

Alive

School
Sisters
of  St. Francis

WITH THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL



In this Issue

Welcoming new sisters
(p. 4)

Applause for outreach
events (p.6)

Sisters honor their
teachers
(p. 8)

2016-17 Annual Report

Bearing the Marks of Christ

BY SISTER JOAN PULS

St. Francis of Assisi very deliberately chose to walk in the footsteps of Christ. From the beginning of his conversion, he had a great devotion and veneration for Christ crucified.

One morning in 1224, two years before his death, Francis was absorbed in prayer on a slope of Mount Alverna when a seraph with six wings appeared to him. When the vision disappeared, the wounds of Jesus were imprinted on Francis' body. Until his death, Francis tried to conceal the wounds to the best of his ability. However, his brothers knew about them, and reliable witnesses attested to this extraordinary event.

The feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis is celebrated on September 17. Franciscans celebrate this as a recognition that what appeared externally on Francis' body reflected his inner conformity to the lived example of Jesus. The imprinting of the same wounds that Jesus suffered in his crucifixion was consistent with Francis' compassion for the suffering Christ, and for the suffering of all creatures, the lepers, the poor, and the sick.

We are called to be in solidarity with the suffering body of Christ in our world today: the marginalized, those trafficked and enslaved, the abused, and the lepers of our time.

Francis lived and embodied the person of Christ, breaking down barriers, seeing all people, all creatures, as brothers and sisters. He was drenched in his love for the Christ whose features he found in the least and the lowliest. The theologian Hugh of St. Victor wrote, "Such is the power of love that it transforms the lover into the beloved." How true this was for Francis in his identification with the sufferings of Christ!

SISTER JOAN PULS is past president of our international congregation, served on the faculty of Alverno College, and has been a member of the community for 63 years.

2 School Sisters of St. Francis

We make Christ visible in our world by bearing the marks of Christ in our thoughts, words and deeds. When we choose to follow in the footsteps of Christ, who knows where it will lead?

Our world today bears a crucified face. Only love can begin the transformation of the sufferings of those among us, our brothers and sisters. Do we have at the core of our lives this desire to feel and to share the suffering love that God has for the world, that Jesus poured out with such generosity, and that visibly marked St. Francis?



ALIVE | Fall 2017
VOLUME 8, ISSUE 1

ALIVE is published
by the School Sisters of St. Francis,
an international congregation of
Franciscan women religious
headquartered in
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Copyright reserved

EDITORIAL BOARD
Sister Mary Diez
Sister Deborah Fumagalli
Sister Carol Rigali
Pamela L. Mueller
Co-Editors
Sister Ruth Hoerig
Michael O'Loughlin
Design and Production
Betty Lewis

For address changes, reprint
permission or other questions
School Sisters of St. Francis
Office of Mission Advancement
1501 South Layton Boulevard
Milwaukee, WI 53215-1924
Telephone (414) 384-3334
Email: communications@sssf.org

FRONT COVER
Sister Jositta Chittakattu (center)
cuts a cake celebrating 25 years of
vowed life while surrounded by
sisters who had just made their final
vows in the St. Francis Province of
North India. This issue spotlights
formation of new sisters and
celebrates retired sisters who taught
girls who became sisters themselves.

VISIT US AT OUR WEBSITE

www.sssf.org



www.facebook.com/schoolsistersofstfrancis



www.twitter.com/sssfcommunity

Making a Forever Difference

After looking at the articles in this issue of *Alive* magazine, our team members reflected on our own experiences in “making a forever difference.”



As a teacher, I often heard my adult students say, “I can’t give a speech” or “I’m not a good writer.” I always told them to “put a ‘yet’ on the end of that sentence” to help them reframe what they were thinking about the possibilities for their own development. I realized what that tiny word meant when I congratulated a former student on a very effective technology training that she gave to the faculty one fall. Her response was “I used to be too afraid to talk in groups or to lead a session. You helped me see I could change.”

—*Sister Mary Diez*

For me, formation was a work of one-on-one accompaniment—earning the trust of each novice by being a good listener and by asking the hard questions required for gaining insight into personal motivation and behaviors. It’s really a good feeling to receive feedback from some of these women that my simply being present, listening, and encouraging them along the path of their discernment made a difference.



—*Sister Maureen McCarthy*



The core ideas of being with God in contemplation and prayer, and being sent to bear much fruit that will last, were always in my mind as I accompanied women in the various stages of formation. I often used the image of a sapling, which needs care and attention to be rooted and developed into a tree. I am grateful and happy now to see so many of these sisters who lead a life rooted in prayer and who are very fruitful in Christ’s mission.

—*Sister Francitta Pazhukkathara*

The Annual Report that accompanies this issue of *Alive* sparked our gratitude and awe at the thought of the impact of our donors on the lives of so many people around the world. We saw the “making a forever difference” theme echoed throughout. We are always grateful that you help us to realize our dream of responding to the needs of people around the world, as well as to care for our retired sisters. We say a big “thank you” to each of you! We hope that we will see many of you in person at the Pancake Breakfast on October 1!



—*Sister Elsa Paul Chiriyankandath*

our global ministry



SSSF PHOTO

Classroom instruction is an integral part of the young women's preparation for consecrated life.

Welcoming New Sisters

Formation ministry comes with great joys and challenges

BY BRENNA SKELLY

At a time when the vast majority of young people around the world are focused on technology and material wealth, women beginning the formation process with the School Sisters of St. Francis are choosing an alternative path.

This is particularly evident in the North India St. Francis Province and the South India Assisi Province, where our international congregation is currently experiencing significant growth. Sisters in these provinces run five formation houses, providing postulants and novices with opportunities to discern their call to religious life.

India's linguistic and cultural diversity presents a unique set of challenges for sisters who are formation

BRENNA SKELLY is a Milwaukee-based educator and freelance writer who previously served in the Mission Advancement and Marketing and Communication offices.

ministers. The young women interested in vowed life come from many different parts of this vast country, so when they arrive at a formation house, they must adapt to differences in culture, language, food, and even climate. Before they can excel at their religious studies, these aspirants, postulants, and novices must learn both Hindi and English.

Sisters working as formation ministers say that they find joy in helping young women overcome these hurdles. These ministers travel to parishes around the country, building relationships with young women who have expressed a calling to religious life.

Sister Sophy Mekkattukulam acknowledges that she and her co-formators must shepherd young candidates—who are living in a world that is increasingly connected through technology and full of options—through the rigors of formation.

“These young women are courageous and willing to take on language learning while living far from their families. They are adaptable to differences in culture, food, and climate, very creative, eager to learn and, above all, joyful.” —Sister Mary Diez

Throughout the formation process, Sister Sophy strives to show patience and humility, modeling the mission of the School Sisters of St. Francis by living the Good News of Jesus and witnessing to the presence of God in the lives of those around her. She observes young women as they work at building their character and deepening their prayer life while aspiring to be consecrated. “My greatest moments of joy come when candidates persevere through the process and respond to God’s call,” she said.

Joan Joseph, a novice, describes the challenges and delights of responding to God’s call. Having grown up in a close-knit family, she struggled to detach herself from the life she knew when she first came to the community. Early on, she had recognized that joining the community would require her to make material sacrifices. She knew there would be opportunities to follow other life paths that would move her away from her call, and not all of her family members and friends were confident she was making the right decision in entering vowed life. In the midst of these struggles, she found that God was calling her even more strongly.

“I could see within me that by the movement of the spirit, I was able to be open and see my formation mistress as like my mom, and my companions as like my own sisters,” Joan Joseph said. “I was able to ‘find myself,’ along with my strengths and weaknesses.”

Formation involves the care and development of the whole person, so a candidate’s educational and spiritual needs must be met, along with her living expenses. Funding needs include food and housing, medical care and learning materials, training for sisters who work as part of the formation process, and travel expenses as the sisters visit parishes throughout India.

The educational needs of the entire community of sisters vary, too, from high school education for candidates to more advanced education for vowed members. In the North India Province, two sisters currently attend nursing school, one attends medical

school, and three are pursuing a degree in education. Having a sister on hand who is a nurse, doctor, teacher, or in another helping profession allows all the other sisters to carry out meaningful mission work with less dependence on outside experts in these fields. At the same time, sisters in these professions serve as role models. Finally, young candidates see that religious life may also present them with education that could lead to a meaningful career.

Sister Mary Diez, President of the International Leadership Team of the School Sisters of St. Francis, has gotten a firsthand look at formation in India as she has traveled to both of the country’s provinces to deepen links across the congregation.

“These young women are courageous and willing to take on language learning while living far from their families,” Sister Mary said. “They are adaptable to differences in culture, food, and climate, very creative, eager to learn and, above all, joyful.”

“God is giving me grace to find and make use of all the hidden talents for His glory,” Joan Joseph said. “Above all, my greatest joy is my vocation, which has made me closer to God.”

Your generosity can help our congregation to attract and prepare more young women for ministry and service as consecrated religious. Consider a gift today, using the enclosed envelope or at www.sssf.org.

SSSF PHOTO



Since the time of our foundresses, young women joining the community often have had to adapt by learning new languages and cultural customs.

Applause for Outreach Events

Performances and cultural events connect our sisters with the wider community

BY MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN

As the final notes are played, the audience rises to its feet for a standing ovation. Outside the hall, performers pose for photos and sign autographs. While these world-class musicians would receive the same reception in Chicago's Orchestra Hall, they are, in fact, in St. Joseph Hall, at our Milwaukee motherhouse. Since 2013, the U.S. Province has been actively inviting outstanding artists and workshop leaders to our campus through its Outreach Events office.

"The goal is to get the general public to understand that the sisters want to be present with them in ministry," explained Donna O'Loughlin, coordinator of Outreach Events for the U.S. Province. "If they know who we are, hopefully they will become partners in ministry, associates, donors, or building tenants."

During her welcome messages, she introduces them to our congregation and mission. "Our sisters are proud to share their legacy of spirituality, education, and the arts. The presence of sisters is always important, and the point is to bring in lay people to get to know them," Donna said. "The event must be appealing to both populations, so that everyone is happy and engaging in fellowship during intermission and, in time, relationships are established through repeat visits."

Peter Chiu noted, "I am a frequent concert-goer. Most concerts are soon forgotten, but Outreach Events concerts left lasting impressions on me. I also enjoyed meeting and conversing with the sisters in the audience."

MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN is director of Marketing and Communications.



Sisters and the public filled St. Joseph Hall to enjoy the Chris Hanson Band's sentimental songs from the Swing Era.

Famous guests include Milwaukee Symphony concertmaster Frank Almond and acclaimed pianist Andrew Armstrong; actress and Adrian Dominican Sister Nancy Murray; and spiritual author Megan McKenna. The list of events runs from art therapy workshops and big band concerts to visits by theologians and an annual bilingual Mass and fiesta.

"I have enjoyed and learned from the diversified workshops, concerts and cultural events," said Sister Barbaralie Stieffermann. "Because of the intimate space of the Hall, performers like Almond and Armstrong reveal a side of themselves that would not ordinarily be experienced in larger venues. The audience loved their wit and humor as they joked with each other."

"It amazes me that Donna can attract performers with worldwide reputation. We are privileged to hear the brightest and the best at minimal price."

"When an event is sponsored by our community, the audience grasps the sisters' financial sacrifice and

gesture of welcome,” Donna explained. “Our ticket admission and workshop fees are low because we’re not doing outreach for fundraising purposes. We try just to cover the cost of a program.”

It’s not just the sisters who appreciate the quality and price. “We have never been disappointed in any Outreach Event my parents and I have attended, and we have attended many,” said Mary Brzozowski. Visitor Colleen Koenig said, “The programs have had excellent speakers, actors, artists, and musicians. I’m thankful for all the programs.”

“It’s heartening that Outreach Events has been around long enough that we can count on a core audience to come,” Donna said.

These events offer a point of entry for new and old friends. “Once a woman came for an event because she had grown up across the street and had never been inside the convent,” Donna recalled. “Another said she had studied violin with Sister Imelda in the 1940s. Both these women are just now visiting—all because an Outreach Event beckoned them here.”

Sister Mary Yanny, who has attended more than 20 Outreach Events since 2014 said, “I’m grateful for the breadth, depth, and sheer enjoyment these experiences have afforded me and my friends. Each reveals an eclectic tendency to enjoy, learn, support, and promote diverse opportunities to grow in age, wisdom, and grace.”

“I am a better person because of Outreach Events,” said Sister Marjorie Ann Eisenmenger. Sister has participated in all three levels of a contemplative basket-making workshop series. “Each event stretched my body, mind and soul to heights and horizons I could not have imagined,” she said. “I encourage my friends to keep in touch and submit their email addresses to Donna to receive advance information.”

Donna recalled one elderly gentleman who insisted on coming to an evening concert even though he had just been released from the emergency room that afternoon. “He had been taught by our sisters at Pius XI Catholic High School, and he was afraid he wouldn’t have another opportunity to come back here. When people cherish our sisters and are glad to find a reason to reconnect through an Outreach Event, God’s reminding us that He works in our midst.”

Join us for our Outreach Events

2017

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Sept. 23 | Chapel stained glass windows presentation |
| Oct. 7 | The Book of Revelation workshop |
| Nov. 11 | Bilingual Mass and Fiesta |
| Nov. 30 | “Have Yourself a Jazzy Little Christmas” (piano and double bass concert) |

2018

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Jan. 20 | Journal collage reflection workshop |
| Feb. 10 | Eric Jacobson Quintet Valentine jazz concert |
| Mar. 2 and 3 | Lent retreat (Sisters and Associates only) |
| April 21 | Marty Haugen and David Haas liturgical music concert |
| May 19 | Mindfulness and peacemaking workshop |
| June 2 | The calligraphy of Michael Podesta |

Visit www.sssf.org for more details on these events.

Your gifts in support of Outreach Events enable the congregation to expand opportunities to bring sisters and the wider community together. Please use the enclosed envelope or our website, www.sssf.org.

celebrating our legacy

Lasting Impressions, Loving Memories

Even today, these sisters can thank their teachers

BY DONNA O'LOUGHLIN

We all can name at least one grade school or high school teacher who had a profound and positive impact on our life. These educators might have suggested a career path, nurtured an artistic or musical interest, or honed our skills as our coach. They may also have provided a listening ear and a compassionate heart during a difficult or challenging time. If we are lucky, we've had an opportunity to express our gratitude to this role model, perhaps in writing or in person.

Not surprisingly, for many of our sisters, that influential teacher was another School Sister of St. Francis. But what may surprise you is that for some of our 70- and 80-year-old sisters, that teacher is still a part of her life!

"Do you remember the times of your life?" The question posed in Paul Anka's Kodak jingle from the 1970s is one we asked our sisters, and we received numerous fond recollections for you to enjoy!

A Good Girl in Class

Sister Ellinda Leichtfeld, 93, recalls that she met Sister Rosemary Reier in 1952 at St. Joseph School in Aurora, Illinois. "Rosemary was nine years old and just entering fourth grade," Sister Ellinda said. "Rosemary became very ill during the year, needing a tonsillectomy and an appendectomy. This was cause for much concern. She was always a perfect little lady and an excellent student."

Sister Rosemary, now the director of Associate Relationship, remembers Sister Ellinda was "tall and slender, and very beautiful. There was always a

graciousness about her. While I was away sick, she took time out of the school day to make and send me cards. One time, she had all the cards from my classmates strung together.

"Sister always found different ways to make things fun," Sister Rosemary said. "She had a track on the wall, where every student had an airplane representing his or her weekly progress with spelling. When I came back to school after being away for so long and not having done lessons at home, I saw that my plane had moved along with another student who was doing very well!

"During my illness, my foot had become very weak," she remembered. "For recess, when all 35 students rushed to the cloakroom, Sister Ellinda would send a classmate out to bring me my coat and boots to the classroom, so that I wouldn't have to be part of the chaos. She was always so solicitous in making sure I was okay.

"I didn't know we could keep in touch with a sister, so years later, when I became a sister, I had no idea if I would ever connect with her again," Sister Rosemary said.

Their paths did not cross again for many years. Sister Ellinda became an administrator for St. Mary's Hill Hospital on Greenfield Avenue, and continued when the hospital moved to the lakefront. "I was really impressed because she had big responsibilities there," Sister Rosemary said. "I sometimes saw her at large assemblies of our community, but we were separated when provinces were created in the United States in 1961." (Those regional provinces were consolidated into a single U.S. Province in the 1980s.)

DONNA O'LOUGHLIN is coordinator of Outreach Events for the School Sisters of St. Francis' United States Province.

DONNA O'LOUGHLIN PHOTO



Sister Rosemary Reier with her fourth grade teacher, Sister Ellinda Leichtfeld.

KHALA SAMPSON PHOTO



Sister Beth Ann Baricevich with her second grade teacher, Sister Mary Helen Bissen.

For her part, Sister Ellinda said, "I did keep aware of Sister Rosemary's progress in community. Now that I reside in the Maria Linden Senior Apartments and she works in St. Joseph Center, we are in close proximity and see each other quite often. It's wonderful to have that contact. I am so very proud of the person Rosemary has become, and her accomplishments and contributions to our religious community."

Sister Rosemary said, "As I go up the aisle for Communion in St. Joseph Chapel, I tap her on the shoulder! She has also helped out with the Associate Relationship's Easter basket making."

"Sister Ellinda and the other sisters at my school were happy women in love with God," Sister Rosemary said. "I thought I would like to be like them someday. By my First Communion in second grade, I had already heard the calling. As a matter of fact, in Sister Ellinda's class alone, four girls entered the community and two of us stayed—Sister Kathleen Braun and I. Two boys became—and still are—priests. I am grateful I had really good teachers."

In 1950, a Class of 60

"It was the opening day of school for the students of St. Joseph's School in Summit, Illinois, in 1950, when this eager little second grader with a lovely smile entered my classroom and greeted me," recalled Sister Mary Helen Bissen, 96, then known as Sister Mary Walter. "Her name was Elizabeth Baricevich, and I was impressed with her desire to learn and succeed. Elizabeth would bring her mother to meet me after school."

"Elizabeth graduated from eighth grade and high school while I continued to teach different levels in different schools. Then, after 12 years, we met again. To my great surprise, this time Elizabeth was Sister Beth Ann, a School Sister of St. Francis!"

Sister Beth Ann recalled that "When I was in Sister Mary Walter's second grade classroom, I had 59 classmates! I can't help smiling as I recall Sister's lovely face and welcoming smile as we all filed in on

that first day of school. She seemed so happy to see all of us enter her classroom.

"Sister laughed easily, was very patient with us, and was so caring and sweet that it was easy to return the love she showed us," Sister Beth Ann said. "I wanted to be like Sister Mary Walter, of course. Little did I know how that desire would one day be fulfilled in a way I could not even imagine at the time."

When Sister Beth Ann became the U.S. Province's vocation minister, Sister Mary Helen invited her to come to St. Catherine Labouré School in Glenview, Illinois, to give a talk to the staff and youth group about vocations and the School Sister community. "Today, because I live in the Maria Linden Senior Apartments, she and I get to see each other quite often in the motherhouse and enjoy reminiscing," Sister Mary Helen said.

Sister Beth Ann said that "Sister Mary Helen showed me God's love every day in some way, and she continues to do so."

More Than 75 Years of Memories

Sister Ruth Hoerig, co-editor of *Alive* magazine and the congregation's social media content developer, had Sister Clarella Werth, now 97, as her first and second grade teacher at St. Lawrence School near Hartford, Wisconsin.

"Sister Clarella had entered the convent in 1935, and our first grade class was Sister Clarella's



Sister Ruth Hoerig standing with her first and second grade teacher, Sister Clarella Werth.

first experience in teaching," Sister Ruth said. "Sister Clarella was very friendly and outgoing. She had a consistently warm, winning smile and cheerful sparkle in her eyes. She was a teacher/organist. She does not recall that she had any particular approach to encouraging vocations, but she said she often prayed for vocations.

"She was a very enthusiastic teacher. She really was there for us and wanted all of us to learn how to read well," Sister Ruth said. "Even though I was only a first grader at the time, I was attracted to her outgoing, friendly and kind way of dealing with the children."

Sister Ruth remembered that it was the mid-1990s that she was traveling to Nebraska and learned that Sister Clarella was missioned at Our Lady of Lourdes Convent in Omaha. "I made it a point to get in touch with her. This was our first contact in 50 years!"

Now both Sisters are living in Milwaukee: Sister Ruth at the Maria Linden Apartments and Sister Clarella at Sacred Heart. "She always enjoys talking about the children she taught. I am amazed at how many of my classmates she remembers, and I'm astounded at her recall from 76 years ago!

"At one of my visits with her at Sacred Heart, I brought my brother, Roy, along with me since she always asks me about him when I see her," Sister Ruth said. "Although Sister Clarella's eyesight is almost completely gone, she said she remembered him. I found this pretty incredible since his hair is now snow white and his facial features ruddy and characteristically male—so different from his innocent, shy smile as a six-year-old student!

"Her upbeat, positive attitude and sense of humor continues to be a drawing card," Sister Ruth said. "Even at age 97, she is quick with her quips and impish comments. It is always a delight to visit Sister Clarella."

MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN PHOTO

Your gifts ensure that our retired sisters, who have touched countless lives in profound ways, receive love and outstanding care as they continue to minister through their prayers and presence. We invite you to consider a gift in honor or in memory of a beloved sister using the enclosed envelope or on our secure website, www.sssf.org.

MICHAEL O'LOUGHLIN PHOTO

Fall Festival Fun October 1

This year's Pancake Breakfast/Fall Festival will be held Sunday, October 1, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at St. Joseph Center. Sisters, associates, family and friends from around the country will make our Milwaukee motherhouse their destination for a day of friendship, food, and fun.

A hearty breakfast of all-you-can-eat pancakes—served from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.—is a great way to start the day. Folks stand in line for our famous homemade bakery, jams, and pastries. In keeping with our celebration of the centennial year of St. Joseph Chapel, all are invited to join us for Mass at 9:00 a.m., and for tours throughout the day. There will be more than 100 great silent auction items, live music, one-of-a-kind crafts and imports, and exciting games like our 50/50 raffle, wine pull, and balloon pop!

The Mission Advancement Office invites you to call 414-384-3334 to let us know if you'd like to take part.

We welcome donations of new auction items and would love to have you help out as a baker or as a volunteer on the day of the event.

Want to get in on the auction fun early? Visit our website, www.sssf.org, starting Monday, September 25, to take part in our online silent auction. We'll have an array of unique and sister-made items so you can enjoy the thrill of the auction, or guarantee the win by offering the buyout price! Then join us on October 1 for a day of memorable moments!



Sister Joan Korte and Sister Annette Martinek enjoy the balloon pop game.

New Bus Enhances Sisters' Mobility

On June 28, a beautiful new shuttle bus arrived on campus, an exciting step in helping to connect all our Milwaukee sisters, including those who are mobility impaired.

The bus has regularly scheduled stops several times each day at St. Joseph Center, Sacred Heart, Our Lady of the Angels Convent, Villa St. Francis, Alverno College, Maryhill Convent, and Clement Manor Retirement Community. It will also be used to take as many as 10 sisters at a time on outings and to special events. The bus offers accommodations that include

a power-lift for sisters who use wheelchairs and scooters.

"This bus service will allow Sisters to remain connected to each other and our places of residence, because relationships are essential to our life together," said Sister Carol Rigali, Provincial Coordinator. "We offer prayers of gratitude for our benefactors, and for the International Mission Advancement team who acquired the funds to purchase this bus. Once again, we have been graced and blessed by the generosity of those who support our community."

KHALA SAMPSON PHOTO



associates

partners in our Franciscan mission

PAT ESSMANN PHOTO

Sew Divine!

A quilter dedicates her piece work to her beloved sisters

BY DONNA O'LOUGHLIN

The urge to give away a part of herself through quilts keeps Associate Pat Essmann at her sewing machine and worktable. Surely, divine inspiration is what's behind her prolific output, as her beautiful and unique creations show. She has donated a bounty of bed and lap quilts, dolls depicting various time periods, whimsical stuffed animals, stylish handbags, and home accessories to our congregation to sell at various fundraising events. Her work generates deserving "oohs" and "aahs."

She puts much time and thought into choosing which calico fabrics to start with as a base; finding complementary fabrics to form geometric patterns, as well as borders and bindings; and then cutting, pinning, and basting all the pieces together before beginning the machine sewing. These mosaic tableaux are a labor of love so akin to the process of forming and building up a relationship with God and neighbor.

Pat enjoys the focused effort and delightful outcome that both deliver. Her experience as textile artist is seamlessly woven into her prayer life.

"Quilting and sewing for me are very spiritual. I have tried other art forms, but I always return to quilting," she said, and added modestly, "It is not the most expressive or notable, but it works for me."

The beneficiaries of her talents would say her hobby also works for them. Besides bestowing our community with her creations, her works grace each of the 27 beds at the Hope Hospice Home of the

DONNA O'LOUGHLIN is coordinator of Outreach Events for the School Sisters of St. Francis' United States Province.



Pat at her beloved sewing table.



KHALA SAMPSON PHOTOS

Pat's latest creations, like this exquisite quilt and the toys and purses on the next page, are the heirloom treasures of tomorrow.

Sisters of St. Agnes in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. She has made a twin-size quilt for each resident and offers families the chance to take the bed covers home once their loved ones have left this Earth. When a grateful family accepts her generous offer, Pat goes back to her studio to make another for the next person who will occupy that bed. She has undertaken this ministry in gratitude to the Sisters of St. Agnes who educated her from grade school through college, she explained.

Religious sisters have touched Pat's life in profound ways. More than 20 years ago, while working as a director of religious education, she befriended the late Sister Mary Jo Horstmann. "Area parishes were experiencing a difficult time and the School Sisters of St. Francis gave me a lot of support. I developed great friendships with them, especially with those at St. Joseph Convent in Campbellsport." Sister Mary Jo became the contact sister when Pat asked to become an associate in 1997.

"Being an associate has helped me maintain the right attitude and given me the confidence that I need in my life," Pat said. She came to our community's very first Spirituality Conference and has since attended many more events offered in Milwaukee. She is also active with the Emmaus Area Community. A momentous



experience was her commitment to take part in the sisters and associates pilgrimage to Assisi in 2013, a trip that many of us only dream about.

Most days, going on quilt trips with a girlfriend or staying home to quilt keeps Pat occupied. "Ever since I retired, I have spent six to eight hours a day quilting. I am inspired by the new and innovative ideas in the quilt world," she said. "I took over the large bedroom for my studio after my husband passed away in 2013." She said the room has two walls of double-door closets for stashing away projects and notions, and two walls of large windows that provide essential natural light.

Pat has been sewing since childhood, thanks to her mother and grandmother, who helped her develop skills in dressmaking, including stitching prom and wedding gowns.

"When I married and had four sons, I got away from sewing," she said. "But in 2002, I read books on quilting and took some classes. I've been going strong ever since. I have gifted all my relatives and friends with quilts, table runners, pot holders, and wall hangings. When the School Sisters at Campbellsport gave me a lot of fabric they no longer used, I began donating items for the Pancake Breakfast and Fall Festival in Milwaukee.

"Quilting is my ministry. It is a calling for me to give to anyone who needs the comfort of a quilt. This art form gives me time to contemplate God's presence in my life and my connection to family, friends, the sisters, and the world."



To learn more about Associate Relationship, contact Sister Rosemary Reier, Director, at rreier@sssf.org or 414-385-5270.

volunteers

partners in our Franciscan mission

A Decade of Service

Chapel docent shares his passion for our sacred landmark

BY SARAH STEFANKO

If you've taken a tour of St. Joseph Chapel in the last ten years, there's a good chance you've met Judge Paul Murphy.

"Paul is a gem," said Sister Nedine Ferris, St. Joseph Center's facility director for 19 years until her retirement this past summer. "We're so lucky to have him. He's warm and friendly, and jokes around with visitors. He really loves the chapel, and it shows."

Our congregation is blessed to have a kinship with this municipal judge of West Allis, Wisconsin. In the 1970s, his interest in our community was sparked by the banners that hung on the corner of Layton Boulevard and Greenfield Avenue promoting the Pancake Breakfast and Fall Festival. He was enraptured by St. Joseph Chapel. At the insistence of a friend, Paul took a guided tour inside, with Sister Barbaralie Stieffermann as docent.

"Sister was so engaging and had a great sense of humor," Paul said. Sister Barbaralie gave Paul's contact information to Sister Nedine, and the rest is history. "After that, I was asked to help give tours, and I've been doing it ever since."

To be sure, Paul is well qualified to serve as the chapel's docent. A lover of church history and architecture, Paul admits that whenever he travels, he always has churches on his agenda. "I've been in too many to count. I love learning about faith and discussing it," he said.

"When I take people into the chapel the first time, I like to make sure their eyes are on me until we get inside the doors. Then they look to the right, at that

magnificent vista, and say, 'WOW!' They're like kids at Christmas."

His love for St. Joseph Chapel is all encompassing. "I love the sacredness and the beauty and the symbolism. There's something special about being in that chapel. You can really feel God's presence."

He especially loves our community's origin story. The sisters' faith and courage—the story of their determination to build this place, and their ability to do it without debt—are what I like to stress to people."

This ministry has connected him with people of all ages and from all walks of life. "During Doors Open Milwaukee, we see a lot of ministers from other denominations, and I really enjoy talking to them and learning from them. I'm grateful to be able to do this, and I always look forward to the next time."



SSSF PHOTO

SARAH STEFANKO has been an associate of the School Sisters of St. Francis for 10 years.

donors

partners in our Franciscan mission

Invested in Our Congregation

A family's love and generosity strengthen our community

BY SISTER RUTH HOERIG

Blessings come in many forms. The School Sisters of St. Francis have been blessed by its 32-year relationship with John Fitzpatrick, managing director of Investments for Wells Fargo.

"John is in charge of all our brokers and oversees all of our investments," said Sister Helen Butzler, corporate treasurer for the congregation's U.S. Province. "Along with his two sons, they make up the Fitzpatrick group of Wells Fargo Advisors in Kenosha, Wisconsin." The team consists of John; his two sons Edward and Andrew as financial advisors; and Dawn Benzinger, senior client associate.

"As our relationship developed over the years, we became more and more impressed with the sisters," John said. "We have terrific respect for the sisters and the work they do. They have also been so good to our family. How could we not want to help?"

John had lived on and off in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and it was there that he learned about the fine work our sisters were doing as educators at what is now St. Joseph Academy. In due time, family members rolled up their sleeves and went to work side by side with our sisters in another ministry.

"I was so impressed by the sisters' wonderful work at the Clement Manor Retirement community in Greenfield, Wisconsin, that I served on its board of directors for a decade," he said. "Edward also served on the board. The sisters' loving care for each individual is so characteristic of their service to others."

SISTER RUTH HOERIG is co-editor of *Alive* magazine and social media content developer for the School Sisters of St. Francis. She has served her community in a variety of ministries for more than 60 years.



Edward, Andrew, and John Fitzpatrick, with their firm's senior client associate Dawn Benzinger, have assisted the congregation with their professional expertise and generous family support.

The Fitzpatricks' generosity is also present in a very tangible way at our Milwaukee motherhouse. "We are blessed to have John and his family as partners in our ministry," said Pamela Mueller, Mission Advancement director. "Our Pancake Breakfast and Fall Festival has benefitted from their generous sponsorship support for many years. They have given to our mission appeals and this year, they gave a substantial gift to help sponsor the St. Joseph Chapel Centennial Concert, benefitting the sustaining of our sacred treasure. Their relationship with our community is so much more than just a business transaction with a vendor, but a real connection and care for our mission."

All our donors share a common desire to support our mission and ministries. Our connection with supporters like the Fitzpatrick family is a special gift. Their stewardship helps our sisters to live out our mission as a sign of new life, new meaning, and new hope for the world.

If you feel called to invest time, energy, or resources in the work that God calls us to do, please contact missionadvancement@sssf.org.



Maples and Birches © by Sister Jane Elyse Russell, OSF

Centering Moments

And now the sun that polished flaming sumac trees;
that etched in bronze proud maple, oak, and elm
in hooded silence broods. Retreating geese announce
their southward flight and cleave a steely path
across the sky. Within the darkened wood
a low wind moans among the wizened leaves.

My heart would chant a requiem, but no!
A brown thrush twirls a gleaming aria and oh,
the world turns gold again.

- Sister Kevin Robertson, SSSF