I remind you of the importance of consulting a tax advisor for specific questions.

## Sharing the Wealth

Year-end bonuses may also play a role in the decision to make contributions in the last few weeks of the year. If you receive an annual incentive compensation bonus at the end of the year, you may consider making decisions on charitable giving based on your award.

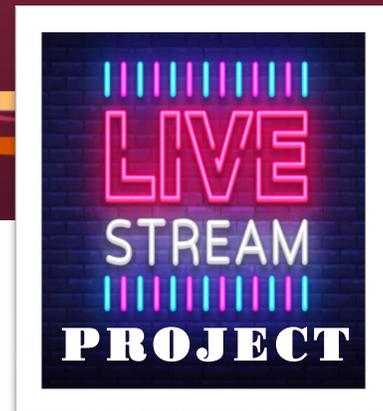
Appreciated stock can also present you with an opportunity to share income while receiving tax benefits. Donating appreciated property, for example—shares of stock, to a qualified charitable organization may allow you to take a deduction on your income taxes for the full fair market value of the donated assets.

In this example, you are not taxed on the appreciation, so in effect you receive a deduction for an amount that was never reported or taxed as income. This is a great way to maximize the value of a donation to the receiving organization, in a tax-efficient way to you.

For more information on the benefits of year-end giving, first check with your financial or tax advisor, and then reach out to S. Maureen Irvin or me to see how your gift can best benefit the Sisters!

**S. Maureen Irvin, OSF**  
Director, Donor Engagement  
PO Box 100 - Oldenburg, IN 47036  
mirvin@oldenburgosf.com - 812-933-6554

**Sue Siefert**  
Director, Office of Congregational Advancement  
PO Box 100 - Oldenburg, IN 47036  
ssiefert@oldenburgosf.com - 812-933-6460



The  
**SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS**

express their APPRECIATION to the  
**Dr. Omer & Martha Jasper Family Charitable Trust**  
and to all the  
**donors who contributed to our Live Stream Project!**

THANKS to your generosity, we have purchased new live streaming equipment, and are broadcasting our Sunday Liturgies and other events via YouTube. Check our Facebook page, **Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg**, for weekly Liturgy links, and also our YouTube Channel for access to past broadcasts:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfcf4VNo4GwizGAOW6H9fKg>

## *Special Request*

*from the* **OLDENBURG FRANCISCANS**

Many are familiar with the **Fatima Shrine** located on our Motherhouse campus. Through the years weather and the elements have taken their toll on the shrine's statues, and the estimate to restore the shrine is **\$33,655**.

We are accepting donations toward the cost of restoring our **Fatima Shrine** so all may enjoy it for generations to come!



The Fatima Shrine statues are in need of immediate repair.

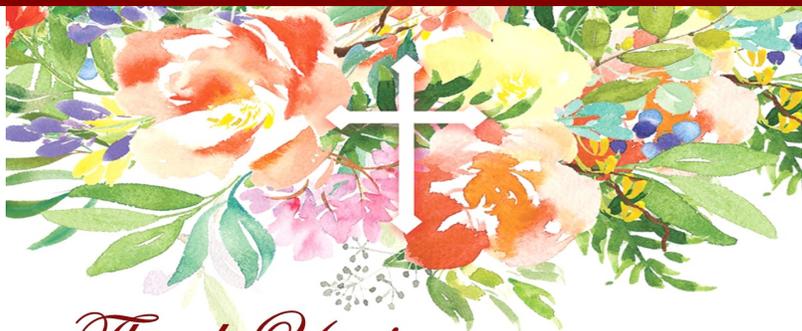
**Monetary donations, both small and large, will be greatly appreciated!**

- ♦ **Online Donations** are being accepted at **OldenburgFranciscans.org/Donate**  
*Please note "Fatima Restoration" in the Comments*
- ♦ **Donations** may also be sent to:

**SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS**  
**Fatima Restoration**  
PO Box 100  
Oldenburg, IN 47036

*Thank You for your consideration!*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & ANNOUNCEMENTS



*Thank You!*

The Sisters of St. Francis  
thank the  
**Dan R. & Catherine M. Dalton Fund**  
of the  
Ripley County Community Foundation  
for their generous grant toward the  
**Sisters' Live Streaming Project!**

*Dan & Catherine's generosity is making a difference in the lives of our Sisters, and those who receive our liturgy and program broadcasts.*



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OLDENBURG

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The Sisters THANK YOU!



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS  
OLDENBURG



## *Holidays* under the *Spires*

will be hosted  
by the  
Village of Oldenburg on  
**Saturday,**  
**December 4.**

*To ensure the safety of our Sisters' health, our Chapel will not be open to guests. Our traditional Cookie & Bread Sale will be held outside in front of the Convent from 9:00 until everything is sold.*

*To visit with a Sister, an appointment must be made in advance by calling 812-934-2475.*

*For more information about the event, check the Holidays Under the Spires website for updates!*

[HolidaysUndertheSpires.com](https://HolidaysUndertheSpires.com)

# RESTING IN GOD



**S. KATHLEEN MCCARTHY, OSF**

S. Kathleen completed her earthly journey on June 12. She was the second of eight children born to Joseph and Inez McCarthy. Kathleen mentioned in her autobiography that the banks crashed in 1929, just two months after her birth. One might wonder how this event affected her, even in later life, as it did most everyone throughout the country.

Meeting the Oldenburg Franciscans for the first time at OLA, Kathleen joined the Community in 1948, becoming Sister Mary Agnes. Though she began her ministry as a first-grade teacher, she eventually taught students in all eight elementary grades, and served as an elementary principal for 26 years.

In a 1985 article written for our Community newsletter, author Dot Lindsey explained: "Evangelization is one of their main concerns. Home visitation is a real aspect of reaching out in the neighborhood. In addition, money must be raised to meet the financial needs and crises of the community. One of the main sources of income is bingo where Kathleen and co-workers spend Friday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Sunday mornings find Kathleen providing music for two Masses. In this way, Kathleen continues to use the flute-playing skills she learned at OLA."

"Summers provide a time for giving help to the children who might otherwise roam the streets. The summer program includes Bible school, remedial classes, enrichment opportunities, preschool and sewing classes." Sounds like Kathleen was also engaged in ministry thirteen months out of every twelve!

Asked why her commitment was so all-encompassing, Kathleen shared, "Because I want to help people to lift themselves up in a system that makes that so hard for them to do. Because I care about the spiritual, material and educational needs of the people of the community."

For our S. Kathleen McCarthy, the Journey is complete. Her Vision now centers on her God whom she has served so faithfully. May we, inspired by her self-giving, likewise dedicate our days in generous service.

*Excerpts from the Memorial Letter written by S. Christa Franzer, OSF, for the General Council.*



**S. ROSAIRE BISHOP, OSF**

On July 3, Sister Death visited us as S. Rosaire departed this life to continue eternal life in the presence of our gracious and loving God.

S. Rosaire was born Mary Margaret in Indianapolis, the third child of Charles and Marie Bishop. The family would continue to grow, numbering 11 children altogether which included two sets of twins. Mary Margaret was surrounded by siblings, two boys and nine girls.

Rosaire's parents loved books and her mother read to the children and gave them gifts of books for Christmas. Rosaire would go on to be a lifelong learner and lover of books.

By third grade, Rosaire knew that she wanted to be a Sister. It was at St. Mary's Academy that Rosaire met our Sisters and first worked in a library. She joined the Oldenburg Sisters as her older sister, S. Madonna, had done.

Rosaire served as an elementary teacher for almost 40 years. Social studies was her forte. Through those years she not only earned degrees in education but added to her knowledge of history by her attendance at various workshops. Especially notable was the certificate that she earned at a six-week workshop in Egypt. Upon her return, she did a presentation on the Egyptian family using the slides she had taken to enhance her classroom teaching. Rosaire also expanded her knowledge by visiting historical places like Valley Forge. When Rosaire moved on to teaching at Martin University, she was surprised that their history books taught about the KKK – information which was omitted in most history books at that time.

The Sisters' library at Oldenburg was in need of a librarian, and Oldenburg Academy needed a part-time librarian. Needing to be certified, Rosaire returned to school to earn a Master's Degree in Library Science. Rosaire filled both positions from 1996-2005. From 2005 until her retirement in 2018, she continued to serve as the Convent librarian.

The following statement by Willard Scott seems especially true about Rosaire: "Librarians have always been among the most thoughtful and helpful people. They are teachers without a classroom."

*Excerpts from the Memorial Letter written by S. Annette Grisley, OSF, for the General Council.*



**S. HELEN ECKSTEIN, OSF**

On August 30, S. Helen journeyed to her eternal reward.

*"A simple, prayerful life. . . Amen."*

With these words, Sister Helen Eckstein ended her autobiography--and probably no few words could provide a better description of her life among us.

Helen was born on March 31, 1940 and joined an older brother in her farming family, which was later to welcome one more girl and four more boys.

Helen relates the tragedy that marked her life: "On February 3, 1953, Mother, Father, Howard and Earl went to Mass and the blessing of the throats. After leaving church, they were in a train accident. All were killed." The remaining five children were split up among various aunts and uncles. Helen herself finished school in Enochsburg, went on to Oldenburg Academy, and then "joined the Franciscan Sisters who were her teachers and friends from school days."

Helen, then Sister Antonella, began her teaching career at Holy Name, Beech Grove, and St. Vincent de Paul, Cincinnati, before moving on to St. Michael, Brookville, where she would spend the next 40 years ministering with her friend, S. Dominica Doyle.

In 2005, Helen "retired" to Oldenburg. She assisted in the Associate Office, and at times she ran the video camera for Mass and events; at other times she would sit with a Sister who was dying. Most recently, hers was a familiar face in our Development Office.

Helen reported that her very favorite thing to do was to drink a cup of hot coffee and eat a piece of homemade pie baked by her sister Rosella. Having been raised on a farm, Helen loved the outdoors. She could often be seen visiting and out walking with her faithful friend S. Dominica.

Helen had a great gift of accepting life as it came with optimism and a smile for all whom she met.

*Excerpts from the Memorial Letter written by S. Christa Franzer, OSF, for the General Council.*



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# *We hold you in Prayer*

*Dear Lord,*

*Here I sit*

*with rosary in hand,  
wondering  
how to best pray  
for our donors,  
those who give to us  
of their prayers,  
time and donations.*

*I ask You*

*to bless them, Lord,  
with peace  
and all good things.*

*Let Your face*

*shine on them always  
with Your joy and  
Your love.*

*Hail Mary . . .*

*S. Elna Stemann, OSF*

*Photo: Beverly Wilson*

