



Sisters of St. Francis of Savannah, MO

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Summer 2011

“Behold, I am doing something new. . . .Can you not perceive it (Isaiah 43:19)?”

“New vision is always what any society most needs, and the edges of society have always been the most likely place for it to emerge. To generate something new, one must be listening to voices other than the loud voices of mass society To be on the margins, therefore, is to put ourselves in a position to watch, to listen, and to become engaged in a new way (Jim Wallis).”

As we come together next month in our provincial chapter to elect leadership and to determine our way into the future, each of us strives to call forth from our inner being a vision of possibilities for us to continue living Gospel values in the best way we can according to God’s plan for us. As a part of our planning for this chapter, to generate something new, we have determined that a board of advisors could help us “to watch, to listen, and to become engaged in a new way”.

Working with a facilitator, we recognize the gifts we have to offer to our society and to the church. However, we could tend to let our smallness distract us from that which we are capable of or that for which we have the potential to be. God is only asking of us to be faithful and to trust in His Providence, and to do what we can.

As an analogy and point of interest, consider our community garden. After consulting with a conservation agent, and with interest from our co-workers and a volunteer who works with us, we decided to proceed with the creation of a community garden. A local man plowed the field for us and mentioned that he didn’t think anything could grow there as the topsoil had been removed to be used as fill around our new provincial house. With vegetable plantings donated by local businesses, we established our garden. Lo and behold, almost everything that was planted is producing! It is great to pick cabbages, zucchini, and peppers and to watch the squash, potatoes, beans, and peas grow and blossom. Rick, one of our co-workers, can’t wait to taste an ear of fresh corn (if the deer do not eat it first). Another co-worker, Paula, learned firsthand from Sr. Raphael how to pickle and can her garden beans. And there are more lessons to come!

The garden is no showcase. The soil is not the best. But the spirit of those working it who want to benefit from “something new” have brought it to fruition. We too are like that garden. We may be straggly and stressed, a little crooked or stooped in our standing, but we are faithful, and oh, what fruit we can produce!

Sr. Kathleen



Two New Intercessors in Heaven

Death of Sr. Dorthie Anne Hall, OSF

Sr. Dorthie Anne Hall passed away on December 16, 2010. Her health had been deteriorating over several months. The Sisters and Father Hugh Tasch, O.S.B., gathered in Sr. Dorthie Anne's room for the Anointing of the Sick the day before her death. Although her breathing was very labored, she was able to participate somewhat in the prayers. Later that day she told Sr. Kathleen, "I'm on the road to Jerusalem with John."

Very early in the morning of the 16th, Paula Baskett, her caregiver, went in to check Sr. Dorthie Anne and inquire how she was doing. Sr. Dorthie Anne smiled and replied, "I'm fine. You just go and check on the others." Just about 20 minutes later when Paula came back, Sister had passed away. The Sisters gathered for a final goodbye and prayers.

Two days of remembrance and blessing for Sr. Dorthie Anne brought poignant memories to the forefront. Several calls from friends and former students, including one from Mehdi in Iran, reminded us that Sr. Dorthie Anne was well-loved. Although none of her family was able to come, Kathy Strobbe, a former community member, friends Dr. John and Mary Margaret Murry, and the Sisters from Independence came to celebrate the life of Sr. Dorthie Anne with us. This was the first wake in the Mother Pia Ministry Center and the first funeral Mass in Our Lady of the Angels Chapel.

Sister Dorthie Anne was born on April 24, 1918, in Stearns, Kentucky, to John and Stella (Clifton) Hall. Although the family struggled economically, Sister credited her success in life to her father's love and determination to secure a good education for his children. She did very well in school and earned the honor of valedictorian. She went on to attend Cumberland College in Kentucky and also Western Kentucky University. After getting her degrees, she taught at Federalsburg High School in Maryland and later was an instructor at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, MO. There she was attracted to the Catholic Church and with the help of the monks of Conception became a Catholic. Very soon after that she answered the call to religious life, professing her vows with the Sisters of St. Francis in 1952.

Areas of ministry for Sr. Dorthie Anne (Marianne) were St. Joseph Academy in Chillicothe, MO, where she was principal and also taught; Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge, IA, where she was a Professor of English, and Donnelly College in Kansas City, KS, where she taught English and Literature from 1978 until 1997.

Sr. Dorthie Anne was an avid reader and a life-long lover of literature and the written word. During her lifetime she was delighted to have several selections of her poetry and various newspaper articles published. In her retirement, she enjoyed writing critiques for news editor and reporter friends. She loved to work crossword puzzles and to quote favorite sayings, and for many years composed individualized poems for special occasions of her fellow Sisters, the co-workers and friends.

During the last months of her life, Sr. Dorthie Anne became more and more quiet and spent more and more time in Chapel. She seemed to be reflecting on her many years of life and she more often expressed her gratitude for all she had received. Her favorite quote is a reminder to us that a deep faith in God was the foundation of her life: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him may not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)



Death of Sr. Marie Long, OSF

Sr. Marie Long was born on July 7, 1926, to loving parents George and Frances Long. She and her sister Ruth were cherished by their parents who made sure that they received a good education. Marie loved to sing and also was quite talented in art. As time went on, both at home and later, she took special classes which nurtured these talents.

Since the age of six, she had expressed a desire to become a sister. On February 13, 1951, Marie entered our congregation which was then located in Chillicothe, Missouri. When she was invested, she received the name "Sister Mary Helen," but later chose to return to her baptismal name because of her great love for the Blessed Mother.



Death of Sr. Marie Long, OSF, continued.

Having earned her Bachelor's degree at St. Mary's College in Leavenworth prior to entrance and with previous classroom experience as well, Sr. Marie went right away into teaching after her profession on February 13, 1954. She taught in various parishes in Missouri and especially enjoyed teaching the primary grades. Not only was she prolific in turning out religious banners for use in our chapel, she also had the knack for teaching art skills, and her students' work was often put on display.

Over the years Sr. Marie had developed many allergies. Missouri is one of the worst states for allergy sufferers. Knowing this and wishing to return to the state of Louisiana where her family had originated, Sr. Marie asked for permission to go to live and work in the state of Louisiana. She was allowed to live in a convent there, first teaching in a school in Lafayette and later in schools in the Archdiocese of New Orleans until 1984.

In 1985 Sr. Marie retired and was granted permission to stay in New Orleans in a diocesan apartment facility for the elderly. When she visited us, we Sisters enjoyed her humorous stories about life in New Orleans. It was clear to us that she was very happy and contented there. When Hurricane Katrina came, Sr. Kathleen tried for a week to locate Sr. Marie. Finally, we learned that she had been rescued from the flood. But after five months, when the city was recovering, she was ready to return to her New Orleans home.

Despite the long separation from community with retirement in New Orleans, ties to community were always there, as evidenced by remembrances of feast days and birthdays and frequent letters about life in New Orleans. Phone calls kept us aware of what was happening with her.

Sr. Marie had suffered with cancer which was treated by chemotherapy two years prior to her death. In the last month of her life, it was becoming apparent that her health was a concern, although she did not complain about anything more than lack of appetite and occasional dizziness. A fall which resulted in serious head injury put Sr. Marie on her final road to God. She had expressed earlier that she did not wish to go to a nursing home, and God granted this wish. After a few days in the hospital, Sr. Marie passed away on July 1, 2011. The community was joined by her brother-in-law Richard Wright, and two nieces, Karen Koenig and Sally Van Horn in a celebration of Sr. Marie's life with the Mass of Resurrection.

Sr. Marie's favorite verse in the Bible was "I will sing to my God, I will praise the Lord as long as I live. Let my song give joy to God who is a joy to me." Psalm 104:33-34 expresses the very real joy that she shared with others in community and in ministry as a Sister of St. Francis. She made this verse visible throughout her life. We pray that she now sings it full voice in her heavenly home.

Retreat, 2011



"Plunge into matter. Plunge into God. By means of all created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us and molds us. We imagine it as distant and inaccessible, whereas in fact, we live steeped in its burning layers (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ)."

Through Brother Barry Donaghue, CFC, from the Prairie Woods Retreat Center in Iowa, we spent a week "plunging into matter" and "plunging into God" being spiritually challenged through presentations and discussions on the Cosmic Christ and the Universe Story, the theme of our retreat. Through an awareness of the vastness of the universe, and what a small part our planet plays in it, we could marvel at our God who is so intimate with us.

The Incarnation revealed that God truly loves us and all of creation. Brother Barry led us into a greater understanding of the cosmic Christ who cannot be contained by time or space. He related that "if we believe in the Incarnation from this perspective, we must acknowledge the sacred dimension of the universe and all of creation. This calls us to the work of restoring relationships between humans and the environment. We realize that we bring everything with us into relationship – our connectedness to all of nature leads us into God. It gives us fruitfulness and joy."

Terms like "Morphogenic Resonance" – "Morphos Genesis", "Holons", "Chaordic Living", and "Spiral Dynamics" were introduced to us for the first time. New realizations of our connectedness from the smallest atom to the continually expanding universe reminded us of our own Franciscan call to be "sister" to all creation. It reinforced our awareness of our charism for peacemaking and the preservation of right relationships with all creation. This gave us new energy to be faithful to our vision and mission as we mesh our new learnings with the familiar words of St. Clare, "Gaze, consider, contemplate, act."

Jubilarians, 2011

Sister Margaret Walker, OSF—55 years



“As long as God allows me to do for others, then I want to keep serving the Lord in ministry.” This comment by Sr. Margaret sums up her 55 years of religious profession as a Franciscan sister. “Because God loves me so much as a part of His creation, then I can also pass that love, comfort and hope on to others.” Sr. Margaret shows her love and concern for others through GED classes, visiting the homebound, taking them fruit or “some special thing they would like”. A grandmother of a child she tutored stated, “Sr. Margaret had the ability to infuse in him an awareness that he could do something, and do it well. Her care and concern alone helped him to improve his skills. And he has done it!”

Sr. Margaret’s belief in the goodness of all God’s creation shows itself in her feeding Minni, a homeless cat, the winter feeding of birds and squirrels, and making sure they have water during the hot days of summer. She also keeps a small garden of watermelon, cantaloupe, and tomatoes so that the sisters can enjoy the fruits of her labor.

Her fellow co-worker Jerry Fisher explains how much Sr. Margaret means to their GED students: “She gives them a feeling of well-being, letting them see the potential they have to succeed. She is truly concerned about each one and wants what is best for each of them. I could not do what I do without her.”

Sr. Margaret gives credit for her vocation as a religious sister to her mother’s prayers. We give thanks to God for her gift to our community and to others for her 55 years of dedicated service.

Commitment

Sister Christine Martin, OSF—40 years

In a recent homily, our chaplain spoke about the Judeo/Christian people always looking toward the future. It cannot probably be said that 40 years ago Sr. Christine was seeing the completion of 40 years of religious profession; however, being future-oriented has always been a characteristic of hers.

Her response to why she answered the call to religious life: “I have to honestly say that the reasons I answered the call as an eighteen year old, and the reasons I continue to answer the call each new day of my life are quite different. The only theme that unites them is a desire to give myself to God as his ‘instrument.’”

“In the beginning I had a very romantic idea of what a Sister was. I knew that I could become this holy person who prayed Lauds and Vespers so beautifully and that I could also become a teacher as I desired. I loved the stories about St. Francis – any saint who loved animals as much as I did, had to be one I would choose! I had admired my cousins who were Sisters and felt that God was calling me to this choice. At the same time, I knew if it didn’t work out, my parents would welcome me home.



“Looking back from my 40 year perspective, I can recognize that my choice has been a continual one that matured and deepened over time. One of the four Franciscan charisms is Conversion (Metanoia) and that has meant a life-time of consciously turning toward the Lord in my everyday choices. I still have a love for communal prayer and private prayer – it fuels my inner life and is an intimate exchange with my Spouse. And of course I still love St. Francis – his faith-journey, insightful writings, and Third Order Rule have formed me as a religious. His appreciation for Creation as a sign of God’s presence gives me an ever more profound love for all that God has made. I do believe God called me as a young woman to this way of life, but now I know that God continues to call me anew each day to be faithful. And so far, despite the fact that I discovered along the way that there are many challenges in this decision to say ‘Yes,’ I have persevered! I can’t imagine a life where I would have been happier or more fulfilled. Because this life-style has been such a blessing, I want to strongly confirm that religious life remains a wonderful choice.”

Sister Christine , continued.

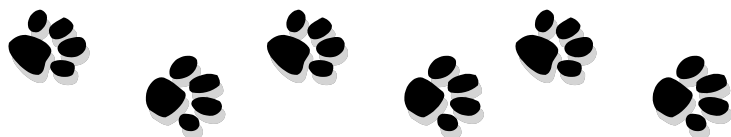
As a teacher first at St. Therese School in Parkville, MO, and later at Bishop Hogan in Chillicothe and St. Francis Xavier in St. Joseph, MO, Sr. Christine has worked with many wonderful colleagues. Jeanne Hinkebein, who worked with her at Bishop Hogan in Chillicothe, remarks: "Sister Christine! Can I say any more than what a great teacher to work with! Sister taught 5th grade and I taught 6th. I don't remember how many years we taught together, but they were good years. I enjoyed every one of them. We did many things together but probably the most challenging were Exchange City and the ski trip to Weston, MO. Sister Christine had such wonderful ideas in the classroom. She was always ready to try something new, especially if she felt confident that her students would like it, and it had educational value. She had a big smile for her co-workers and always for her students."

From her co-workers and friends in the Diocesan Peace and Justice Office: "Christine is quite ornery, mischievous and fun-loving, yet very dedicated to her community, family and friends. Having had the opportunity to work and play with Christine you might say I have witnessed and benefited from these qualities." (Linda Zeorlin)

And from Sr. Jeanne Christensen, RSM, . . . "Besides being a kind and caring person, Christine is also creative and hardworking. She has the innate ability to see a problem or need and move to finding a solution. But she does not do this alone. She is one of the best collaborators I know. One of the finest examples are her efforts – very successful ones – in creating, nurturing, and strengthening with others Northwest Missouri Enterprise Facilitation into the very strong and successful organization it is today. Who else could entice 60+ generous, gifted civic community members to join a fledgling project? Who else could convince, through her strong grant-writing skills and compelling stories, to donate financially to this endeavor? And who else would bear the 'blood, sweat, and tears' to bring it to the thriving organization it is today? Christine does not duck the difficult! And she makes the seeming impossible, possible. It has been a gift and a joy to be a collaborator with her, to encourage her and to congratulate her – not only on her ministry accomplishments but also on her 40 years of generous, compassionate, loving service to God and all God's people."

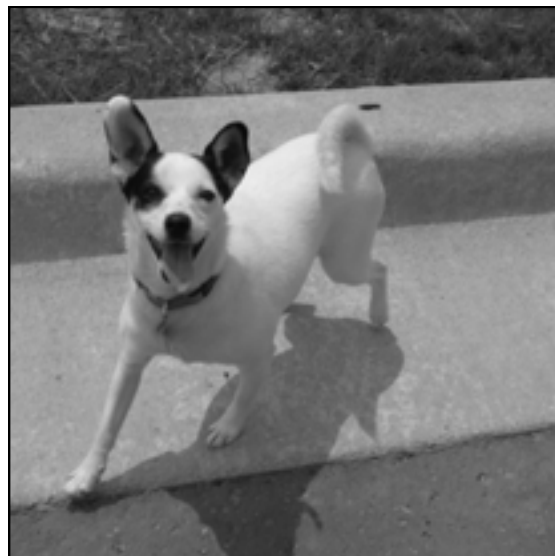
Sr. Christine continues to give herself in service to others in various ways. One is with the above mentioned Northwest Missouri Enterprise Facilitation, as its secretary and founding member. Bob Bush, a fellow board member has this to say about Sr. Christine: "Sister Christine has been our role model, a leader, a visionary, an inspiration, an encourager, a follower, a super fundraiser and a beloved friend in every respect to all of us who are engaged in the Northwest Missouri Enterprise Facilitation initiative. Sister Christine is that rare person that William Arthur Ward was describing when he said, 'Do more than belong: participate. Do more than care: help. Do more than believe: practice. Do more than be fair: be kind. Do more than forgive: forget. Do more than dream: work.'"

We her fellow sisters give thanks to God for our future-oriented visionary who has given 40 years of her life in service to us and to God's people.



Our Newest Member

We Sisters had been saying that we would get another dog after we moved to the new convent. Co-disciple Ginger Geeding alerted us to a "candidate" at a local St. Joseph animal shelter and offered to cover the adoption costs. So in April we brought home our newest member, whom Sr. Audrey dubbed "Kizzy." You may have already guessed from the photo that this Jack Russell Chihuahua mix is a bundle of energy and a bit of a character. In many ways we can say that she has become our new "exercise program."



Here are some scenes from our life in the new Sisters of St. Francis Provincial House and Mother Pia Ministry Center. Now that we are “settled” in our new building—(not completely, but we are getting there) - we are happy to welcome visitors!



Helen's daughter, Natalie, tours the building with her nine children.

Sr. Raphael's niece, Helen Pinkston, who is assisting us with landscape planning, visits and volunteers her granddaughter Lucy, as an able hand in the kitchen.



Above and right, the Atchity Family Reunion was held in the Ministry Center. Below, our patio furniture takes a tumble from a severe storm. Below right, our Retreat gave us the opportunity to walk a labyrinth in prayer.





**AUCTION
AT LAVERNA HEIGHTS
104 E PARK, SAVANNAH, MO
STARTS AT 9:00 A.M.
SEPT. 5, 2011
LABOR DAY SALE!**

The Sisters of St. Francis are selling the "rest of the story" at LaVerna Heights in an auction on Labor Day. Certain Dr. Nichols' furniture and fixtures will be for sale, along with the rest of our former belongings which we have decided not to keep. These items include desks, chairs (some antique), chapel chairs with kneelers, kitchen hutches, vintage crocks, goose-neck lamps and much, much more! See photos below!



OPPORTUNITY TO HELP US GROW

The proceeds of the auction will go to our Blessed Giving Campaign Ministry Fund. We have appreciated the kindness of all who have donated to this fund and continue to remit their pledge donations. We are in need of additional funding for programs in our Ministry Center.

Please take the opportunity to consider a donation for this purpose.



As Fall approaches, we're thinking GREEN!



Assisted with our landscape planning by Helen Pinkston, Sr. Raphael's niece, we are hoping to fill some of our empty spaces with some nice trees, bushes and plants. Our good friend, Marion Vogt, was the first to "spring" into action with a donation of some lovely hibiscus bushes which now adorn the south and west edges of the Ministry Center. Their blooms have been spectacular, as you can see. Now we would like to give you the opportunity to make a "living" donation to our landscaping project. We will recognize these donations with a marker indicating the donor's name. We also plan to supplement these donations by transplanting some of the trees and bushes from the LaVerna Heights property to the new convent grounds.

OUR LANDSCAPING WISH LIST

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------|---|
| ⇒ A tree | - | \$150.00 | (oak, ash, maple or elm) |
| ⇒ A shrub or plant | - | \$30.00 | (boxwood, spirea, myrtle, viburnum, etc.) |
| ⇒ Perennials | - | \$20.00 | (asters, catmint) |

All donations will be gratefully accepted!



On the web at www.Sistersofstfrancis.org

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