



Associate Program

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Volume I  
Issue 10

June 2018

## The Associate Alliance



### Pope Francis Releases “Gaudete et Exsultate”

“Rejoice and be glad!” is what Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount. It’s also the title of Pope Francis’ new apostolic exhortation on holiness in everyday life. Why should we “rejoice and be glad”? Because God, as Francis reminds us, calls us all to be saints. But how can we respond to that call?

1. Holiness means being yourself - The saints pray for us and give us examples of how to live, but we are not meant to be cookie-cutter versions of them. We are meant to be ourselves, and each believer is meant to “discern his or her own path” and “bring out the very best of themselves.” As Thomas Merton said, “For me to be a saint means to be myself.”

2. Everyday life can lead to holiness - You do not need to be a bishop, a priest or a member of a religious order to be holy. Everyone is called to be a saint, as the Second Vatican Council reminded us - a mother or a father, a student or an attorney, a teacher or a janitor. “Saints next door,” Francis calls them. All we need to do is to “live our lives in love” and “bear witness” to God in all we do. That also doesn’t have to mean big, dramatic actions. Francis offers examples of everyday sanctity, like a loving parent raising a child; as well as “small gestures” and sacrifices that one can make, like deciding not to pass on gossip. If you can see your own life as a “mission,” then you soon realize that you can simply be loving and kind to move towards holiness.

You also do not have to be “swooning in mystic rapture” to be a saint or walking around with “lowered eyes.” Nor do you have to withdraw from other people. On the other hand, you do not want to be caught up in the “rat race” of rushing from one thing to another. A balance between action and contemplation is essential.

3. Two tendencies to avoid: Gnosticism and Pelagianism - Pope Francis may send people racing to either dictionaries or their theology textbooks when he asks us to avoid two dangers in the spiritual life. The first is Gnosticism, from the Greek word *gnosis*, to know. Gnosticism is the old heresy that says that what matters most is what you know. No need to be charitable or do good works. All you need is the correct *intellectual* approach. “When somebody has an answer for every question,” says Francis, “it’s a sign that they are not on the right path.” In other words, being a know-it-all is not going to save you.

The second thing to avoid is Pelagianism, named for Pelagius, the fifth-century theologian associated with this idea. Pelagianism says that we can take care of our salvation through our own efforts. Pelagians trust in their own powers, don’t feel like they need God’s grace and act superior to others because they observe certain rules. It’s a real danger to holiness because it robs us of humility, sets us over others, and leaves little room for grace.

4. Be kind - “Gaudete et Exsultate” is filled with Pope Francis’ trademark practical advice for living a life of holiness. For example, don’t gossip, stop judging and, most important, stop being cruel. That goes for online actions, too. Francis’ comments on this topic are memorable. Online, he writes, “defamation and slander can become commonplace - since things can be said there that would be unacceptable in public discourse, as people look to compensate for their own discontent by lashing out at others. In claiming to uphold other commandments, they completely ignore the eighth, which forbids bearing false witness or lying and ruthlessly vilifying others.” To be holy, be kind.

\*\*\*\*\* continued on page 2 \*\*\*\*\*

## Gaudete et exsultate *(continued)*

5. The Beatitudes are a roadmap for holiness - As you might guess from the document's title, the Beatitudes, Jesus' list of "blessed are," are central to this exhortation. The Beatitudes are not only what Jesus means by holiness, they are also a portrait of our Lord himself. So we're called to be poor in spirit, meek, peacemakers, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on. But focusing on one beatitude: "Blessed are the merciful," Pope Francis says mercy, one of the central themes of his papacy, has two aspects: helping and serving others but also forgiving and understanding. Jesus does not say, "Blessed are those who plot revenge!"

And what is Pope Francis' overall summary of holiness? It's based on the Beatitudes: "Seeing and acting with mercy."

For the full text, visit

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html)



## Pires do Rio Celebration

*Claudio Alves de Oliveira*



In the month of April, we celebrated the 75th Jubilee of the presence of the Most Holy Name of Jesus Province in Brazil. The Associates participated in Masses and other events, along with several of the FSAs from Anapólis. It was a lovely celebration.



## Renewal in Palmas

*Sr. Nara Jaime*



Associates, Sisters and Friars of Palmas

It was a time of renewal as the Associates of the FSAs celebrated recommitment to the Associate program.

They were joined by local OFS who renewed their vows.

The evening was blessed with a reflection and on-going formation by Frei Vitório Mazzuco, OFM.



## He is Risen! (Now What?)

Sheila Vincent

*John 20:19-22 – On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you! ... As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

Jesus is risen from the dead and we want to live into that reality and remind ourselves of that. Jesus has risen and the world has never been the same. Jesus has risen and we are never going to be the same. The resurrection changes us, it motivates us and it reassures us. The power and the reality of the resurrection changed those first followers - but not right away. The disciples had a whirlwind first week, that week leading up to that Easter. There was a week of confusion and discouragement, leading to the crucifixion - the grief, the anger, the despair. Then that crazy morning, when the women ran back and said, “He is NOT dead!” And what were they all doing that very night? That Easter evening, the doors were locked for fear of what else might happen. Jesus is risen, but now what? Utter confusion and locked doors and fear and hiding. Then a beautiful Jesus appears to them and speaks peace to them and reassures them. He reminds them of the mission and empowers them. He says, “Unlock the doors. Set aside fear. It’s time to go. It’s time to grow.” And today he says the same to us.

So we must pray, “Lord Jesus, we know that you have come to reassure us, to reinvigorate us and to renew our sense of calm. Open our hearts to understand your scriptures and receive your power to grow and go out.”

The New Testament is filled with stories and lessons about “growing and going” and, as Christians, we must be growing in the power of the Spirit. And that is the answer to the question “Now What?”

The Apostle Paul, in his own separate encounter with Christ, understood that as the Father had sent Jesus, Jesus was sending him. Paul received the power of the Spirit and went out and enriched and built up the early Church, just as Jesus asked him to do.

Paul loved the Greek word “teleios.” He uses it in Romans, in Corinthians, Colossians, Ephesians, in Philippians - it means “personal wholeness” and “completeness” and “fulfillment.” Jesus’ last words on the cross, “It is finished” - in Greek, finished is “teleó” meaning it was complete, whole, fulfilled. God calls us to be teleios - complete, whole, mature. We are doing this when we proclaim him and gain wisdom and draw on the Spirit’s power. We must learn how to proclaim Jesus; learning to talk about Jesus is the beginning. The natural cycle is to talk more, share more, gain more wisdom - grow. Proclamation of the Gospel of Christ leads to maturity. Proclamation, teaching, admonishing, wisdom - it’s all part of the path towards maturity. And that is why, on that first Easter evening, Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Proclaiming the Good News is not going to happen if we don’t talk or if we stay behind locked doors! We may not all be evangelists through gifts of the Spirit, but we can all talk! That is where wisdom comes in. We don’t want to speak gibberish, we want to speak truth about Jesus. There is nothing like the Word of God to show us the way, to train us in God’s way, showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes - we are shaped up for the tasks God has planned for us.

Is all of this easy? No. As Paul says in Colossians, “I labor and strive. It is work. It takes practice. It takes straining. It takes setbacks. But we do not need to do it alone - we can draw on the power of the Spirit. We are not left just to our own devices. To continue the quote: “I labor and strive according to the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.” Without the Holy Spirit, we’re not going anywhere and we’re not growing.

Let us remember to proclaim Him, for talking about Him is part of maturing. Let us continue to seek wisdom, for that is part of maturing. And let us draw on the Spirit’s power, because we need that energy working in us. Like the disciples, we must go from being hidden, broken and fearful, to being empowered, whole and bold. The Lord opened the disciples’ minds and they went out in the power of the Spirit. What seemed impossible, happened. They went out and changed the world. We can do the same. Now what? Go. Grow. The world is waiting to be changed.



## Meet José Matias & Dona Tininha - Associates from Pires do Rio, Brazil

Page 4



Presenting José Matias, 92 years young, and Dona Tininha, 89. They have been married for over 60 years and have been members of the Associate community since the group was created in Pires do Rio - Goiás.

As Scripture tells us: the house does not fall because it is built on rock (Mt 7: 24-27). There are no better words than these to describe this couple. There are slowly taken steps, other steps are rushed. Deaf ears that can, at times, hear everything. Days, years, battling hardships, raising children, making friends, suffering, planting, harvesting, sewing, taking care of the animals....

Prayer is a constant. The rosary is always present, either in their pockets or their hands. They are not perfect but they know how to kneel and ask God for forgiveness through the blessings of a priest. They faithfully go to Church every weekend, partaking of the Eucharist and participating in the community of the faithful.

Their “yes” lives on in their children, in their many friends, in the small works they help to blossom in the present Kingdom of God.

What can be said about this simple and sincere couple except what is expressed through St. Paul: “There is a deep secret truth - which I understand as applying to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32). They are examples of how to live, how to be Eucharist, how to be Church. They are symbols of many things

missing in ourselves as we strive to be good children of our Eternal Father. Their house is a place of harmony and peace - a peace that is only broken by the sound of the train that passes by several times a day. It is good to be with them.

There is still much to learn from them - through long conversations, through stories told, and through following their footsteps as they walk under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In every corner of the house is a sign of their love for God, from a manger in the corner of the living room, to the Apostolic Blessings of three Popes. There is, of course, the Cross of Christ to guide their way even through the darkest night. And there are always words - to comfort and to guide others.

The words may one day disappear, but Love - Ah! This will never end (1Cor 13, 8).

## New Jersey Assembly

*Kathy Doyle*



L to R : Mary Jacques, Clare Bertero, OSF, Robin Roche, Gerry Mullin, Pat Simmons, Kathy Doyle, Pat Sheeran, OSF, and Rosemary Weiss

After years of going to the Homewood Suites in Cranford, NJ for Assembly, it was a delight to be at the St. Francis Retreat House in Easton, PA. How lovely to be able to stroll outside on their beautiful campus (which won a local landscaping award recently) and mingle with sculptures and blooming daffodils, instead of noise and traffic! The commute was shorter for some and longer for others, but everyone was thoroughly pleased with the site and overwhelmingly approved the continued use of the facility.

Associates from three states were present: New Jersey, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. Each Associate was given a copy of the new Associate Brochure.

## Associate Advisory Committee Meeting ... Via ZOOM!

Kathy Doyle & Sheila Vincent

Well, some of us probably needed to be dragged, kicking and screaming, into the 21st century ... but the Spring meeting of the Associate Advisory Committee took place successfully on May 19th via Zoom! Members of the Committee signed in from the US, Jamaica and Brazil. This time-saving and cost-effective "meeting" replaced the regularly scheduled May meeting in Tampa.

This year's focus is "Visioning the Future." It ties in beautifully with the celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Associate Program.

Each associate and any sister who chooses to participate is asked to help with visioning our future by reflecting, discussing and praying on some questions, while keeping these thoughts in mind: What keeps you coming? What will motivate you to continue as an Associate? Is living with sisters something to consider? Since Association is based on relationship, how might the loss of sisters impact the program/local associate community? How will the aging of associates affect the program/local community?

Recalling the origins of the program, of your local community and your own personal commitment may help with your reflection on these questions:

- **What do we need to look at for the future?**
- **How do we want our way of life to look in the future?**
- **How do we get there?**
- **What are God and the world asking of us in this time and place?**

Please respond to Jeanne Williams ([fssaassoc09@aol.com](mailto:fssaassoc09@aol.com)) or Kathy Doyle ([memadoyle@gmail.com](mailto:memadoyle@gmail.com)) no later than June 19th.



Members (**Top L-R**): Sr. Patricia Reid (translator), Sr. Bernadete Albernaz, Kathy Doyle, Betty Parbst, Mary Laubenthal.

**Middle L-R**: Sheila Vincent, Sr. Colleen Brady, Sr. Patricia Klemm (Leadership Liaison), Ella Pulido.

**Bottom L-R**: Sr. Jeanne Williams, Lois Kirton.



## Empathy

When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you do not blame the lettuce. You look for reasons why it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce.

Yet, if we have problems with our friends or family, we blame the other person. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well - like the lettuce.

Blaming has no positive effect at all, nor does trying to persuade using reason and argument. That is my experience. No blame, no reasoning, no argument - just understanding. If you understand, and you show that you understand, you can love and the situation will change.

Thich Nhat Hanh

## The Mysticism of Peace in Francis and Clare - Francis as a Peacebuilder

*Luzia Ely Silva*

In all the stories of conflicts which occurred in places where St. Francis was present, he had a very particular pedagogical method for resolving them. Among them we can mention the episode of the thieves of Burgo; the poor man and the boss. The biographer recounts the episode of Arezzo, in which Francis learned that the entire city was drowning in an internal struggle, threatened with imminent destruction. Friar Sylvester was sent to the gates of the city to free the city from destructive demons. "The city returned to peace soon after and sought to preserve the rights of the citizens." Francis uses the biblical formula of blessing (Num 6:23-27).

Another fact of profound significance is Francis' encounter with the Sultan in Damietta, Egypt. In a context of the Christian crusades against the Saracens, who were called dogs and "depraved" and who occupied the Holy Land, Francis presented himself as respectful and one who sought to avoid fighting. Accompanied by a confrere, he met Sultan Malik-el-Khamil in an unarmed, peaceful, evangelical way and with humility, as an envoy "of the Most High God." Francis found a brother in faith, as the Sultan also believed in the one God. In turn the Sultan discovered in Francis a "courteous man" and not an enemy.

A classic text reveals the pedagogy of Francis' peace in the episode of the Wolf of Gubbio when he manages to establish a pact of peace between the wolf and the city.

Also, Clare and her sisters managed to avoid an attack by the Saracens in Assisi, who sought the destruction of the city. They accomplished this without fear and without violence, armed only with confidence in the power of prayer and in the strength of Christ present in the Eucharist.



Associates from Miami and Tampa Bay, Florida

### Florida Assembly

*Sheila Vincent*

The Florida Assembly, held at St. Joseph's Hospital in Tampa, focused on communal reflections from the General Commission. During the first one, there was a presentation and wonderful discussion regarding "from I to WE." There was some open and honest sharing about discernment, respect, and openness. Several references were made to our 2016 Chapter Statement and the desire in our hearts to be like Clare, a reflection to the world of God's love witnessed through how well we live with each other.

The second subject led to an animated discussion on cultural differences. One interesting comment was how the Congregation has changed over the years: it started with recognizing our being a multicultural congregation. It then changed to a cross-cultural mentality - attempts were made for uniformity but it didn't really take our differences into account. We have, in recent years, changed to an intercultural dialogue, which allows each and every one of us to learn from each other and be enriched by our relationships from every country, nationality and religious background which we share as Allegany.

**Since many Associate communities take the summer off, the next edition of the *Associate Alliance* will not come out until October 2018. Please continue to submit articles and photos up to and including the deadline. Thank you for your participation - keep our *Alliance* alive!**

**The Associate Alliance** is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.  
 Editor/Translator: Sheila Vincent      Contributors: Claudio Alves de Oliveira, Sr. Nara Jaime, Kathy Doyle, Luzia Ely Silva

**Please send articles & photos to: [svincent@comcast.net](mailto:svincent@comcast.net) ♦ Deadline for next issue: Sept. 24, 2018**