

Volume 17.3 Winter 2014

Good NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Keeping the “Catholic” in Catholic Healthcare

Also in this issue:

- Bringing Life to the Dying:
Support for the Body
and Soul
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News



Commitment Statement

We recommit ourselves to “rebuilding the Church” by living the passion of the Gospel in the discerning spirit of our Franciscan charism and tradition.

We are willing to take the necessary risks to be a healing, compassionate presence in our violent world especially with women, children, and those who have no voice.

We desire to reflect this commitment in our dialogue with the entire Church, in our own governing structures, and in our relationship with one another as sister.

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel in the prophetic spirit of Francis of Assisi and our Foundress Mother Francis Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family and with all creation. Calling ourselves and one another to continuous conversion of heart, we commit ourselves to a life of contemplation, poverty and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of collaboration and of mutual service to the needs of others, especially the economically poor, the marginal and the oppressed. Seeking to participate in the Spirit's action in the world, we direct our personal and corporate resources to the promotion of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Filled with trust in the goodness of God, we move forward.

POINT OF VIEW

At our 2014 Congregational Chapter in June, we, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, gathered for a week to celebrate our sisterhood, enter into deep prayer with one another, and discern the question: Provident God, whose life-giving Spirit urges us forward, where are you challenging us as Franciscan women today to risk rebirthing our charism into an unknown future?

It was a holy time, a time of contemplation and reverent listening to one another, and a time to attend to the promptings of the Spirit in each sister's heart. After several days, we came to a consensus about our direction for the next six years with the following statement:

Trusting in our Provident God, whose life-giving Spirit urges us forward, we challenge ourselves as Franciscan women to risk rebirthing the charism, offering it as gift to all. Rooted in contemplative consciousness and committed to the primacy of relationship, we choose to be a prophetic and transformative presence in our Church and world.

In this issue of Good News, we meet two sisters giving witness to our directional statement—Sister Pat Walsh in the halls of Franciscan Hospice House and Sister Clare Christi in the halls of the Capitol building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Although the locations are quite different, they are both committed to building relationships and each sister brings a presence that transforms those with whom she ministers.

Sister Pat Walsh, a volunteer at Franciscan Hospice House in Tacoma, Washington, engages in a variety of tasks. In all of them, Pat brings a compassionate, joyful presence to those who are in a time of passage, a sacred time in their lives. Whether relating to a patient or a family member, Pat's presence calms and comforts all.

Sister Clare Christi, president of the Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association, advocates for the values inherent in our Catholic tradition in preserving the quality and dignity of human life. Her breadth of knowledge and her passionate commitment to Catholic healthcare challenges and transforms legislators both politically and personally.

May the articles here inspire you to recognize the opportunities you may also have to be a transformative presence to those whom you meet each day who are in need of love, compassion, and justice.



Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF
Congregational Minister

Blessings,

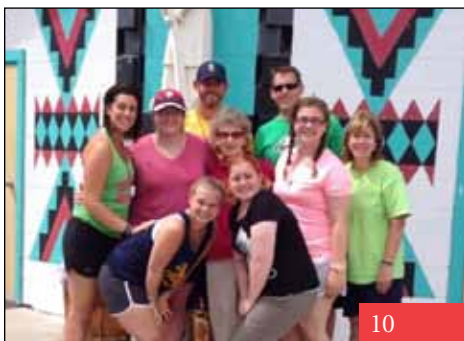
Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF



4



12



10

VOLUME 17.3 WINTER 2014

INSIDE *Good* NEWS CONTENTS

Point of View. 2

Bringing Life to the Dying: Support
for the Body and Soul 4

Sister Patricia Walsh is well-known and well-loved at Franciscan Hospice House, doing what some would call volunteer work but what she transforms into a ministry and a calling. Situated near Tacoma, Washington, Franciscan Hospice House has become a comfortable home away from home—infused with warmth—for those nearing the end of life.

Written by Deb Litman
Photography by Tim LaBarge

People & Places 10

Keeping the “Catholic” in Catholic
Healthcare 12

Since 1982 Sister Clare Christi, Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association president, has committed herself to representing the positions of the Church and the Catholic health ministry in legislative and regulatory matters at the state level. Sister Clare’s deep and abiding commitment to the values of the Catholic Church is part of what sets her apart on Capitol Hill.

Written by Deb Litman
Photography by Andrea Cipraini-Mecchi

Sharing the Good News 16

Focus 18

Communications Office
609 South Convent Road
Aston, PA 19014
Tel (610) 558-7726
Fax (610) 558-6131
goodnews@osfphila.org

Managing Editor
Florence Smith

Assistant Editor
Sister Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

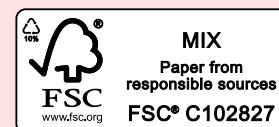
Editorial Board
Dr. Joseph Glass
Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer, OSF
Sister Marie Monica Borden, OSF
Sister Marie Therese Carr, OSF
Sister Helen Jacobson, OSF
Sister Jean Rupertus, OSF

Graphic Design
Geneen Pintof

The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and invite others to become involved in our mission.

Good News is published three times a year (spring, summer, winter) by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. We welcome your feedback and comments; correspondence should be addressed to *Good News* at address above.

Visit our website! www.osfphila.org



The environmental savings by printing this document with FSC certified stock on an FSC certified press are:
Trees preserved for the future: 43; Lbs water-borne waste not created: 124.17; Gallons wastewater flow saved: 18,266; Lbs solid waste not generated: 2,021; Lbs net greenhouse gases prevented: 3,979; BTUs energy not consumed: 30,459,240

On the cover: Sister Clare Christi is a familiar and well-respected presence in the halls of the Pennsylvania State Capitol where she lobbies for the positions of the Church and Catholic healthcare ministry.

Bringing Life to the Dying: Support for the

Fred and Stephanie Ostmann were still dazed when they arrived at Franciscan Hospice House in University Place near Tacoma, Washington, in November 2012. It had been only two months since Fred had begun experiencing the symptoms of what turned out to be a brain tumor and just a week since learning that his cancer was terminal. Before that the 73-year-old was extremely active—hiking, bicycling, swimming, and even mountain climbing.

“I was numb,” said Stephanie, Fred’s wife of 42 years who, along with the couple’s two adult daughters, was with him when he arrived at Hospice House. “We had been through hospitals, nursing homes, and home care. When we arrived at Hospice House, it was like we had landed in the right place for the circumstances.”

Within the first few days at Hospice House, the Ostmanns met Sister Pat Walsh who has been a volunteer there for more than a decade. Although they recognized Sister Pat from St. Leo’s Parish where they all attended Mass, they didn’t know her well. Sister Pat introduced herself and began a relationship that came to be very important to both Fred and Stephanie during the last weeks of Fred’s life. “Sister Pat was extraordinary,” said Stephanie. “She sensed whether we wanted to talk or just be. She was a comforting and reassuring presence. Fred looked forward to her visits and so did I.”

continued on page 6

Sister Pat Walsh and Stephanie Ostmann embrace. The two have remained in touch since getting to know one another while Stephanie’s husband was a patient at Hospice House. “I am still very grateful to Sister Pat for what she did for me and for my husband,” said Stephanie.



Franciscan Hospice House, located near Tacoma, is home to the only dedicated inpatient hospice program in the South Puget Sound region of Washington State. It features 20 private rooms, a large family room, a chapel, and a garden area.



“BEFORE I GO IN, I PRAY, ‘GOD, LET ME BE YOUR
HANDS, YOUR FACE, YOUR VOICE.’”

Body and Soul



► Cards written by grateful families fill the staff board.

“ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SOME PATIENTS OR FAMILIES WHO MAY AT FIRST FEEL RESISTANCE TO THE IDEA OF HOSPICE CARE, MOST COME AROUND ONCE THEY EXPERIENCE THE CARE AND LOVE THAT IS SHOWN BY EVERY MEMBER OF THE HOSPICE TEAM.”



continued from page 5

A Comfort, a Joy, an Institution

Sister Pat is well-known and well-loved at Franciscan Hospice House, doing what some would call volunteer work but what she transforms into a ministry and a calling. She does anything that is needed—greeting families at the door, giving tours of the facility, making sure there is fresh coffee in the kitchen, delivering flowers to patients’ rooms, and entering data into the computer. No matter what the task, Sister Pat brings a sense of spirit to it. But it is with patients and their families that she utilizes her gifts to their fullest. “Pat is an institution here,” said Sherry Shultz, man-

ager of volunteer service for Franciscan Hospice and Palliative Care. “She is able to sense what people need and provide it in a way that is very natural, very comforting.”

That means something different for each patient and each family. “Sometimes it’s talking, sometimes listening, reading, prayer, silence, touch. I let them lead me,” said Sister Pat. “Before I go in, I pray, ‘God, let me be your hands, your face, your voice.’”

It is not unusual for patients to ask Sister Pat to hold their hands or to sit quietly next to them so they are not alone. Sometimes Sister Pat invites people to share memories

from their lives. Other times patients will ask her to tell them what is going on in the outside world. The requests are as varied as the patients themselves. “We once had a professor who wanted someone to read Shakespeare to her,” said Sister Pat, laughing. “I was happy to do it but I was so lousy that I put her to sleep every time!”

No matter what the assignment, Sister Pat imbues it with a quality of joy that is contagious—an ability with great value in a place where grief is routine. “Sister Pat is very fun-loving,” said Dr. Mimi Pattison who, in addition to serving as Medical Director for Franciscan Hospice and Palliative Care, is a longtime friend of Sister Pat. “She never declines an opportunity for joy. She brings that to her patients.”

A Place of Comfort Amidst the Pain

Patients at Franciscan Hospice House receive much more than just medical care. Part of the Franciscan Health System, the facility is housed in a single story building that was once a nursing home but has since been infused with a warmth that is instantly recognizable. The twenty-patient center is an extension of St. Joseph Hospital which the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia began in Tacoma in 1890. All who come are greeted at the door by a volunteer and offered a tour of this home away from home. There is a grand piano in the lobby, a small chapel, and a family kitchen where fresh coffee, homemade soup, and dessert are always available. For those families

wanting to cook and eat together, there are pots and pans and a large table available for use by patients and their loved ones. A courtyard features a table with an umbrella and chairs, a pond, and a garden that is tended by volunteers. “My husband liked to go into the kitchen and have a cup of tea and, on nice days, to take it out to the garden,” said Stephanie.

Although there are some patients or families who may at first feel resistance to the idea of hospice care, most come around once they experience the care and love that is shown by every member of the hospice team. “I remember a man who did not want to come at first,” said Sister Pat. “It wasn’t long, though, before he was very much at home here. I remember him telling me when he went home for a few days

continued on page 8



◀ Lois Saito (left) visits with her mother while Sister Pat tends to her. “I try to care for patients and visitors as I would my own friends and family,” said Sister Pat.

▼ One of the many things Sister Pat does at Hospice House is deliver fresh flowers to patients’ rooms. In fact, no detail is too small for Sister Pat. Whether locating a favorite food, reading a book aloud, or just sitting quietly with a patient, Sister Pat does all she can to make patients’ days as pleasant and fulfilling as they can be.

► Staff members Sherry Schultz (left) and Arlene Olson (right) with Sister Pat. “The staff at Hospice House—the doctors, the nurses, the cook, the chaplain—they are all angels,” said Stephanie Ostman. “They devote all their efforts to making patients and families comfortable.”



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for patients and families living with terminal illness and for the loving and compassionate people who care for them.
- Give the gift of presence to loved ones who are sick or dying. Providing meals, offering to do laundry, or providing transportation to doctors' appointments are practical ways of helping. Equally important, however, are less concrete methods of providing assistance. Reminiscing over shared memories, being a listening ear, or sharing a movie or a cup of tea are all ways of caring for those you love during their final weeks.
- Volunteer at a hospice near you. Hospice volunteers offer companionship and support for people living with serious illnesses. They also provide help with office work, fundraising, and outreach efforts.
- Donate your gently used medical equipment to an organization that provides items such as canes, walkers, shower chairs, and wheelchairs at no cost to those who need them.

continued from page 7

around Christmas, 'Don't give my bed away. I'm coming back.'"

"The staff there never says 'no,'" said Stephanie. "Toward the end of his stay, Fred had become delusional and had it in his mind that he wanted a motorized wheelchair so he could go to the Y for a swim. The doctor said, 'We can look at getting a chair but we need to have a physical therapist come evaluate you,'" remembers Stephanie. "The fact that he wasn't being denied meant a great deal to him and to me."

A Spiritual Connection

Sister Pat makes it her mission to ensure that patients' spiritual needs are being as well tended as their physical and emotional ones. "Many volunteers aren't comfortable talking about religion, but I am open to it if it is something the patient wants," said Sister Pat. "Always, though, I let them lead the conversation."

That openness allows people to communicate sincerely whatever is on their minds. "When people open up to Sister Pat, they can open up in a spiritual way about what is deeply meaningful to them—sometimes even more than they can with their family

members," said Mimi. "As a volunteer she brings the extra element of being a woman dedicated to serving God."

For patients who are Catholic, Sister Pat brings Communion and she collects rosaries for those who want them. In fact, the story of Sister Pat's dedication to providing Communion to patients is well-known at Hospice House. At one time the policy at the facility was that only the resident priest could bring Communion to those who asked for it. But with the priest unable to visit every day and some patients wishing to receive Communion daily, Sister Pat took matters into her own hands. "She started bringing it in herself instead of waiting for the priest," said volunteer coordinator Arlene Olson. "She was so adamant about providing the Eucharist when patients requested it that the administration gave up and tweaked the policy. That is typical Sister Pat. She pushes the envelope for the good of the patient when she sees a need."

Fred Ostmann was one of the patients who benefitted from that determination. Sister Pat brought Communion to him nearly every day during his stay. "The three of us shared Communion together," remembers Stephanie. "It was obvious that this was a significant and sacred action for Sister Pat



Strips of ribbon inscribed with thoughts by grieving friends and family are kept as mementos of each Hospice House patient.



In addition to her work with the patients, Sister Pat volunteers in the office, taking care of some of the paperwork that is an inevitable part of operations of Hospice House.



Sister Pat pauses before a wall of plaques inscribed with the name of every person ever treated at Hospice House. Remembering them gives her strength.

and it became a sharing of something very meaningful for us, too.”

An Opportunity to Give

Sister Pat’s ministry does not stop at the Hospice House doors. In addition to the work she does at the center, she is very committed to making sure that articles left behind or brought in by loved ones after a patient dies do not go to waste. Hospice House is not permitted to use them so Sister Pat takes countless items—everything from shampoo and slippers to bandages and walkers—to places that can. “It relieves family members of the worry of getting rid of things and I love knowing that the supplies are going to those who need them,” said Sister Pat.

Items are placed into a mission bin at Hospice House. At the end of each week, staff members help Sister Pat load her car and she delivers the goods around town. A local homeless shelter uses the toiletries

and the medical supplies are sent to Africa, Haiti, and Mexico.

Sherry remembers bringing a collection of supplies to Sister Pat’s house for her to donate. They were heavy so Sherry put them by the front door and warned Sister Pat not to try to take them inside herself. With a twinkle in her eye, “she immediately advised me never to tell her that she can’t do something,” said Sherry. “Sister Pat is not interested in anyone putting a limit on what she can do.”

Despite her unwavering determination, Sister Pat has had some physical challenges in the past few years. Walking can be difficult for her and she uses a cane to help her get around. The one she carries with her on a regular basis was a gift from Fred. “When I was visiting him one day, he noticed that my cane squeaked and that it didn’t have a comfort grip handle. He immediately asked his wife to bring me his old one,” said Sister Pat. “I still use that cane every day. It is my support.”

Inspirational Exchange

Sister Pat says her biggest inspiration is her patients—that their example and their gratitude give her strength. In turn, Sister Pat is the support for so many people who come through the doors of Hospice House. “Some people do their job because it is their job but that is not Sister Pat,” said Stephanie. “She really has a ministry. The love and caring she conveys—her steadiness—mean a great deal. I am very grateful to her and I know I am not alone. The number of lives she’s touched I’m sure is beyond counting.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

Who are the 'Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia'?

Through this section we hope to share a glimpse of our congregation and the individuals who make real its mission.

AFRICA

Recently the **African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC)**, of which our sisters are a part, received a \$48,300 grant from the GHR Foundation in Minnesota. The monies will be used to produce a book titled *Voices of Courage: Historical, Sociocultural, and Educational Journeys of Women Religious in East and Central Africa*. Authors from both the U.S. and Africa will contribute their research on Catholic sisters in Africa, focusing on the historical, sociocultural, political, and economic factors that have contributed to influencing women religious in east and central Africa. ASEC's goal in publishing the book is to "open a new avenue of research by investigating the works of the Catholic sisters, painting a portrait of their challenges, successes, and achievements as well as their efforts toward educational attainment and future plans for their congregations and the society they serve."

Ethete and at Blessed Sacrament Church in Fort Washakie. They also spent time helping the staff at St. Stephen's Mission and provided assistance to Mr. Joe Henry at the Head Start program in Fort Washakie. All in all, it was a time of learning and sharing for the students who both gave and received blessings through their days of service.



Sister Marie Cimino displays her Vivere Christus Medal which she received at a special vesper service and reception at St. John's Cathedral in Paterson, New Jersey.



WYOMING

Neumann University students traveled once again to Wyoming to work with **Sister Teresa Frawley** at the Wind River Reservation. Director of campus ministry Melissa Hickey and Patrick McKenzie, campus minister, accompanied the six students: Jillian DeFina, Stephen Moran, Julia Love, Melissa Dwyer, Amanda Saunders, and Angela Pesce. The group engaged in a variety of service activities—some of which utilized their skills in painting! The reservation covers an extremely large area and the students lent their help in various areas. They worked with Sister Teresa both at St. Joseph the Worker Church in

▼ *Neumann University students gathered at the Wind River Reservation for an opportunity to learn and to render service.*



NEW JERSEY

Sister Marie Cimino was recently nominated for the Vivere Christus Medal, a diocesan medal created by Paterson's Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli to honor the "many lay faithful who selflessly serve the Church of Paterson." Sister Marie ministers at Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish in Hewitt and was nominated for the award by the pastor, Father Michael Rodak. Father Rodak explained that Sister Marie had spent the greater part of her 63 years as a Franciscan sister serving the parish in Hewitt. That service included teaching in the parish school and the Childcare Academy, volunteering in the food pantry, serving as a Eucharistic minister, helping at the parish festival, and visiting the sick. In short what Father Rodak was describing in Sister Marie was a living example of what Bishop Serratelli meant when he said, "We honor the many lay faithful who have shared the life of Christ with others... The more we live as Christ, the greater effect we will have on society to change what needs to be changed."

CONNECTICUT

Sister Loretta Francis Mann was recently featured in an article in the Hartford, Connecticut newspaper, *The Courant*. The article described her work in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford where she cuddles premature and sick infants. Sister Loretta explained that, while the babies need long-term care, their parents often have other responsibilities that prevent them from being at the hospital full-time. During the time that she volunteers in the unit, Sister Loretta reads to the babies, sings to them, and rocks them to sleep—all after having prayed for them. The article also outlines her earlier ministry experiences and summarizes her rationale for her present work as a volunteer. Check out the article and the great photos in the *In The News* section of our website, www.osfphila.org.



PENNSYLVANIA

Sisters Ida Marie Nicklas and Clare Carty were recently inducted into the Hallahan High School Hall of Fame which recognizes the accomplishment of “alumnae and friends who have lived lives of service and faith.” Sister Ida Marie, a 1945 graduate, has ministered on both elementary and secondary levels. She has been a presence at Hallahan since 1978, especially as a teacher in the business department. Although she retired from teaching in 1999, Sister Ida still maintains an active presence at Hallahan—first in the Advancement Office and later as manager of the school store and with the school’s Community Service Corps. Sister

► **Sister Maggie Gannon presented Sister Cathy McGowan, SSJ, with a statue of St. Francis in recognition of her work and achievements at Drexel Neumann Academy.**

Clare Carty, a 1954 graduate, initially ministered in education. However, after completing a degree in hospital administration, she began ministering at St. Mary Hospital in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, first as administrator and then as CEO and president. Under Sister Clare’s leadership, St. Mary’s advanced from a hospital to a medical and trauma center. She also looked to the needs of low income families—particularly in the Mother Bachmann Maternity Center which, in addition to healthcare, provides social services and when needed, offers interim emergency housing for families.



OREGON

Between 25 and 30 Portland Companions in Faith enjoyed their 12th year of faith sharing and getting to know our sisters. The year included a variety of activities. During their monthly meetings, faith sharing was a major focus. They also studied the Third Order Rule that the sisters follow in order to get to know our sisters better. The sisters explained how living the Third Order Rule forms the fabric of their daily lives in community. The companions also enjoyed the new study guide on the Primacy of Christ—finding creative ways to approach the material as well as to share ways in which it has impacted their lives. Donations to Drexel Neumann Academy is another way in which the Portland companions give expression to their Gospel vision. They collect spare change monthly.



In May they sent **Sister Maggie Gannon**, the president of **Drexel Neumann Academy**, a check for \$300. On July 19, **Sisters Theresa Lamkin, Celeste Clavel, and Mary Jo Chaves** hosted a pot luck picnic at Santa Chiara Convent for 14 of the companions. After a brief respite in August for planning the coming year, the group resumed their gatherings on September 2—beginning their 13th year together. To learn more about the companion program, visit the Companions section of our website, www.osfphila.org.



PENNSYLVANIA

Congratulations to **Sister Maggie Gannon** and the faculty, staff, and students of **Drexel Neumann Academy** in Chester. The school recently received its Middle States Accreditation. At a special dinner celebrating the occasion, Sister Cathy McGowan, SSJ, principal of Drexel Neumann, received a bronze statue of St. Francis for her dedication and leadership of the school. The statue is a smaller version of the sculpture that graces the entrance hall at our motherhouse. A number of our sisters were present for the event, including Sisters Esther Anderson and Marijane Hresko. Drexel Neumann Academy, cosponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis, Neumann University, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and St. Katharine Drexel Parish, grew out of a joint effort of the Sisters of St. Francis and Neumann University when, in 2005, St. Katharine Drexel School, the last Catholic school in Chester, was slated for closing.



◀ **The 2014 Hallahan Hall of Fame Inductees (l-r) Hilda Carr, Sister Ida Marie Nicklas, Barbara Murray Rilling, and Sister Clare Carty—all school alumnae—are joined by a group of current Hallahan students.**

▼ Sister Clare and Pennsylvania governor Tom Corbett hold a proclamation celebrating the Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association's 50th anniversary.



Keeping the “Catholic” in Catholic

As Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association President Sister Clare Christi walks the halls of the Capitol building in Harrisburg, she greets legislators, secretaries, and guards by name, smiling and asking after their families. Dressed in a habit, Sister Clare's small stature and reserved demeanor belie the respect and influence she commands among the legislators in the Pennsylvania General Assembly. As a registered lobbyist, Sister Clare is committed to representing

the positions of the Church and Catholic health ministry in legislative and regulatory matters at the state level. She brings years of experience, a deep understanding of the issues, and a passionate commitment to ensuring that public policy does not restrict Catholic healthcare ministry from following the teachings of the Church. “Simply put, I advocate for and speak out in defense of the sanctity of life and justice in healthcare—in particular for the needs of children, the elderly, the poor, and the

underserved,” said Sister Clare. “I support Catholic healthcare in living out its unique mission and maintaining the Catholic identity.”

“I think of her role as working to keep Catholic healthcare facilities Catholic,” said Dr. Bob O'Hara, executive director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference which works closely with the PCHA. This means screening every bill introduced in the Pennsylvania General Assembly with an eye for any legislation that would compro-



Though small in stature, Sister Clare carries a lot of weight with Pennsylvania's top lawmakers. She also works closely with Richard Connell, Esq., legal counsel for the Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association, and Bob O'Hara, Pennsylvania Catholic Conference Executive Director (shown here).

Healthcare

mise Catholic healthcare facilities' ability to follow the moral and ethical teachings of the Church.

Personalized Professionalism

Sister Clare has worked in healthcare most of her life, starting at a local Catholic hospital in Hazelton, Pennsylvania, as a sophomore in high school. She was employed as a nurse when she entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and worked at hospitals in several different states before

being asked by her community to consider serving as president of PCHA.

"At the time I knew nothing about public policy or lobbying. I initially said I wasn't the right person for the job but my provincial wouldn't take no for an answer," said Sister Clare. "I actually borrowed a high school civics book to start learning about public policy."

A lot has changed since then. Taking the helm of PCHA in 1982, Sister Clare has

become a well-versed and well-respected presence on the Hill. "People listen to Sister Clare because she knows her subjects inside and out," said Julie Trocchio who, as senior director of community benefits and continuing care for the Catholic Health Association of the United States, has worked with Sister Clare for years. "She is consistently one of the most informed people in the room. She never has to speak loudly to be heard because
continued on page 14



▲ The halls of the Capitol building are often the setting of impromptu lobbying sessions. While talking with Sharon Ward, executive director of the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, Sister Clare and Fran Viglietta stop a passerby to hand him the PCC's stance on a bill being pushed through the House.



▲ Sister Clare and Bob O'Hara review strategy while waiting for a meeting with legislators.

◀ Legislators, demonstrators, tourists, and lobbyists mingle on the Capitol steps.



Folks on the Hill appreciate her more personal guidance as well. Sister Clare notes that legislators often approach her to discuss private matters, ask her advice, or request that she say a prayer for them or a member of their family. "She brings something different to the table," said Bob. "She is admired for her knowledge and her conviction but also for who she is and how she conducts herself."

“SIMPLY PUT, I ADVOCATE FOR AND SPEAK OUT IN DEFENSE OF THE SANCTITY OF LIFE AND JUSTICE IN HEALTHCARE.”

she comes prepared with information and credibility. And she knows how to ask questions to get to the heart of an issue.”

This knowledge comes from exhaustive research on every issue of interest to the PCHA. “You have to have a credible rationale when you go to a legislator to defend your position,” said Sister Clare.

Sister Clare’s viewpoint is so highly valued, in fact, that legislators often will seek her out if they have not heard PCHA’s position on a particular issue. “When it is time for legislators to endorse a piece of legislation or note opposition, Sister Clare’s correspondence gets a great deal of attention,” said Rich Connell, legal counsel for the PCHA. “They value her insight.”

Preserving Life and Dignity

During Sister Clare’s tenure, PCHA has been involved in numerous healthcare debates and legislative changes. Among those topics, Sister Clare considers legislation to address end-of-life-issues, conscience protections, the effort to retain tax exempt status for charitable institutions, and the channeling of tobacco settlement money to healthcare initiatives as some of the organization’s greatest successes. She also is proud of work on the state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Pennsylvania was a forerunner in the adoption of the program that provides healthcare insurance coverage and access to services for children and the



Representative Gene DiGirolamo greets Sister Clare with a hug. For many at the Capitol, Sister Clare is more than just a lobbyist. She is regularly approached by people who want to connect or even talk about a problem or special prayer intention.



Sister Clare's work also includes a blog which she gets help maintaining from communications department members Joelle Shea (left) and Amy Hill (right) who manage the site.

Pennsylvania program was used as a model for the federal system.

Access to health insurance is an issue that continually resurfaces—most recently in the form of the Affordable Care Act. “We are in favor of initiatives that would expand health insurance coverage and that can be financially sustained,” said Sister Clare. “We see access to healthcare as a basic right which flows from the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the person.” The vision for healthcare reform supported by the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania includes universal access to quality care with a special concern for those who are poor and vulnerable. It incorporates the values of responsible stewardship of resources and protection of the freedom to exercise ethical and religious beliefs.

Another issue in the forefront for Sister Clare these days is the Church’s position on organ donation. Although the Church is very much in support of organ donation as a form of self-giving love in line with a culture of life, it is also very clear on the necessity of informed consent legitimately given by the donor or a family member who can speak for the donor. According to Sister Clare, a bill currently in the Pennsylvania legislature would allow for presumed consent—the assumption that everyone is an organ donor unless the individual has made explicit instructions to the contrary. Sister Clare is lobbying to keep that kind of language from becoming law. “Presumed consent is not in accord with the Church’s teaching that organ donation is a gratuitous gift that relies on the giver’s informed consent,” said Sister Clare. “We need to make sure that the act of organ donation doesn’t go from giving to taking, especially in the case of people without an advocate.”

Tackling Issues Across the State

Although the more visible part of Sister Clare’s job occurs on Capitol Hill, another important aspect of her ministry takes place among the 60 members of the PCHA itself. Hospitals, long-term care facilities, related healthcare ministries, and individuals involved in Catholic healthcare in Pennsylvania belong to the association and look to Sister Clare for help keeping abreast of developments that could affect them. She works closely with the PCHA’s board of directors who represent the diverse healthcare needs and concerns across the state.

“In a way she answers to the board but they also depend on her for her thorough work and the information she provides,” said Rich. “If they are not aware of the importance of an issue at the beginning of a meeting, they are certainly well aware of it by the time Sister Clare is finished.”

A Voice Grounded in Faith

As essential as her knowledge and insight are to her ministry, it is clear that Sister Clare’s deep and abiding commitment to the values of the Catholic Church is part of what sets her apart. The way she interacts with others, her prayerful demeanor, and the determination she brings to the lobbying process all bear the mark of her grounding in faith. “Sister Clare lives her faith every day,” said Julie. “The general public thinks of lobbyists as hired guns but in Sister Clare’s case, there are some very strong principles behind what she does. She believes strongly in her responsibility to lobby for what she believes is right. Sister Clare makes sure that voice is heard.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Keep in prayer those who struggle to find access to quality, affordable healthcare.
- Support candidates who promote healthcare access for children, the elderly, and those who are poor and underserved.
- Stay informed about public policy issues affecting Catholic healthcare. Sign up to receive action alerts from the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference or a similar organization in your area.
- Send an email message to your state legislators on matters that are important to you. Public officials pay close attention to communication from their constituents.
- Write letters to the editor or submit op-ed pieces that highlight the importance of defending the sanctity of life and justice in healthcare. Media attention is critical to raising the influence of the Catholic perspective on public policy issues.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

—Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Welcome New Leadership

Our congregational chapter this summer was a time of prayer, communal discernment, and faith-filled sharing. Our goal was two-fold: to set directives for the next six years and to elect a new leadership team who would journey with us in living out those directives. Although the chapter itself lasted only six days, a great deal of preparatory work had taken place over the 18 months prior to the chapter as we worked in small groups to discern where it was God was leading us as a congregation. During these many meetings we arrived—not at a list of “how-tos” but at a single question that would be the focus of the chapter discussions. Chapter began with a beautiful opening prayer ritual during which Sacred Scripture was carried in procession into the chapter room. The meetings were facilitated by Sister Barbara Valuckas, SSND. Each morning began with approximately an hour of prayer and faithsharing. This sense of prayer and prayerfulness pervaded the chapter room throughout the week. Delegates worked with the “question” and through a process of communal discernment arrived at a direction statement which will guide us during the upcoming six years. Still using the communal discernment process, we devoted the final days of chapter to the election of our leadership team: Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty was elected congregational minister. Sisters Mary Katherine Farrell, Marie Colette Gerry, Ruth Bernadette O’Connor, and Patricia Smith were elected as council members.



Please join us in blessing and praying for our new leadership team: (l-r) Sisters Patricia Smith, Ruth Bernadette O’Connor, Mary Kathryn Dougherty (congregational minister), Mary Katherine Farrell, and Marie Colette Gerry.

Project H.O.M.E. Celebrates 25 Years

Philadelphia’s Project H.O.M.E. is celebrating its 25th anniversary—25 years of serving the needs of those who are poor, homeless, and underserved. Begun in 1989, today the organization, under the leadership of Sister Mary Scullion, RSM, staffs five centers in addition to its main office and provides housing, adult learning programs, workforce development, healthcare and recovery services, advocacy, street outreach, social enterprises, teen and youth programs, and veteran services. Our sisters have been connected with Project H.O.M.E. in various ways over the years. Currently Sisters Catherine O’Donnell and Miriam Eileen Murray provide monthly games—complete with much needed clothing and toiletries as prizes. Sister Catherine Ginther, a certified healing touch practitioner, volunteers her services at the St. Elizabeth Wellness Center. Coincidentally the center is located in one of our former convents in Philadelphia. Sister Catherine was also part of the choir that performed for Project H.O.M.E.’s 25th Anniversary Gala.

Jubilee Day Brings Joy to Many

Sunday, June 22, was a day of great celebration for the more than 300 sisters who gathered in Our Lady of Angels Chapel to honor the 28 jubilarians celebrating 75, 70, 50, and 25 years as Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia—1605 collective years of service. The jubilarians processed around the outside of the motherhouse, their joyous voices singing Rufino Zaragoza’s “Praise and Glory.” As they entered the chapel, the choir and congregants began the entrance hymn—Dan Shutte’s “Gather the People,” beginning the Eucharistic liturgy presided over by Fr. Cyprian Rosen, OFM, Cap.



Meet our 2014 jubilarians!



Holding a lighted candle, Sister Kathy Flood professed her first vows and later received a blessing from those gathered in chapel.

Sister Kathleen Flood Professes First Vows

On August 10 Sister Kathleen Mary Flood professed her first vows as a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia. The event took place during a Eucharistic liturgy at Our Lady of Angels Convent Chapel which was filled with the sisters and with family and friends. The opening hymn, “Everyday God,” seemed especially appropriate as the congregants reflected on God’s great love that brought Kathy to this moment in time. The Eucharistic liturgy was presided over by Father Cyprian Rosen, OFM, Cap., and Father Jay McKee of Good Shepherd Parish in Perryville, Maryland. Father McKee offered a beautiful homily. Sounds of joy and praise filled the chapel as Sister Esther Anderson welcomed Sister Kathleen into the congregation and gave her copies of the Third Order Regular Rule of St. Francis and our Constitutions as well as a beautiful San Damiano crucifix. Sister Kathleen says of making her first vows: “In the weeks leading up to my profession, the excitement and happiness expressed by each sister I encountered—physically or virtually—gave me a growing sense of joy, confidence, and peace. It felt like a balloon of goodness was gently expanding within my chest. So, in making my first profession of vows, I felt held aloft and buoyed by the prayers, love, and support of sisters, family, and friends near and far. Yes, I am still floating peacefully and I hope to stay aloft for many years!”

Turning 100: Reaching the Century Mark!

June 2014 was a special month for Sister Columbkil O’Connor—her 100th birthday celebration! Sister Columbkil shared the story of how her father sent her and her sisters to England to be educated by the Sisters of Charity. Her sister later entered that congregation and, although Sister Columbkil felt God was also calling her to religious life, she did not feel that call was to the Sisters of Charity. After seeing an ad about the Franciscan sisters, she made an appointment and knew that this was where God was inviting her. She recalled the long and difficult journey by boat from Ireland to America. Now professed for 76 years, Sister Columbkil described her past ministry in education and remembered fondly many of her former students. Today she speaks about her life in Assisi House where she is able to attend daily Mass and prayers and enjoys participating in the various activities. “I am very proud and privileged to be a Franciscan sister and to have lived the Franciscan lifestyle,” she said. “I am grateful for the graces and blessings I received in my ministry and community life.”



Sister Columbkil O’Connor celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends. She received a special citation from Delaware County.



In Memoriam

Sister Dorothy Epple
(formerly Sister Anne Jerome)
June 24, 2014

Sister Donna Fread
(formerly Sister Catherine Bernadette)
September 6, 2014

Sister Margaret Jones
(formerly Sister Jozeta Marie)
September 6, 2014

Sister Regina Mary Leonard
September 27, 2014

FoCUS

► Now that both Pat Langon (left) and Nancy Opalski (right) have retired from the New Jersey Department of Children and Families—Nancy as an administrative assistant and Pat as a licensed clinical social worker—they have enjoyed the opportunity to be of service and to travel.



“THEIR LOVE FOR OUR SISTERS, OUR FRANCISCAN CHARISM, AND FOR OUR CONGREGATION AND ITS MISSION SHOWS THEM TO BE TRUE COMPANIONS.”

—SISTER KATHLEEN GANIEL

▼ Both Nancy and Pat are frequent Assisi House visitors. They join with the Trenton companions to provide entertainment and companionship at the annual St. Nicholas Party held for the sisters.

COMPANIONS NANCY OPALSKI AND PAT LANGON

In 1992, following a retreat at Holy Angels Parish in Trenton, New Jersey, Nancy Opalski and Pat Langon made a simple offer to Sister Kathleen Ganiel—“Can we help with the next retreat?” As Sister Kathleen began mentoring them, Pat and Nancy were drawn to her gentle Franciscan spirit and were compelled to join the Companions in Mission—Christian women and men who share in and live out the spirit and mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia within their own vocation and lifestyle. They never dreamt they would continue the retreat ministry when Sister Kathleen moved to North Carolina. However, Sister Kathleen remembers that she was confident that “faithfulness to their own prayer, spirituality, and generosity would call others to follow them.”

Both women were taught by the Sisters of St. Francis—Nancy at Holy Angels and St. Anthony High School in Trenton, and Pat in St. Joseph School in Raritan, New Jersey.

Losing touch with the sisters after high school, they both rekindled this relationship in 1992 when the Holy Angels parish bulletin offered a women’s retreat opportunity. It was at this retreat that a friendship began which has deepened through the years. Nancy and Pat connected and through want and need became close friends and eventually roommates. Their unique friendship first enabled them to care for Pat’s parents and Nancy’s Mom—offering support to one another. They continue to bring that same love and compassion to others—whether it be to the sisters at Assisi House, gardening for less able neighbors, helping a needy family, belonging to community committees, or sharing hospitality. Assisi House resident, Sister Alberta Manzo’s proud words, “They are my good friends. I look forward to seeing them. They are a real example to me in their sincerity and true Franciscan spirit,” are echoed by many sisters.

Sister Maggie Greco, a member of their companions’ group also praised Pat and Nancy’s work. They are special and exceptional women,” she said. “They wholeheartedly embrace the Franciscan charism and traditions. They reach out to those in need. With Francis we say, ‘Be Praised, My Lord,’ for our sisters, Pat and Nancy.”

◀ Nancy and Pat prepare a retreat, Jesus: Gateway to the Promise, for the women in the Trenton area. This marked their 18th weekend retreat, most held at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, Pennsylvania.



Let's Hear From You!

- ____ Please add my name to the mailing list for *Good News*. (This is a secure list to which no other mail will be sent unless you request to receive information.)
- ____ I am receiving duplicate copies of *Good News*. Enclosed is the address label that contains the mailing address to be removed from your mailing list. (Mail card and address label in envelope.)
- ____ Please remove my name from the mailing list; I no longer wish to receive *Good News*.
- ____ Please add my email to your e-list so I can receive my copy electronically. In addition, please remove my address from your hard copy list.
- ____ Please send a copy of *Good News* to the following individual:

Name _____ E-Mail Address _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Select areas of interest to receive information about the congregation.

- ☐ Companion Program ☐ Franciscan Spiritual Centers (select one): ☐ Aston, PA ☐ Milwaukie, OR
- ☐ Community Supported Agriculture: Red Hill Farm, Aston PA ☐ Sisters of St. Francis Foundation ☐ Vocations



Join Our E-News Mailing List!

Visit www.osfphila.org to sign-up. It only takes a minute to enter your email address to receive prayerful, entertaining, and informative e-news from the Sisters of St. Francis twice per month.



Join us!



Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



SrsofStFrancis

Link directly to our pages from our website homepage: www.osfphila.org

SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION

Help to *Preserve our Heritage* and *Secure our Future*.

A will is a written legal document that controls the distribution of your property after your death. A will is your only guarantee that your estate will be distributed according to your wishes.

By including the Sisters of St. Francis in your will, you will help to ensure the care of the sisters in their retirement years and the continuation of their ministries.

I would like to be contacted about giving through my will.

NAME _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____ E-MAIL _____



Please tear out this page and mail completed to:

GOOD NEWS, Communications Office, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014-1207

Visit us online at www.osfphila.org or call us at (610) 558-7726

The Sisters of St. Francis
of Philadelphia
609 S. Convent Road
Aston, PA 19014-1207
Change Service Requested



See our website at www.osfphila.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ROYERSFORD, PA
PERMIT NO. 539

Raising Money for Africa

Sister Frances Cassidy did it again—another successful flea market held last spring in the motherhouse parking lot! As usual the \$5,000 in proceeds went to help students in Lawson High School in Nyumbani



Sister Frances Cassidy greets the students at Lawson High School in Kenya, which she helped establish.

Village, Kenya—the school that Sister Frances and Sister Rose Monica Katusz helped to start. The funds provided financial assistance for several students who were unable to complete payment on the previous year's tuition. As a result 10 seniors and 11 other students were able to remain in school and were able to take their national exams in October.



Franciscan Federation Nominee

A number of our sisters attended the Franciscan Federation Annual Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, among them Sister Marie Angela Presenza who was our nominee for the annual federation award.

Sister Marie Angela was selected because of the many ways she lives out the conference theme, “Cultivating Kindom Power.” She has spent her life in community and her years in ministry honing her natural skills for hospitality and compassion.



Sister Marie Angela Presenza's ever-present sense of hospitality and welcome make her a natural nominee for the Franciscan Federation Award.

Whether exercising leadership in Catholic education, planning programs, contracting with presenters of various faiths and expertise, hosting retreats and other groups, inviting volunteer participation, connecting with a wide variety of departments to assure the smooth running of programs at our Franciscan Spiritual Center, Sister Marie Angela embodies the relationship that we Franciscans hold as a core value. Her contemplative spirit enables her to live and minister with humility, grace, and enthusiasm, tirelessly and quietly welcoming all wherever she happens to be.

◀ *The Sisters of St. Francis have a long history of caring for those who are ill and those in the end stages of their lives. The sisters began many hospitals, including St. Joseph Hospital in Tacoma, Washington. Here we see a sister at St. Joseph's Hospital in the 1950s caring for one of the patients—offering compassion and support when it is most needed. Sister Patricia Walsh offers that same compassion and support today at the Franciscan Hospice House near Tacoma, an extension of the quality care still offered at St. Joseph Medical Center. Read more about caring for those in the end stages of life on page 4.*