

The Associate Alliance

Co-Creating the Future God Desires

excerpted from 'The Associate' (NACAR)



Gardeners know that the forsythia bush is sometimes propagated through layering. A weight is placed over a branch to keep it on the ground. As the branch touches the earth, it sends out new roots. This portion of the branch can then be separated from the main. When re-planted it will grow and bloom.

The 2017 NACAR theme, **Associate Call: Alive Today, Co-Creating God's**

Dream for Tomorrow challenges us to be like the forsythia. Alive today, we are rooted in Christ and watered by the vision, mission and charism of our founders and congregations. Yet sometimes we feel weighted down by the force of our present circumstances. Encumbered like this it is difficult to see how we can ever again flourish and flower.

The forsythia reminds us that the weight which brings us low contains within it an opportunity to connect once more with the holy ground that has rooted us. It is because we bend under pressure that we will once more flourish and flower; for as we bend to touch all that has sustained us, we reconnect with the deep richness of our charisms, the long history of our companions. We will send out new roots that allow us to live and grow even if we become separated from the main branch.

We are now called to become co-creators of God's dream for tomorrow. We are called to hope, called to respond to the pressures we feel by preparing ourselves to be re-planted. In this way, whenever and wherever we find ourselves, we will, like the forsythia, continue to grow and bloom.

Inspirational Words

Be silent.
 Be still.
 Alone.
 Empty before God.
 Say nothing.
 Ask nothing.
 Be silent.
 Be still.
 Let your God
 look at you.
 That is all.
 God knows.
 God understands.
 God loves you with
 an enormous love.
 God only wants to
 look upon you
 with love.
 Quiet.
 Still.
 Be.
 Let your God
 love you.

-Edwina Gately

A Garden for the Food Pantry

Elizabeth Parbst

St. Brendan's Catholic Church started a parish garden for the benefit of the food pantry, "Loaves & Fishes." The Franciscan Sisters of Allegany community of Associates has joined in and help once a week to weed and pick vegetables.

Pictured are Calabash, NC, associates Gayle Hughes, Ellen Nash, and Janet Shirdon, assisted by a member of the parish, Pat.





The Franciscan House

Sr. Ana Cristina da Silva

The Franciscan House, also known as the “Place for Promoting Life” (PROVI), belongs to the community of Our Lady of the Angels of Pires do Rio and its activities are coordinated by the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany Associates with the collaboration of Sr. Ana Cristina.

Sr. Ana Cristina and Associates
working with local children

Mary Laubenthal ~ Franciscan Federation Honoree

L-R: Kathy Doyle, Sr. Margaret Mary Kimmins, OSF, Mary Laubenthal and Sr. Jeanne Williams, OSF, at the Franciscan Federation,

Mary Kimmins, OSF, Mary Laubenthal and Sr. Jeanne Williams, OSF, at the Franciscan Federation,

One of Mary's passions is coordinating and teaching English as a Second Language. In response to a need for some priests from other countries to better pronounce English words, Mary conducts a program to teach them correct pronunciation. She was very instrumental in setting up a program for the two sisters from Vietnam who are living at the Motherhouse and working diligently to learn English. Mary comes to Allegany every weekend to work with these sisters as well as to help other sister-teachers arrange their lesson plans for the coming week.

- “A Franciscan who embodies the best of our teaching tradition
- Someone who, in their ministry, embodies the values of being incarnational, personal, communal, transformative, engaging the heart and developing servant-leaders.”

Mary Laubenthal was chosen to be honored at the conference for the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany for her work with English as a Second Language, her generous service to the sisters at the Motherhouse in a variety of ways, and her ministry to priests and refugees. We are grateful to Mary for her approachable and unassuming manner, her willingness to take risks, and her generous sharing of her talents.

Associate Advisory Committee May Meeting - Tampa, FL

Kathy Doyle & Sheila Vincent



Left to right: Ella Pulido, Sheila Vincent, Mary Laubenthal, Sr. Jeanne Williams, Betty Parbst, Sr. Colleen Brady, Kathy Doyle, Sr. Pat Klemm.

Missing: Michelle Robinson, Sr. Ana Bernadete Albernaz

A summation of the Associate Advisory Committee's work during their May 13 meeting would be, "Keeping the charism vibrant in the public sphere." Committee members came together to pray, learn more about faith and who Jesus is for us, and discuss how to continue to witness to the Gospel within the context of the charism of the Congregation.

Much of the discussion during the meeting incorporated that sentiment, whether referring to leadership, formation (initial and on-going), relationship/way of life/community, Meg Guider's presentation at Assemblies and how to use them within our program, the Associate Retreat, and even updates on various topics and issues.

Our liaison with leadership, Sr. Pat Klemm, was able to be present. Her thoughtful remarks and understanding of the Associate program added depth and richness to the conversations. The camaraderie and joyful spirit of Sr. Ana Bernadete was missed, however, as she remained in Brazil to be with her sisters as they mourned and celebrated the passing of Sr. Teresa Sweeney.

Co-Directors Sr. Jeanne Williams and Kathy Doyle will be busy over the summer fleshing out many of the committee's suggestions and recommendations, in preparation for the Joint Meeting of the Associate Advisory Committee and the Local Area Coordinators (LACs) in late September. There will be much to discuss in terms of how to implement some of the modifications being recommended.

Recommitment Ceremony

Since Sheila Vincent and Kathy Doyle had not been present for their local communities' recommitment ceremonies, they made their renewal in the chapel surrounded by the other members of the Advisory Committee. The prayerful and joyful ceremony followed the outline in the Associate Handbook, with prayers, readings, and song.



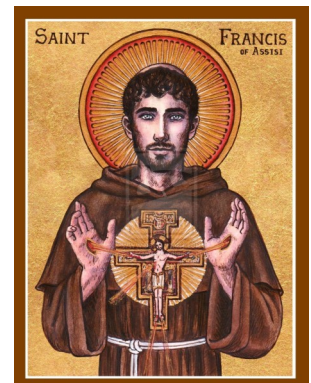
Sheila and Kathy



Sr. Pat Klemm was one of the sisters who invited Sheila and Kathy to renew their commitment as Associates.



Mary Laubenthal, Betty Parbst and Michelle Robinson sing "The Blessing of St. Francis."



Plough to Pantry

Sheila Vincent

I had the opportunity to spend the months of May and June in the mountains of western North Carolina. There is hardly a better place to get in touch with the “down to earth” aspect of Franciscan spirituality! There is a program there that I became aware of called “**Go Green!**” It is an initiative that seeks to connect people to the values of **guarding** and **repairing the earth**. The program offers opportunities for service learning, community gardening, and exploring natural resources, as well as intergenerational and cross-cultural connection.

There are programs about the cycles of nature through gardening, composting, and harvesting food. There are also programs about green energy and practices of alternative farming and permaculture.

In July the ecovillage, **Earthaven**, will offer a class “*Immersion into Permaculture and Its Connection to Franciscanism*.” Permaculture is a way of thinking, not a set of dogmatic practices, thus, it is very similar to Franciscanism. It is not about sustainability, which strives to maintain the earth’s resources; it goes beyond simply sustaining the planet to improving the earth for future generations and leaving the environment in a better condition than it is now.



The course will focus on the connection between permaculture principles and Franciscan traditions and spirituality. Most major world religions have some form of the customs and belief systems which will be discussed, so there will be something for everyone no matter what perspectives are brought to the table!



Lower Your Nets: Casting Out Into the Deep

Kathy Doyle

The NACAR (North American Conference of Associates and Religious) Associate Directors Retreat was held at the picturesque Loyola at the Potomac, MD, Jesuit Retreat House from May 30 to June 2.

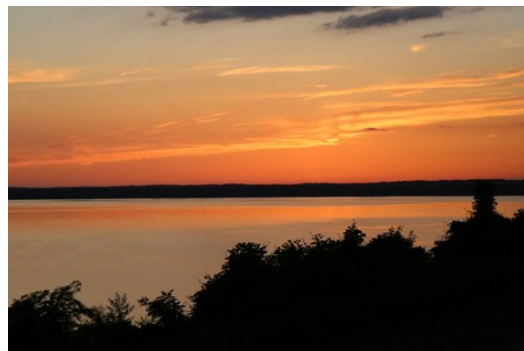
Sr. Jeanne Nisley OSF, an Aston Franciscan, and I drove together and joined four other members of our regional Associate Directors group there. It was wonderful to be able to have conversations with so many directors about the blessings and burdens of associate leadership and share experiences and ideas, especially about growth and sustainability.

The delightful New Orleans accent, idioms, and jokes of our presenter, Sr. Judy Gomila, MSC, kept us on track as we navigated sessions on Spirituality, Charism, Discernment of Gifts, Living Faith, Living in the Present, and Gratitude. Some sessions had activities built in: for Charism we had to write down what we thought might be some of the challenges our founders would face if they were forming their congregation today. For Living Faith, each table had 15 minutes to come up with some creative way to express how faith carries one through light and darkness into growth. My table did a mime that depicted how ‘Son’/sunlight allows life to emerge from the darkness.

Our four-day “voyage” ended with Sr. Judy encouraging us to be more than just a reflection of our charism; to anchor ourselves to the charism and use its power to “chart a course,” to take us beyond the edge of tomorrow.



“Living Faith”: life emerging from the Son



Sunset on the Potomac River

What is Community?

So here's some homework: think about what community means to you.

Hint: There's no right or wrong answer, but every answer will be important when thinking about this very question and igniting a conversation to find out what Associates understand "community" to mean. It will help us all to discover how we feel about ourselves and to imagine what could be.

A healthy community is one grounded in widely shared values and deeply rooted norms of behavior wherein people respect and take care of one another. Community implies a division and sharing of labor and resources. But perhaps community has been most significant in offering us fundamental meaning in life. At the end of the day, do we really judge the value of our lives by how much money we make or how many things we collect, or how much fame we achieve? Don't we feel most satisfied when we know we have truly affected another person positively, when we have contributed to our own communities? There is great value when people come together to share not just similar interests or ideas, but when they share in each other's **lives**.

Community is sustained by each individual's responsibility to uphold their obligations as part of that community. We must come together to build and sustain such a community and continue to witness to the Gospel within the context of the charism of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany.

This will be one of the conversations between the LACs and the Associate Advisory Committee in September, after which a plan of action will be developed.

What does community mean to you? What does the ideal Associate community look like? What's on **your** to-do list to make us better? Please feel free to share your thoughts and ideas after contemplating your feelings about these questions.

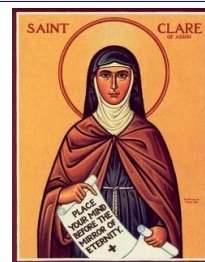


Living Franciscan Lives

Isabel Macedo de Carvalho

When Sr. Margaret Mary Kimmins visited our community of Macajuba, Bahia, she brought such joy that it created a greater commitment and desire to collaborate in order to open our hearts more to Franciscan spirituality. We have been journeying with the FSAs for 25 years and we hope to continue with them by our side, in happy times and sad, helping us to live out our Christian faith.

May the difficulties which arise in our paths not dishearten us and may we help those who are with us to reach the top of any mountain. May our attempts to collaborate with the Sisters continue to be influenced by the unique way of St. Francis in living the Gospel and respecting all of creation. May our community become ever more alive and attentive to Christ. May this Congregation continue to teach us how to better walk the path of peace, justice, and fraternity and may the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany continue to count on us to evangelize to the people as spokespersons of God's great love.



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

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