



Associate Program

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

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The Associate Alliance



Franciscan Spirituality 101 - Compassion

The people of the town of Gubbio were terrorized by a wolf who lived in the woods surrounding the town. The wolf had started sneaking into the town, first attacking sheep...then audaciously attacking a small child...and then, even attacking adults. The people became enraged. They panicked and sought revenge. They wanted to fight for the right to take evening strolls again without fear of attack...to live in peace. Their efforts to hunt down the wolf failed, however. Since several of them had met Francis, the poor man from Assisi, they sent for him, in the hopes that he could mediate the situation.

When Francis arrived at the town, his first course of action was to listen deeply to the people. He stood in their midst and listened to their accounts of the vicious attacks of the wolf. He let their anger and fear and frustration and rage rush over him. Then he wandered into the woods in search of the wolf. At their first encounter, the wolf bared his teeth and prepared to attack. Francis sat down on the ground and made it known that he would like to talk with the wolf. After some time getting used to one another, the wolf finally approached and listened to what Francis had to say.

Francis asked the wolf why he was causing so much fear in the town. The wolf responded, "I didn't know I was causing fear." Francis asked the wolf why he was instigating so much rage in the people. The wolf responded, "I didn't know I was instigating rage." Francis asked the wolf, "What are you trying to do, then?" The wolf responded, "I just want to eat. I am so hungry.... my pack has abandoned me and I see no other way to find food than in the town."

Francis considered the plight of the wolf and understood his predicament. Francis then proposed a solution: what if the people of the town fed you? Would you stop attacking them? The wolf considered the proposal and agreed to Francis' solution. Francis walked back to Gubbio with the wolf heeling by his side. He brokered a deal with the townspeople who after some reservation, agreed to feed the wolf. The people marveled and asked how Francis had tamed the wolf. And he said, "Oh, I merely brought myself to the wolf to listen and understand his situation. Who I tamed was you."

In this story we see Francis navigating through the anxiety and anger of the townspeople, not being swayed by their gossipy stories of the terrorizing, vicious outsider. Instead Francis listened to the villagers' complaints. He asked them questions in order to understand their fears. He stood as witness to their anger, pain, and suffering. Similarly, as he encountered the wolf, he could have brought with him all the fear and anxiety the people had vented; he could have been tense and prepared to defend himself by carrying a weapon or he could have been timid and fearfully approached the wolf. But he did neither. He brought his full self in front of the wolf, without trepidation or revenge; without timidity or rage. Instead filled with compassion - that capacity to be with suffering - he opened his heart, laid himself open and vulnerable, and sought to understand, rather than judge.

Compassion is at the heart of our Franciscan tradition: presence with suffering, presence with those you disagree with. This is not a stance of meekness. No, the Franciscan way shows us we must be bold enough to walk up to someone who is different from us and with an open heart to be curious enough to understand - then to do something for someone else who is in need.



News from around the world

Allegany Associates

Mary Laubenthal



Not having had a new member to our Community in three years - and the last one was mentored by a Sister who is no longer active in the Associate Program - we were at a loss as to how best to mentor a woman interested in becoming an Associate. Mary Kay Tambash and I initially decided to split the topics - she would work with Cathy Walters on Franciscan Spirituality and I would focus on the charism, Congregational history, and initiatives.

With my living 80 miles away from Allegany, where they both live, we came up with the idea of meeting through conference calls. The results have been enriching!

I haven't heard of any other group using technology for mentoring. It might be useful for any group that might be in a similar situation, feeling limited due to distance and/or time! The phone calls allow for flexibility in scheduling and eliminates travel time. We do see each other at monthly meetings, so there is still face-to-face time.

Sometimes we even kid each other about being in our PJs during our "meetings"!

Tampa Bay Associates

Sheila Vincent



The last presentation of the retreat "**Love Unfolding - Becoming a Wholemaker**" offered by Sr. Colleen Brady, Sr. Jeanne Williams, and Kathy Doyle took place at St. Elizabeth Convent, with associates and local sisters from Tampa and St. Petersburg participating.

While the retreat was insightful, in typical Franciscan fashion, they spent quite a bit of time eating wonderful food and socializing, exchanging stories and sharing thoughts, ideas and prayers.

Retreat for the Associates from Porangatu and Novo Planalto

Sr. Bernadete Albernaz



A time for sharing by the Associates from Porangatu and Novo Planalto during their March reunion

Coordinated by Associate Elza Albino de Castro, the Associates of the Porangatu and Novo Planalto communities participated in a retreat in March.

An active layperson, Elza shares our charism with the Associates, following guidelines from her parish and from the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany.



The always important "social hour!"

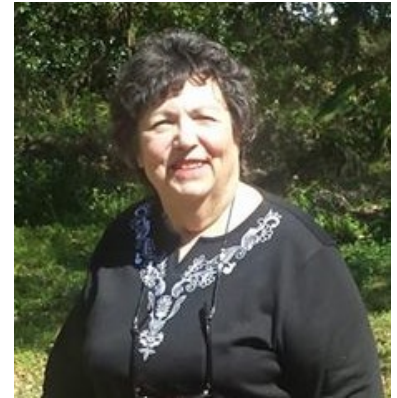
Meet Judy Radell - Associate from Tampa Bay, FL

Judy has been involved with the Associate Program since its beginning - a charter member, if you will!

In 1997, she and Sr. Francis Leo Brown were asked by the General Council of the congregation to be the first co-Directors of the Associate Program. They worked together visiting sisters and associates, participating in regional Assembly days to expand awareness and involvement in the Program, and developing guidelines and the Associate Mission Statement. Associates were encouraged to participate in ministries with the sisters, as well as in their parishes and/or local communities. Sr. Francis Leo retired in 2000 and Sr. Toni Pellegrino was appointed to serve as co-director with Judy. Judy continued as co-director until 2002. For a time afterwards, Judy served the Associates as Temporary Budget Manager.

Prior to retiring and moving to Florida, Judy worked for the New York State Office of Developmental Disabilities for over 28 years. She served in various positions: as a teacher, Director of Education, and Chief of Service for six northern counties of the state.

In addition to the Associates, Judy is a Eucharistic Minister at St. Joseph Church and for their shut-in members (Zephyrhills). She is also a member of Catholic Daughters of America, participating in their charitable works.



Judy Radell

A Chance to Live the Mission

Myrnamae Engleton

A few years ago, I felt called to go on a missionary trip. With a little help, I was able to go and visit the Allegany sisters in Jamaica. During the two weeks I was there, I met approximately five groups from Canada and the US, who were going to help with the missions and were also staying at Immaculate Conception Convent.

I enjoyed working with Sr. Grace Yap, who took me with her every day to all of her community meetings and other events all over Kingston and afar. I got to meet local citizens who were very friendly, diligent and devoted to the cause of building a better community. These concerned citizens even took time off from their jobs to travel several miles every few weeks to participate in community affairs. Sr. Grace continuously displayed the stamina needed to organize and manage these important projects. God bless her!

Some of the important projects I learned about were: school projects, agriculture (planting fields), irrigation (for farming as well as drinking water), transportation, dental and health concerns for the poor, and housing. Many new homes are being built and old homes are being renovated for the poor every year.



Myrnamae and the sisters at Immaculate Conception Convent

A bonus was that I was present when Prince Charles (U.K.) visited and motorcaded onto the convent grounds, passing right under our balconies. I also celebrated Jamaican Day, participated in its Youth Rally and met sisters and associates from Montego Bay.

I enjoyed my time with all of the Jamaican sisters and appreciate the caring, efforts and love they displayed to all. I loved the variety of delicious fruits and foods; the beauty of unfamiliar flowers and trees, the beauty of the mountains and rivers... but, most of all, I loved the friendly people the Allegany Franciscans introduced me to.

News from New Jersey

Sandra Klose



Sr. Pat Sheeran
dressed in her
Irish finery.



Irish Soda
Bread



Corn beef &
Cabbage

The Associate Community of New Jersey had their March meeting on St. Patrick's Day, March 17. The reflection centered on the prayer of St. Patrick, and the similarities between Patrick and Francis. They then feasted on a traditional Irish meal prepared by their hostess, Peggy Madison.

Creative Conversations

Kathy Doyle

One of the challenges identified by the 2016 North Atlantic Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) sponsored CARA (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate) Study was the inability of members, scattered across Canada and the U.S., to share crucial ideas. Responding to that need, the Member Services Committee devised a plan for up to 25 NACAR members to participate in one-hour ZOOM webinars with breakout rooms for discussion on engaging topics.

The CARA Study covered key issues such as the impact of associates on the mission and ministries of religious institutes, the structure of the associate relationship to the institute, and the future needs and challenges of this relationship.

Using findings from the study, the webinars have covered topics on Associate Leadership and Formation. Under Leadership, we reflected on the associate's personal integration of the congregation's charism and how well associates and their lay leaders are assuming ownership of the associate program. We were pleased to note that evidence of the Allegany Associates' integration of our congregation's charism is very visible in the life of associates as seen through their witness, actions and ministries in the Church and society. In a comparison of ownership of the Associate Program, our associates seem to fall just ahead of the curve in willingness to "step up to the plate" when asked; and, like most associates, were hesitant to take the initiative on their own.

The subject of formation was viewed in two parts: Initial and On-Going and whether that formation is intentional, structured and scheduled or accidental and a by-product of other activities. We had to agree that although we do have an initial formation process, most formation continues as a by-product of other activities through faith-sharing discussions at monthly meetings and from presentations at Assemblies and Chapters.

Jeanne and Kathy are taking turns participating in the sessions. The videotaped sessions are available for NACAR members who could not participate. These "Creative Conversations" provide a way for associate leaders to share ideas and get to know one another.

The Prayer of St. Patrick

I arise today
through the strength of heaven;
light of the sun,
splendor of fire,
speed of lightning,
swiftness of the wind,
depth of the sea,
stability of the earth,
firmness of the rock.

I arise today
through God's strength to pilot me;
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's hosts to save me
afar and anear,
alone or in a multitude.

Christ shield me today
against wounding
Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ in the heart of everyone
who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone
who speaks of me,
Christ in the eye that sees me,
Christ in the ear that hears me.

I arise today
through the mighty strength
of the Lord of creation.

Christian Stewardship

Marion Tarallo

The Mission Statement from Chapter states that we should Gaze, Consider and Contemplate, to ignite our hearts with the fire of God's love. To me this means contemplative prayer needs to be the foundation and framework of our lives. It is from this process of contemplating that we become one with the Lord and open our hearts to hear what God wants us to do. United to God, we are open to the Trinity and Holy Spirit's guidance. "Contemplation is to be open to God's call," according to Ilia Delio.

We are unique individuals living in relationship with Christ through contemplation and by becoming a mirror of God's love reflected to the world. This response involves stewardship or a sharing of talent, time and treasure. We each have gifts we can share with each other. These gifts give witness to Franciscan-Clarian Spirituality.

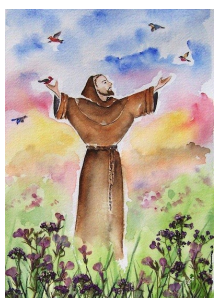
The time we live in is ripe for living these values of seeing goodness, love and beauty in the world - seeing diversity as unique rather than seeking uniformity; sharing time and involvement with each other as community so no one is alone; solidarity with others for rights and freedom. Again, Ilia Delio says, "We become what we love and prayer leads us to compassion. Francis was filled with compassion and he was transformed into Christ."

We can share treasures with St. Elizabeth Mission Society and/or join other Sisters and Associates who are responding to people's needs. We each have talents we can share even if it is just listening to someone who needs support, encouragement, guidance or prayer... or just needs a friendly hug.

Each Associate community can share with other groups based on needs and gifts. We are part of a chain linked together with the Allegany Sisters. The Allegany early history gives witness to women who saw a need and boldly went forward to meet the need. We could share activities, projects, events in our areas - all reflective of God's goodness based on our contemplation of the Cross as St. Clare did as she pondered and ministered. We can improve communication with each other and with different groups and be willing to support each other. We especially can be people of non-violence and try to bring others together to communicate or heal.



Note from the St. Elizabeth Mission Society



Hi Sheila -

I was looking at the (February) Associate newsletter and saw your article on Franciscan images. I don't know if you're aware, but the Mission Society used the watercolor one for one of our enrollment cards. We found the image on the internet and tracked down the artist in Arizona to ask her permission to use it. Her name is Regina Ammerman, and she has made other artwork with Assisi images. The original piece has dried flowers on it. She is rather homebound right now but grew up in Catholic schools and has made several trips to Assisi/Italy. She was pleased to help us out and learn more about the (Allegany) Franciscan Sisters and their ministries. Just thought I'd share that fun fact with you!

Laura Whitford

President

St. Elizabeth Mission Society

Dr. Lyle F. Renodin Foundation

Affiliated with the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany

You know what they say: “You can’t win the lottery without buying a ticket.” It seems fairly obvious, right? How could one ever expect to win without actually entering the contest? How could one expect to succeed without even trying?

And, yet, that is what so many of us expect when it comes to our faith. I hear many people complain that they feel distant from God and disconnected from a faith community. Many complain that their faith just isn’t very strong. When I ask what they’ve tried or what they’re struggling with, many simply reply “nothing.” Well, that might be your first problem.

Just as you can’t win the lottery without buying a ticket, *you can’t improve your prayer life by not praying.*

Like anything else, faith and prayer do not come naturally and we’re not necessarily good at it at first. It takes practice and hard work and patience. But most of all - maybe first of all - it takes *showing up*. As much as faith is a gift of God, and as much as we cannot control how God will respond to us, we absolutely can control how openly and readily we show up to God.

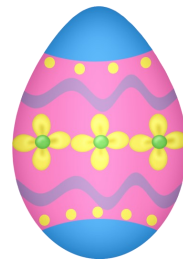
Because, really, God is always showing up to us. When we’re comfortable and content, God is there. When we’re proud and arrogant, God is there. When we’re lonely and tired, God is there. God is always there, showing up to us, waiting for us to show up to him.

Why not show up to God a bit more? Why not make your prayer one of fidelity, a steadfast commitment to spend time with God no matter what is going on in our lives? It may not sound like much, but sometimes it’s the simplest things that we forget that can make the biggest difference.

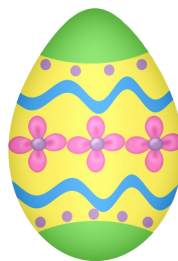


EASTER PRAYER

Lord, instill us with the hope
we celebrate this Easter -
the hope we are supposed to experience
because of Jesus’ resurrection;
the hope that is difficult to believe in
when we live in a world
with much pain and suffering.
Remind us that Jesus did not exempt himself
from human hardships;
He humbled Himself and identified with us
who live in this broken, yet beautiful world.
So, this Easter we choose hope.
To have hope is to believe that life wins over death.
To have hope it to begin again
as many times as necessary.
To have hope is to believe that God’s love will prevail.
To have hope is to live in God’s love.



Happy
Easter!



“Keep a clear eye
toward life’s end. Do
not forget your
purpose and destiny
as God’s creature.
What you are in his
sight is what you are
and nothing more.

Remember that
when you leave this
earth, you can take
nothing that you have
received... but only
what you have given -
a full heart enriched
by honest service,
love, sacrifice, and
courage.”

St. Francis of Assisi

The Associate Alliance is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.

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