



Allegany Connections

A publication of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, N.Y.

November 2013

Celebrating 25 Years



Observing jubilee is a significant event and an important milestone not only in the life of those sisters who are celebrating but also in the life of the community. Jubilee is the opportunity for all of us to reflect and to recall the goodness and fidelity of God in our lives as well as honoring the gifts of life, faithfulness, commitment and service of the jubilarians. It is also an opportunity to affirm, encourage and support one another as we continue our evangelical life's journey together.

Saturday, September 28, marked the Silver Jubilee celebration of three of our sisters, **Dorothy Dwyer, Jo Marie Streva** and **Joyce Ramage**. The celebration began with a festive Eucharistic liturgy in the Motherhouse chapel. Those gathered were first welcomed by **Carol Kenyon**, who was novice di-

rector for the jubilarians. The presider was Fr. Jim Vacco, OFM, pastor of St. Bonaventure Parish, Allegany, NY. Jim has shared in the jubilarians' journey of religious life in a very significant way. He was the presider at their reception and also at their first and final profession celebrations. **Margaret Mary Kimmins** preached the homily, reminding all gathered "to keep our eyes, our minds, and our hearts fixed on Jesus, who showed us how to live." Following the homily Margaret Mary received the jubilarians' renewal of vows. The celebration continued with a delicious meal prepared and served by Steve Dodge and the dining room staff of the Motherhouse. We are grateful for all who worked to make this Silver Jubilee a wonderful event, and also to those who captured the festivities and

celebrations in these wonderful photos (see page 3).

Florida Celebrations

Since Dorothy, Jo Marie and Joyce began their journey together with the Allegany Franciscans from Florida, and each ministered at St. Anthony Hospital, the trio's *first* 25th Jubilee celebration was hosted there on Saturday, September 14th. **Mary McNally** welcomed the 80 sisters, associates, friends and family members before the beautiful Eucharistic liturgy with Fr. Jerome Massamino, OFM, presiding. **Mary Arghittu** preached the homily and received their renewal of vows just as she had received them into our congregation 25 years ago! Afterward, a delicious brunch was served in the hospital auditorium.

The following day, several sisters gathered with the Silver Jubilarians at

Sacred Heart Church in downtown Tampa. Joining them in this public renewal of vows during the parish liturgy were Golden Jubilarians, **Nancy Christopher** and **Odette Haddad**.

On the Feast of St. Francis, the School community of St. Francis Xavier in Fort Myers, celebrated Jo Marie's jubilee. During the afternoon Eucharistic liturgy for the children and families, which was presided by the Pastor, Fr. Anthony Hewitt, **Colleen Brady, Marie Vincent Chiaravalle, Pat Redmond**, and Jo Marie renewed their vows. Following the Mass, everyone participated in the annual Pet Blessing at the School's soccer field.

Congratulations and thank you, Dorothy, Jo Marie and Joyce!
Our continued prayers are with you.

Editor

Barbara Joseph, OSF

Managing Editor

Denise Bunk-Hatch
FSA Communications Director

Communications Office

The Franciscan Sisters of Allegany
PO Box W
St. Bonaventure, NY 14778
www.alleganyfranciscans.org

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To report discrepancies, misspelled names or other errors, or to submit material for publication, please contact:

Barbara Joseph, OSF
fsaconnections@hotmail.com
(813) 229-1978 ex. 240

Denise Bunk-Hatch
denise.bunk-hatch@fsallegany.org
(716) 373-0200 ex. 3246

Mission Statement

*We, the Franciscan Sisters
of Allegany,
seek to live the Gospel
of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.
we witness to God's love
in the Franciscan tradition
by living as sisters
with all creation and
by joyfully serving others,
especially those who are
poor or marginalized.*

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*Next Deadline
for submissions
November 15, 2013*



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Carol Kenyon remembers Jubilarians...

25 years later

The following is the “welcoming talk” given by Carol at the Silver Jubilee celebration at the Motherhouse.

Welcome, everyone, to this joyous celebration!

To our Jubilarians Dorothy, Joyce and Jo, we thank God whenever we think of you and when we pray for you, we pray with joy, for God, who is mighty, has done great things in you.

In 1988, 25 years ago on the day these women were to arrive at San Damiano Convent to begin their novitiate, I, their newly appointed novice director, was a nervous wreck wondering whatever I was going to do with them.

And finally came that dreaded, fateful moment when they arrived on the front doorstep and rang the bell. Even through the closed door I could hear them laughing and singing. I still remember the words to the song: “Gather us in the lost and forsaken, gather us in the blind and the lame...”

At that moment, all strength left me; I thought I would pass out. Finally, after a couple more rings, God gave me the courage to open the door.

And from that moment on, as God gathered us all into God’s welcoming arms of love, our lives were changed forever! Exteriorly, everything may have seemed the same. Still didn’t have a clue how to run the novitiate; we were all still and remain today very imperfect. However—and this is the important part—from that first day of welcoming, God’s love never left us.

Since we didn’t have it together, we went to God for everything. It was God and the other sisters who taught us how to pray, how to discern and how to love.

No doubt that same love and presence of God has not only continued to sustain you over these past 25 years, but has been deepened and purified in such a way that, now, you yourselves have become God’s love and presence in the world. I was a witness to that when the Jubilarians invited their old novice director to go to the park.

What I discovered was: they still delight in the simplest of things; they move with joy and wonder amid people and nature alike and, as proof of that, they were forever greeting strangers on the paths with smiles, hellos and even reaching out to pet their dogs. I was fascinated by the fact that all the people responded to their friendliness in like manner, some entering into conversation, some even sharing their stories. One couple even asked to take our picture.

Strangely enough, none of this seemed embarrassing or out of place. It was all very natural and real. Just – love – extending – love. Dorothy, Jo and Joyce, you are, as God and Francis might say, “My Troubadours of love and praise moving people’s hearts to joy and gladness.” May it ever be so!



Margaret Magee delivers Transitus Homily

St. Mary's, Pompton Lakes, N.J.

Throughout the years, transitus has always been, for me, a very special and significant celebration. It is a wonderful opportunity for Franciscan women, men and Franciscan-hearted people to gather, to reflect more deeply on the life and faith of the poor one of Assisi.

Throughout those years in the various parishes, communities and places where I've lived, I have experienced many and diverse expressions of transitus. Most interesting were those celebrations that had been totally focused on Francis' death and actually felt like being at a wake, very mournful and somber. I don't believe that is the real purpose of our gathering, for as Francis said, "I have done with is mine to do, may Christ teach you what you are to do."

Transitus is a celebration of transition, of journey, of passage and transformation in Christ and into the Divine Love of God. So, in a way, transitus is truly visible and can be traced all throughout the life of Francis of Assisi.

For Francis, transitus began in his rebellious, rambunctious days of youth when the desires for popularity, recognition and knighthood no longer brought a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. In these early days of conversion, Francis began to experience a sense of isolation, separateness and a disconnection. But he had yet to experience or to comprehend the great Love that was drawing him forward and more deeply into Love.

In the transitus of his conversion:

- Francis moved from self-centeredness to being centered in God and in the lives of other people, especially the lives of the poor and disenfranchised.

In his transitus of embracing the leper:

- he moved from fear and the repulsion of disease to experience the leper

as person and to see the face and presence of God and humbly wash their feet and bathe and kiss their wounds.

In his transitus of prayer before the San Damiano cross:

- he moved from listening to the values and expectations of the world to being attentive to the voice of Christ, finding ways to "go rebuild my house."

In his gathering of brothers to join in this new evangelical expression of life:

- he moved from individualism and independence to engage in community and relationship.

In his welcoming Clare and other men and women, married and single:

- he moved from the conventional attitudes and expression of male-centered church to an invitation of inclusivity and balance for all who are called to live gospel life and follow Christ.

In his transitus of deep prayer on La Verna and through the experience of the stigmata:

- he moved in a very significant way from what had been expressed and imprinted so deeply within and on his heart to visibly embracing and living his whole being entwined in Christ, his beloved.

Transitus as you can see is a whole life's journey. And as the reading from the Testament of St. Francis so clearly states, the mission begins within, the dream unfolds through the Word of Life...whatever we do in thought word or deed must flow from our reflection on God's Word... from within!

Where do we experience our own isolation, our own disconnection and our separateness. When have we experienced transitus in our lives, moving us from self-centeredness into relationship, from attitudes and actions of power, status, exclusivity to inclusivity, community and compassion for all?

John O'Donohue, a writer of Celtic spirituality, wrote much on the topic of longing and the desire to belong in his book *Eternal Echoes*. He writes, "Part of the reason that we are so lonesome in our modern world is that we have lost the sense of belonging on the earth." "Every human heart is full of longing. You long to be happy, to live a meaningful and honest life, to find love, and to open your heart to someone. You long to discover who you are and to learn how to heal your own suffering and become free and compassionate. To be alive is to be suffused with longing." This desire and longing for connectiveness and wholeness is what Francis learned throughout the many experiences of transitus in his life.

Are the transitus experiences of our lives drawing us forward and more deeply into connection, love and compassion?

Are our transitus experiences of Christ's deep presence and love for us calling us to be prophetic evangelizers in our day and in our world?

What are the marks of Christ's presence imprinted and expressed within us and on our hearts?

How will these marks, this imprint, be visibly expressed when we come to our final transitus and journey to God?

A Franciscan friar, Roch Niemeir, once said, "We need to let the myths of Francis die so that the Spirit that enlivened Francis and the first brothers and sisters can enliven us. What might happen if we do? Perhaps holiness of life in a new time will blossom. Perhaps there will be a more fully committed dedication to our life and a fidelity to all that the gospel asks. Perhaps we will know a wholeness and freedom of Spirit inside, for the sake of the Church, for the well being of others, and for our own happiness.

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Another Anniversary!

In September, Antoinette (Toni) Garner celebrated 15 years of employment in the housekeeping department at the Motherhouse.

*Congratulations, Toni,
and thank you!*



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Perhaps we will discover the mystic in each of us!"

The Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard said, "life must be lived forward but understood backward." This is our call. It is a call to live into the transitus experiences of our lives, to reflect and to see the face and encounter the Christ and to give witness to that encounter and presence in and for our world.

When the time draws near for our final transitus my hope and prayer is that another story, a story from a Zen master, will be a reflection of our journey and transitus into the heart of God and into the new life of divine Love.

The story goes like this:

An old woman made a pilgrimage to a far away mountain shrine during the worst part of the rainy season. Stopping at an inn along the way, she asked for a night's lodging before beginning her climb to the holy mountain. "You'll never climb the slippery clay of that mountain in this weather," the innkeeper said, "It's impossible." The old woman replied, "Oh that will be very simple. You see, sir, my heart has been there for many years. It is now only a matter of taking my body there."

May we continue to live and celebrate transitus and, like Francis, grow in wholeness and oneness in God and in one another.





A few weeks ago, I thought about the upcoming celebration of the twenty-fifth Jubilee of our Associate Program. I asked Eva Di Camillo to write a reflection for this special occasion. As you read it, let us together give joyful thanks for the many people who have joined us as associates and shared our Franciscan Mission over the past twenty-five years. - Margaret Magee, OSF

A Wonderful Anniversary *by Eva Di Camillo, OSF*

Francis of Assisi , many years ago
Heard the call;
"Rebuild my church!"

It took much listening, praying and searching
For Francis to fully understand that call.

Many others have also been called
in very different ways--

Some responded to what they heard by becoming
Benedictines
Dominicans
Carmelites
Poor Clares
And some became
Franciscan Sisters of Allegany.

Others responded to a different call:
They became
Wives and husbands
Mothers and fathers
Poets and story tellers
Teachers and lawyers--

Many of these also heard that call;
"Rebuild my church."

They too, somehow wanted to be a part of
those
who were
Working to rebuild God's church.
But how?

Twenty-five years ago
The Franciscan Sisters of Allegany invited these seekers
To journey with our Congregation
as Allegany Franciscan Associates.
Finally they felt they could respond to this further call.

Thus as the Associate Mission Statement proclaims:
"They strive to live Gospel values
while maintaining their chosen way of life
They seek to respond to the needs of our suffering,
broken world
as instruments of
- peace
- reconciliation
- non-violence."

Wonderfully, the Associates have found a way
To respond to the same call that Francis heard:

"Rebuild My Church"

Associate News

Recap/Update of Associate Program

The Allegany Associate Program, including local associate coordinators and the Associate Advisory Committee, have been very busy. What follows is a recap and update of their activities.

Associate co-directors, **Jeanne Williams** and **Kathy Doyle**, participated in the Franciscan Federation Conference in Pittsburgh in June. Ilia Delio, OSF, and Keith Warner, OFM, were the keynote speakers on "Franciscan Life in Evolution." A copy of their enlightening and challenging talks with question and answer periods is available on DVD. To borrow it, please contact Jeanne. There are also copies of the talk given by Patrick Carolan (executive director of FAN) at the spring 2013 assemblies, available on DVD through the communications office: Denise Bunk-Hatch (denise.bunk-hatch@fsallegany.org).

Everyone is encouraged to contact Denise with information on UPCOMING events and programs. She will put them on our website (www.fsalleg.org) and Facebook.

Do you know that our Facebook page offers a reflection on the daily readings? Check it out! If you are on Facebook, search for "Franciscan Sisters of Allegany and Associates" and 'Like' our page to receive the daily reflections and other postings.

The associate directory is nearly completed for the U.S. and Jamaica. Brazil has compiled their own directory. The revised and updated associate brochure should be ready for printing (and print-ready off the web site) by mid-October.

By the time you read this article most of you will have seen the beautiful 25th Anniversary Celebration shirts that were designed by the previous and present Associate Advisory Committees, and produced in Brazil. **Ana Bernadete** negotiated the contract and handled the Brazilian orders while Jeanne Williams coordinated the U.S. and Jamaican orders. Associates and sisters are encouraged to wear their shirts at meetings, when they are working in ministry/service projects and just to advertise the associate program.

The official opening of the 25th Anniversary Celebration was conducted as part of the fall assemblies with an opening prayer, testimony from associates about what the associate program means to them and a blessing and distribution of banners with the celebration logo for each local associate group. Each group is invited to decorate their banner with symbols pertinent to their specific group and to use it throughout the upcoming year. All the banners will be dis-

played during the closing ceremony in 2014. Kathy Doyle has accepted the invitation from the Brazilian regional leadership to attend the opening celebration in Brazil and Jeanne will travel to Jamaica to open their anniversary year. Both of these events will take place in mid-November.

The closing of the anniversary year will take place in Allegany. More information about this exciting event, including registration details, will be coming soon. See you in **Allegany!!!**



Thursday, July 31 thru Monday, August 4, 2014.



Calabash by Kathy Doyle, OSF

In response to the Chapter initiative, *Responding to the Impact of Ecological Crises on our Sister Mother Earth*, and because **Teddy Altreuter** was part of that learning community, we invited Kimberly Thompson from our county's recycling facility to speak to us about trash at our June meeting. One surprising piece of information we learned was that **plastic bags in mixed**

recyclables cause havoc with the sorting machines. The bags get tangled in the mechanisms. **We were cautioned to recycle our plastic bags separately and asked to spread the word.**

Our recommitment ceremony was held in July. As part of that event we viewed the DVD, *A Ritual Walk with Clare*. Filmed in Assisi, it showed some of the important places and

the probable route and gate through which Clare exited the city to where Francis and the brothers were waiting for her. The video sparked some deep reflection and thoughtful discussion on Clare's life, times and her momentous decision to leave her world of privilege.

Pat Bueter and **Gayle Huhges** have agreed to serve and have been approved as co-coordinators for
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Calabash group beginning in 2014.

At the August meeting, following a suggestion to celebrate Franciscan feasts, **Carol Carlson** led us in reading an article from *FranciscanMedia.org*, titled "St. Clare's Gamble." It was more meaningful and had greater impact because of the video we had seen in July. Carol, who is reading Mary Beth Ingham's, *Scotus for Dunces*, then spoke about John Duns Scotus' perspective on the Assumption, which provided some unfamiliar but stimulating food for thought.

Because we were gathering as a group for Mass on the Feast of



Calabash associates gather to celebrate Rita Joan's 80th birthday

St. Francis, we distributed the 25th Anniversary shirts at our September meeting so we could wear them to the Mass. We also continued to work on our group's opening program for the Anniversary. After Mass on 10/29, the

we invited parish-ioners and the local community to come and find out what it means to be an associate and follow in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare. They will learn about the symbolism of the San Damiano Crucifix from a DVD video, and hopefully have a better understanding of how Francis' ideas of 'encounter

and fraternity' inspire and motivate our new Pope Francis. Of course in the Franciscan tradition of hospitality, refreshments and anniversary cake will close the event!



Happy Halloween!



MIRIAM REGINA SCHNEIBLE, OSF



Born Ruth Schneible on February 23, 1914, she died October 30, 2013.

She was received into the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY at St. Elizabeth Motherhouse on December 8, 1946 and professed her final religious vows on December 9, 1953.

Sister Miriam Regina faithfully lived the Mission of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany for more than 65 years.

As a young girl, she attended the Jay Street and St.

Mary's elementary schools in Rome, NY from 1919-27 and entered Rome Free Academy High School in 1927, graduating in 1931. Following high school, she performed secretarial work for a local attorney and for a number of years, held clerical positions within the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Although adequate, those years of public work were filled with thoughts of pursuing religious life and in the Spring of 1946, Sr. Miriam joined the community of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. After entering, she began college course work at St. Elizabeth Teacher's College, now part of St. Bonaventure University. A strong interest in healthcare administration had grown out of her earlier experiences in the insurance field and she went on to receive a Certificate in Hospital Administration at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

During her ministry in the healthcare industry, Sr. Miriam Regina served both as Assistant Administrator and Administrator for multiple healthcare facilities of the Congregation in Rhode Island, New York and Florida. In later years, she graciously provided secretarial support for Congregational Leadership and served as a Trustee on the St. Francis Hospital board in Olean, NY. In 1999 she entered retirement, enjoying several relaxing years at the San Damiano House in Allegany and St. John Convent in Olean. In 2004, her sisters welcomed her home to the St. Elizabeth Motherhouse in Allegany, NY.

Have a memory you'd like to share about Sr. Miriam Regina? We are looking to include short reflections in our next issue. Please send any thoughts and tributes to Sr. Barbara. Thank you!





At the Motherhouse:

Sisters competed with St. Bonaventure University students at Wii Bowling. The Sisters put up a good fight, but were defeated by the students in the end.

