

January 2017

Upcoming Events

Please join us for these celebrations and special events at St. Joseph Center, 1501 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee

“The Realities of Human Trafficking” presentation

Saturday, January 14
10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Hall

“En Route” opening reception and artist talk

Sunday, January 15
1:00-3:00 p.m.
Alfons Gallery

“The Zen Way” workshop

Saturday, January 21
9:00-10:15 a.m.
St. Joseph Hall

Beatitudes Prayer and Concert

Wednesday, February 1
6:00-7:45 p.m.
St. Joseph Chapel

Come and See Afternoon of Reflection

Saturday, February 18
1:00-4:00 p.m.
St. Joseph Center

Visit www.sssf.org for more upcoming events

Celebrating Family

The past two weeks have certainly been a time of celebration in the Church’s liturgical calendar. We celebrated the beautiful, glorious feast of Christmas, then just five days later on December 30, we celebrated another special day, the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. This is a feast that unfortunately often gets “lost” between Christmas and the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

On the Feast of the Holy Family, the priest who was celebrating the Mass I attended focused on the importance of the family during his homily. As he was inviting us to look at Mary, Joseph and Jesus as the ultimate role models of family, he managed to also make them very human in a lovely, engaging way. In my imagination, I began to see them doing simple, ordinary, everyday things we all experience—even dancing with joy!

As I was listening, I began to think of the meaning of family in my own life. The definition then began to broaden, including not only my immediate family, but also my religious community, my relatives, and my friends and colleagues. Even all of creation is a gift that we are continually called on to care for and nourish. St. Francis felt such a connection to nature, he famously spoke of creation in such beautiful, familial terms as “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon.”

As we think about the Holy Family as well as the meaning of family for each of us, one of this day’s readings seems especially appropriate. St. Paul reminds the Colossians (and us), “There is only Christ: He is everything and he is in everything. God loves you... Be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, in gentleness and patience. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful. Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you... With gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God.” Amen.

A blessed and peace-filled new year to you!

Sister Beth Ann Baricevich, OSF
Vocation Minister



Vocation Story: The Acker Sisters

By Sister Ruth Hoerig

Sisters Haroldine and Elmerine Acker were born in Cross Plains, Wisconsin, and grew up in a family of six boys and five girls. After graduating from eighth grade, three of the girls joined the School Sisters of St. Francis: Sister Haroldine, the oldest of the three, entered the congregation in 1940; Sister John Rose, who died in July 2012, entered in 1948; and Sister Elmerine, the youngest of the three, in 1951.

The values of faith, family prayer, and hard work were the cornerstones of the Ackers' upbringing. "We always said our meal prayers together and prayed the family rosary at special times," said Sister Elmerine.

Sister Elmerine credits her decision to serve God in a special way to her religious upbringing. "In those days, there were many vocations from Cross Plains," she said. "Many of us grew up in large families and it was not unusual for several young girls from the same family to enter the convent. The Zander family had eight girls in the convent at one time."

The two sisters spent the next 50-plus years teaching first through eighth grades in various schools throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and Illinois. In 1972, the two sisters were given the opportunity to live and work together in ministry. "Being together was a blessing, because we work well together and know how to support each other. We have been together ever since." Finally in 1980, they settled in the Milwaukee area, working in parish schools in both the city and the suburbs, until their retirement.

The Ackers agreed that the most cherished part of being consecrated is the lifestyle. "It frees us to be available for others and attentive to the needs of the world through daily prayer," said Sister Haroldine.

This article is excerpted from Sister Ruth Hoerig's interview with the sisters for the Foundation for Religious Retirement's Dialogue newsletter.



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Women of Hope is the monthly electronic newsletter from the Membership and Relationship Team of the School Sisters of St. Francis for single Catholic women interested in exploring God's call in their lives.

If you are interested in learning more about life with the School Sisters of St. Francis, contact Sister Beth Ann Baricevich by email at babaricevich@sssf.org or call her at 414-550-0321.



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