

Volume 18.1 Spring 2015

Good NEWS

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

On a Journey of Faith

Sister Mary Jo Chaves walks with the seekers of God

Also in this issue:

- Practicing Everyday Environmentalism at White Hall Farm
- 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

Discover the *Glory, Truth, and Beauty* of God

*S*t. Bonaventure, Franciscan medieval theologian, says, Each creature and the whole of creation is, in its truest reality, an expressive sign of the glory, truth, and beauty of God. *Living in a technological world where information showers us instantaneously, it is difficult to readily comprehend this verity of Bonaventure. Yet it is a belief we Franciscans hold dear and strive to live daily.*

In this issue of Good News, we meet Sister Mary Jo Chaves who ministers as a spiritual director at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Milwaukie, Oregon. Through her work, Mary Jo enables people caught in the hectic pace of life to see what Bonaventure states so clearly. She listens deeply to people's experiences. She creates opportunities for people to enter into quiet, peace, and reflection so they may sense the mystery and depth of their lives and rediscover the source of life who is the God of love. Through the spiritual exchanges led by Mary Jo, people reawaken to the sacredness of life. Their lives are wrapped in Mystery and the Mystery is gracious. What a gift!

In another venue—a small organic farm in White Hall, Maryland—Sisters Libby Pepe and Monica Bauer have chosen to live a simple, contemplative lifestyle of responsible stewardship for our Earth. Through the activities of mowing, tilling the soil, planting seeds, and harvesting, they, too, have discovered the glory, truth, and beauty of God. In attending to the natural rhythm of the Earth's cycle, they have seen the interconnectedness of all of life. The Earth, tended, produces the food that nourishes us. The unused portions of food are then composted or given to the worms whose processes create a fertilizer. That fertilizer is then added to the garden which enriches the soil for the next planting. Practicing sustainable living and being encircled by the beauty of creation, the sisters experience the fecundity of God. Monica and Libby share this space with others who seek a time apart to be refreshed and recreated.

As you read these articles, may you come to treasure the glory, truth, and beauty of God which enfolds you each moment of each day.



**Sister Mary Kathryn
Dougherty, OSF
Congregational Minister**

Blessings,

Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF



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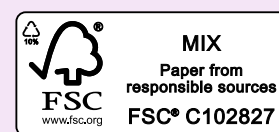
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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the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

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On the cover: Sister Mary Jo Chaves shares a moment with spiritual directee Shirley Tormey. "There radiates from Sister Mary Jo a genuine compassion and kindness," said Shirley. "When you are with her, you know that you are truly, honestly, and unconditionally loved by someone."



Retreat participants come together for an opening prayer led by Sister Mary Jo Chaves. The group is beginning a four-day silent retreat grounded in the scriptural story of Mary and Martha.

“BEING PRESENT TO ANOTHER IS ABOUT HOLDING
VERY STILL AND BEING A MIRROR THAT FAITHFULLY
REFLECTS HOW ANOTHER IS AWARE OF THE DIVINE.”

On a Journey of Faith

*Sister Mary Jo Chaves walks
with the seekers of God*



Sister Mary Jo Chaves approaches each day as an opportunity to see more clearly how God is working in her own life and the lives of those around her. Warm and soft-spoken, she brings a sense of peace with her through the halls of the Franciscan Spiritual Center where she ministers. As she stops to talk with folks in the hallway, she greets each one with a welcoming smile. Her attention is fully trained on the person with whom she is speaking. Whether they are sharing pictures of their grandchildren, reviewing the agenda for an upcoming meeting, or listening to the concerns of a coworker, that person has her full concentration.

One of Sister Mary Jo's primary roles at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Milwaukie, Oregon—a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia—is that of spiritual director. She maintains between 30-35 directees who come from a variety of

faith traditions, ages, and walks of life. Some initially come during a difficult time in their lives or because they feel their prayer lives have become stagnant, some come because a sense of restlessness has them searching for something more, but all come because they have a strong desire to build a renewed relationship with God.

Meeting each person individually, Sister Mary Jo helps foster his or her relationship with God. As participants talk about their faith journeys, she listens closely and asks questions to help them see more clearly where God is working in their lives. “The biggest challenge is hearing and listening at a deeper level, making sure that I am empty of anything that would distract me,” said Sister Mary Jo. “I have a saying in my office: ‘Being present to another is about holding very still and being a mirror that faithfully reflects how another is aware of the divine.’”

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▲ Sister Mary Jo meets with Shirley Tormey. At the core of Sister Mary Jo's gift for spiritual direction is an ability to listen intently to people, allowing them to be the leaders on their own spiritual journeys. "The directee determines where we go," said Sister Mary Jo. "I simply walk with them and help point out the fingerprint of God in their lives."

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AND GROWTH IN MY
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Sharing in the Journey

Shirley Tormey considers herself very fortunate to be among those who receive spiritual direction from Sister Mary Jo. "She has a very keen ability to be fully present to a person, honoring the Spirit at work without imposing something from outside," said Shirley. "She is able to sense what is most needed at the moment."

Shirley came to Sister Mary Jo with a solid background in theological and spiritual literature. Although she enjoyed that more intellectual aspect of spirituality, she also felt a desire to expand her methods of relating with God.

"One day Mary Jo said, 'I think we need to get you out of your head,'" remembered Shirley. She encouraged her to try abstract

doodling, something Shirley says has become a powerful spiritual practice for her. In addition, she had gained a better understanding of contemplative prayer which involves moving beyond conversation with God to communion with God in a prayer of the heart rather than the mind. "At first it was very hard to pray without words but Mary Jo helped me break through that barrier," said Shirley. "She helped me discover a spiritual realm beyond words."

Another exercise was to make a point of "doing something beautiful" each month. The task could be something as uncomplicated as collecting interesting autumn leaves and enjoying their simple splendor. "Doing that kind of thing trained my eye to see the world more wonderfully and to be more aware of the Spirit working in my life," said Shirley.



Rituals, symbols, and objects are very important to Sister Mary Jo's work. She often employs the use of symbols to center herself and encourages others to do the same as they clear their minds and ready themselves to be fully present for their spiritual journey.



Sister Mary Jo Chaves leads a monthly meeting with her Companion group. Members range in age from 25-75 and come from a diversity of faith traditions. Five Sisters of St. Francis from the area participate regularly in the companions' monthly gathering.



According to Shirley, the 10 years since she began working with Sister Mary Jo have been revolutionary from a spiritual perspective. "I have experienced an incredible acceleration and growth in my understanding of my relationship with God in ways I never would have expected," said Shirley. "I have moved beyond narrow thinking to a more expanded spirituality."

Leading the Leaders

Sister Mary Jo's first ministry was teaching high school math and religion. When she retired from that in 1994, she decided to follow the prompting of her heart to study for a Master's Degree in Applied Theology. Two years later she returned to Oregon and began ministering at the Franciscan Renewal Center on Palatine Hill. When the congregation closed the renewal center in 2000, she and several other sisters remained committed to finding another home to minister to the spiritual needs of the people in the area.

Recognizing Sister Mary Jo's gift for walking with others on their spiritual

journeys, Franciscan Spiritual Center executive director Mary Erickson approached her a few years ago with the idea of starting a two-year Franciscan Spiritual Director Training Program for people wishing to become spiritual directors themselves. Today Sister Mary Jo leads that program which approaches the practice of spiritual direction from the perspective of Franciscan spirituality—sometimes described as a spirituality of abundance or extravagant love—the fullness of God's extravagant love for each of us.

"I knew that Sister Mary Jo had to be the one to lead this program," said Mary. "She connects with people just by being who she is, a woman filled with gratitude who wakes up every morning with one motivation in life—to live out the Gospel."

Students of the program agree. "Sister Mary Jo is a master teacher," said Mari Miller who went through the program. "She has the ability to bring individuals to a place of spiritual depth and keep them engaged there. I think that is because she is

teaching what she experiences. Her life is a life of prayer and deep spiritual reflection. There is an authenticity there."

Classes meet two days each month and rely heavily on experiential learning. "The class is designed so that the students are not just learning tips and techniques but actually going through a transformation," said Mari. "Mary Jo creates a sacred space so her students can actually experience how powerful spiritual direction can be."

Students spend the first year being introduced to the Franciscan charism, continuing their own theological formation and spiritual growth, and developing listening and discernment skills. During the second year, focus shifts toward practicum experience with Sister Mary Jo providing support and supervision.

Faith-Filled Experiences

A woman with a seemingly unending wellspring of energy, Sister Mary Jo also heads up a variety of other faith-sharing

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Sister Mary Jo Chaves stops to enjoy the scenery at the Alton L. Collins Retreat Center, the location of the Franciscan Hermitage Experience.



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experiences through the center. She coordinates the Companions in Faith program in the Portland area, leading the group that meets monthly to share faith, pray together, learn about Franciscan spiritu-

Connie attended her first hermitage experience in May 2003 and has been on every hermitage experience that Sister Mary Jo has offered since—either as a participant or a leader. “They have had an incredibly profound impact on me, showing me a spirituality that is real and practical—something I can live out in my everyday life,” said Connie. “They allow me to look at life through a different lens, to operate out of abundance rather than scarcity, to approach things with my palms open rather than my fists held tight.”

Walking in the Footsteps

For those able to travel further, Sister Mary Jo leads a pilgrimage to Assisi and Rome every other year. The pilgrimage follows in the footsteps of Francis and Clare and provides an experience very different from that of a typical tour. “It is about more than just seeing the sights. It is an experience of how God worked in these places and in Francis’ and Clare’s lives,” said Shirley who went on the pilgrimage with her husband. “There was a prayerfulness and time for reflection.”

Sister Mary Jo has led the pilgrimage four times but says the experience continues to energize and inspire her. “When I am at Our Lady of Angels Church (the Portiuncula)—touching the very stones that Francis used to rebuild the church—there is a very special presence there,” she said. “I always find when I go to Assisi that my soul is already waiting for me when I get there. I always feel that I am coming home.”

Despite the deep spiritual nature of the trip, Sister Mary Jo makes sure to bring a sense of joy and levity to the experience as well. “She is able to lead the group to very deep places but she can also make us laugh,” said Shirley. “She told us we shouldn’t be worried if we didn’t have a grand spiritual moment. That really took the pressure off. She kept assuring us that the fullness of the pilgrimage experience may not be realized right away.”

Finding God Together

Whether it is in a spiritual direction session in Oregon or at a sacred site in Assisi, Sister



Retreat participants ritualize St. Clare of Assisi’s understanding of Holy Poverty by showering one another with rose petals symbolic of the “riches” of Holy Poverty.



Another retreat activity involves a large piece of tulle used to symbolize St. Clare’s invitation to clothe oneself with the virtues of poverty, humility, and charity.

ality, and support one another and the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. The group has been meeting since 2002 and counts approximately 30 people among its members. In addition, she has assisted with directed retreats at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston, Pennsylvania.

She also directs a four-day silent hermitage retreat that provides an opportunity for participants of all faith traditions to explore and experience deeply the spirituality of St. Clare and St. Francis. The experience is based on the *Rule for Hermitages* written by St. Francis. The rule is centered on the story of Mary and Martha, the pair of sisters from the Gospel who represent prayer and action. “We ‘Martha’ a group of ‘Marys,’” said Connie Isgro who coordinates the hermitage experience alongside Sister Mary Jo and others who serve as ‘Marthas’—including Michelle Kroll who is the administrative assistant at the Franciscan Spiritual Center. “We take care of all their needs so they really can just be.”



▲ Sometimes growing means stepping outside of your comfort zone and Sister Mary Jo designs many activities to encourage people to do just that. Her kindness, along with her ability to mix deep spirituality and a sense of lighthearted fun make it easier for people to open themselves to new experiences.

Mary Jo's message is always the same. "God comes to us disguised as our life," she says. Whether that realization comes in the form of an autumn leaf, the smile of a stranger, or a stone that St. Francis used to rebuild the churches around Assisi, we can rejoice in the knowledge and the confidence that God's love is there for each of us if we open ourselves to it. For those lucky enough, Sister Mary Jo is there—walking hand in hand, helping them to keep their eyes, their ears, and their hearts open enough to let in the message. ■

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for all those struggling to see more clearly the role of God in their lives.
- Practice listening deeply to those around you. Clearing your mind of the distractions of your own concerns takes effort, but the ability to give another person the opportunity to be truly heard is a gift worth cultivating.
- Set aside a designated time to focus on your own spiritual life.
- Be mindful of the simple beauty all around you. The colors of an autumn leaf, the smell of freshly cut grass, the sound of a bird's song, or the touch of a child's hand can be powerful reminders of the wonder of God's creation if we make the effort to truly notice them.
- Use the attached envelope to make a donation to the Franciscan Spiritual Center. Your contribution goes directly to the programs you designate for funding and helps continue the mission of the center—to provide environments, experiences, and resources which enable people to meet God in both stillness and activity.

PEOPLE & PLACES

► Former students shared their memories of Sister Dorothy Epple in York Catholic High School's alumni newsletter.



PENNSYLVANIA

A recent issue of *Greensleeves*, York Catholic High School's alumni newsletter, carried a photo of our deceased **Sister Dorothy Epple** on the cover. The photo, dating back many years, portrays her clad in full habit playing baseball. Principal Katie Seufert explained that the cover photo was used because past uses always "evoked the most positive reactions from members of the alumni." Sister Dorothy was remembered at the alumni Homecoming Mass in October and the Sister Dorothy Fund is being established in memory of her many contributions to York Catholic High.



NEW JERSEY

A recent newsletter from St. Francis Medical Center in Trenton published an update on the pastoral care department. Among the department members noted were **Sisters Denis and Maureen Maguire**. Sister Maureen, coordinator of the Spiritual Care Department, is one of two board-certified chaplains on the medical center's staff. She completed her CPE education for 2000 hours at Mercy Fitzgerald and Miseracordia Hospital and recently became recertified through the U.S. Conference of Bishops. Sister Denis is also part of the team, bringing to it 40 years

of nursing home experience as a certified nurse's aide. She recently completed a six-month certification program through the Diocese of Trenton.



NEW YORK

Recently the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) selected **Sister Nora Nash** as the recipient of its 2014 Legacy Award. The award recognizes individuals "whose work has provided a strong moral foundation and an enduring record of demonstrated influence on corporate policies." Seamus Finn, ICCR's board chair, described Sister Nora as being "tenacious, tireless, and, some would say, ubiquitous in advancing her congregation's commitment to integrate their Franciscan identity and vision into the management and deployment of their assets." She received the award at a special event held at the Copacabana in New York City.



As director of our Corporate Social Responsibility Office, Sister Nora Nash has been actively involved in the work of ICCR.



DELAWARE

Sister Margaret Cunniffe was one of 83 individuals in the Diocese of Wilmington who recently received the Medal of Merit. Each of these individuals were nominated by their pastors in recognition of their service and dedication to their respective parishes. In a recent parish bulletin from the Church of the Holy Child, the pastor, Father Michael Carrier, summarized the reasons why she was selected for the award. "Sister Margaret is no stranger in our

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.



Sr. Rose Monica Katusz accepts the Franciscan Heritage Award.

diocese or parish,” he said. “She is known to many for her years of service throughout our diocese as teacher, liturgist, director of religious education, and most recently as the bishop’s delegate for religious.”



POLAND

Last summer **Sister Cathy Swartz** fulfilled a long-term goal—teaching English as a second language. What she never dreamed, however, was that the teaching experience would take her to Pińczów, a small town in south central Poland. Sister Cathy and her coworker Patricia Sheetz traveled as part of the Kosciuszko Foundation’s TEIP program. The program included two weeks devoted to teaching preteen and teenage students. Evenings were devoted to cultural exchange activities, enriching both students and teachers. During the final week of the program, the Polish hosts provided a tour of Poland for the American staff.

▼ *Sister Cathy Swartz (far right) gathered with the American staff, the Polish hosts, and a group of Polish dancers outside the school formerly attended by Pope John Paul II.*



MARYLAND

During the Catholic High School of Baltimore’s Heritage Week celebration, **Sister Rose Monica Katusz** became the first recipient of the Franciscan Heritage Award. The award recognizes a graduate for “joyfully serving the poor, leading initiatives for social justice, empowering others to reverence creation, and giving witness to the Franciscan spirit in the world.” In presenting the award, Sister Joyce Helfrich, director of mission at TCHS, outlined Sister Rose’s academic achievements as well as her ministry background, citing particularly her efforts in working with individuals living in extreme poverty. She described Sister Rose’s assistance in the founding of the St. Claire Secondary School in Kenya, her work among the indigenous people of Alaska, and, most recently, her ministry of teaching in Kenya. And, as Sister Joyce indicated in her closing remarks, Sister Rose continues to “let her light shine through her deep humility and witness to Franciscan joy today.”



Sister Frances Cassidy received this year’s Alumni Association John Neumann Award.



PENNSYLVANIA

Neumann University’s homecoming weekend usually includes the winning of awards by alumni and other deserving individuals. **Sister Frances Cassidy** received this year’s Alumni Association John Neumann Award. This recognition is presented to “outstanding alumni who, through their own professional development, service to Neumann University, and community service, exemplify the values of the university.”



(L-R) Sisters Nora Nash, Kathleen McCabe, Bernadette Brazil, Kathy Dougherty, and Betty Kane were among those gathered in Manhattan for the People’s Climate March. (Not pictured: Tom McCaney, Sisters Barbara Carr, Maggie Greco, Marie Lucey, Maria Orlandini)



NEW YORK

A number of our sisters, joined by Tom McCaney, our associate director of corporate social responsibility, and members of Franciscan Action Network, were among the 400,000 people gathered in Manhattan for the People’s Climate March. As part of the faith contingent, the sisters prayed, sang, and eventually merged with other contingents as they walked through the streets of Manhattan. In an article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Sister Kathy Dougherty, our congregational minister, referred to climate change as a life issue. “I certainly feel it’s critical—the way corporate decisions are made that affect the environment,” she said. “If we can’t sustain the planet, human life is not going to be sustained.”



Sister Libby and Sister Monica try to live as simply and sustainably as they can, starting their day in prayer in their home's chapel, using rainwater they have collected to grow their own food, getting help from friends and neighbors when necessary, and ensuring that nothing goes to waste by using food scraps to make compost.

Practicing Everyday

“OUR EFFORT IS NOT JUST ABOUT SUSTAINING OURSELVES. IT’S ALSO ABOUT CALLING OTHERS TO EMBRACE SUSTAINABLE AND WHOLESOME LIVING.”

By early September, the cornstalks are so high that it feels like you are walking through trees as you navigate the fields surrounding the home where Sisters Libby Pepe and Monica Bauer live in White Hall, Maryland. It is farm territory out here—isolated enough that the noise of a car on the gravel road is reason for comment. Here the two women live out the Franciscan commitment to responsible stewardship of the Earth. They try to be as self-sustaining as possible—growing their

own food, using clean energy, reusing and recycling materials, and embracing the cycle of the natural world.

Though in many ways the model for this way of living goes back to St. Francis himself, in a practical sense, the inspiration for the lifestyle at White Hall dates back to 2005—when both Sister Libby and Sister Kathy Dougherty went on sabbatical. Both sisters spent a portion of the year at both White Violet Center for Eco-Justice in Indiana, a ministry of the Sisters of

Providence, and at Our Lady of the Rock Benedictine Monastery on the San Juan Islands of Washington State. During Sister Libby’s time in Indiana, she experienced sustainable living and deepened her sense of spirituality in the natural world. She helped care for a herd of alpaca, worked with fleece, practiced organic gardening, and took time for contemplation. Sister Kathy, during her program in the San Juan Islands, devoted her life to living with the monastic community, working the land, caring for the



Environmentalism at White Hall Farm

farm animals, and sharing the sisters' days centered on liturgical prayer.

"We both came back feeling that God was calling us to a simpler, sustainable, intentional way of life," said Sister Libby. A search for a suitable property to rent turned up the house in White Hall adjacent to the landlord's farm and boasting of fruit trees, beehives, and organic gardens.

Although Sister Kathy's ministry has since necessitated a move to Aston, Pennsylvania, Sisters Libby and Monica

continue the original efforts begun in 2011. Whenever possible, Sister Kathy returns to White Hall saying it is still a source of renewal for her. "Being in the midst of the beauty of creation is calming to the soul," said Kathy. "It draws out the spiritual dimensions of my life."

Sowing Sustainability

For all its beauty and simplicity, sustainable living is also hard work. Sisters Libby and Monica grow much of what they eat,

utilizing organic gardening methods. They have an extensive garden that produces a variety of crops throughout the growing season. In the spring they enjoy cabbage, broccoli, kale, asparagus, and strawberries. As summer continues, blueberries, zucchini, peppers, tomatoes, and herbs come into season. By fall they are harvesting beets and potatoes. During the growing season, the sisters eat what is fresh from the garden. They also freeze, can, and store the crops

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▲ *Locally made ice cream topped with fresh raspberries is the perfect farm-to-table dessert. Whenever possible, the sisters eat from their own garden or from other local sources.*

◀ *Although an energy efficient geothermal system provides the majority of the heat for the house at White Hall Farm, a wood burning stove helps keep the kitchen and living room extra cozy on especially cold winter nights.*



they do not eat for use during the winter. What they do not produce themselves—things like firewood, cheese, and meat—they try to buy locally.

“We are out in the garden every single day,” said Sister Monica, “weeding, watering, and cultivating.” The work is rewarding but sometimes tedious. Sister Monica picks Japanese beetles off the crops by hand twice each day. Pests to the gardener, the critters are delicacies to the chickens that live on the farm next door. Sister Monica brings the insects to the neighboring brood who

await them like children anticipating the ice cream truck.

With the busiest time of year occurring during peak growing season, Sister Libby is grateful that her work at a school lunch program—one that provides healthy, nutritious lunches for students in private schools—allows her to have the summers off. Still crop cultivation is nearly a year-round project and work starts well before the ground thaws each spring. The sisters plan their garden in the winter months and start seeds indoors under a grow lamp. After the harvest they mulch and prepare the soil for the next year’s plantings. This year they hope to extend the growing season by using a cold frame that will allow them to grow greens all winter long. “It is very rewarding to tend the Earth and learn how it nourishes us and provides for us,” said Sister Libby.

Sister Libby says she and Sister Kathy had a lot to learn when they first started farming at White Hall. Luckily they received pointers from the farmers at Red Hill Farm, the congregation’s CSA in Aston, as well as the

folks in their own backyard. “The learning curve was extreme but we were very fortunate to have our landlady, Barbara Gruber, here to help us. She was so good at teaching us what we needed to know,” said Sister Libby. “She educated us about things like companion planting—placing plants near one another so they can help each other grow, keep pests away, and attract beneficial insects that assist in pollination.”

The sisters also work closely with other neighbors, including Jo Asher, who raises sheep and makes her own yarn. Sister Monica partners with Jo on several projects, one of which is using the wool to make felt Christmas decorations for the annual holiday sale that Sister Monica helps organize at the Glen.

Conserving Resources

Although farming is a big part of life for Sisters Libby and Monica, living ecologically is about more than just growing their own food. Employing a mindset focused on minimizing waste and using resources in an environmentally responsible manner are also important components of their commitment to sustainable living. The sisters eliminate food waste by utilizing a worm composting system to turn their scraps into nourishing fertilizer for the gardens. They use autumn leaves to make mulch. They get manure from the horses next door and have an outside compost bin that utilizes garden clippings. They also water all their crops with rainwater collected from an aqueduct that runs from the roof of the house into a 3,000 gallon barrel.

The house where the sisters live uses a geothermal heating and cooling system that takes advantage of the fact that subterranean temperatures remain relatively constant throughout the year. Unlike ordinary heating and cooling systems, the geothermal HVAC system does not burn fossil fuel to generate heat but rather transfers heat to and from the Earth. Electric power is used only to operate the unit’s fan, compressor, and pump—significantly lowering the environmental impact of the system. In addition to the geothermal system, there is also a wood burning stove in the house. The stove is used on extra cold winter evenings and the sisters use the

ashes generated from it to replenish the Earth after harvesting.

Coming Full Circle

Sisters Libby, Monica, and Kathy all view White Hall Farm as an oasis—a place where they can get in touch with the Divine through the natural world and live out the congregation's commitment to care of the Earth. Eager to share their experience with others, they offer hospitality to those wanting to get a taste of their way of life. "If you're looking to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life, White Hall Farm is the place to go," commented visitor Sister Helen Jacobson. "Since I'm a hermit at heart, the remote location of the house and the unobstructed views of the land through the windows make it a place where one wants to stay awhile to soak in the peace and solitude." Sister Libby adds, "Our effort is not just about sustaining ourselves. It's also about calling others to embrace sus-

▼ *Neighbor and friend, Jo Asher, keeps chickens, horses, and sheep on her property. Sisters Monica and Libby often help care for the animals when Jo is away. In addition, Jo has been teaching Sister Monica how to clean, card, and spin wool to make clothes and other items.*



tainable and wholesome living. The number of people who have come through here has been marvelous. The farm has been a real blessing for so many people."

For those who might not be able to jump into sustainable living with both feet, Sister Libby suggests starting small—perhaps by recycling and setting up a small container garden. "I invite people to begin with one little pot," said Sister Libby. "Read up on one vegetable or fruit. You don't need a whole lot of land to start a garden."

Those who take that suggestion may just find themselves connecting ever more deeply with the very Franciscan worldview of reverence for all of creation. "Living this way has made our Franciscan theology of care of creation even more palpable for me," said Sister Libby. "It is very different to have your hands in the Earth and feel that you are cocreating with God. It is not just experiencing creation as brother or sister but a real ingesting of creation—taking it in on a whole different level. I see that as coming full circle—back to the early sisters of the congregation who had farms, orchards, and animals—back even further to Francis himself." ■

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

▼ *Sisters Libby and Monica pray together before a lunch of locally sourced ingredients. The iced tea is flavored with berries from the garden, the grilled cheese sandwiches are made from cheese from a neighbor's farm, and the salad is a mixture of cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, and herbs from their own backyard.*



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for a greater appreciation of the Earth as a gift from God.
- Grow your own food. Those who haven't gardened before may find the prospect daunting but even a few containers on a small, sun-drenched porch can produce a satisfying crop.
- Buy locally grown produce and other items whenever possible. A little research often reveals sources of fruits and vegetables, herbs, cheese, honey, and meat very close to home.
- Freeze or can fresh items when they are in season and enjoy them during the less abundant winter months.
- Drive less. Whether that means walking or biking when possible, or batching your errands into fewer trips, reducing the miles in your car reduces your carbon footprint.
- Look for other small ways to do your part for the environment. Hang your clothes out to dry. Recycle your glass, paper, and aluminum. Use reusable containers instead of disposable ones. Turn off the faucet while brushing your teeth.



SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Neumann Students Step-up for Justice

For Neumann University students, the phrase “education in the Franciscan tradition” takes on a very literal interpretation, especially in regard to justice issues. In November six Neumann students joined 1,300 social justice advocates at the Ignatian Family Teach-in for Justice where they attended workshops, presentations, and discussions; rallied on Capitol Hill; and met collectively with more than 125 congressional offices. They addressed current issues such as comprehensive immigration reform, human rights policies in Central America, climate change, and issues affecting the economically poor.

On a November night when temperatures hit a record low, a group of Neumann students participated in a sleep-out to draw attention to the issue of homelessness and to experience for one night what people who are homeless experience on a daily basis. When the evening began, the students met with a group of sisters from the motherhouse and other local convents. They shared a beautiful prayer service which culminated in the sisters singing the “Blessing of St. Francis” as they prayed over the students. When the students returned to the Mirenda Center lawn, they received cardboard boxes in which they would spend the night.



The November night was bitter cold but Colleen Waters, a senior Nursing student at Neumann, is ready to settle in for the night.

2014 Companions Retreat Day

The 2014 Companion Retreat Day was held at the motherhouse in mid-September. Companions and sisters came from as near as the surrounding convents and as far as Oregon and Washington. Sister Mary Jo Chaves



After a period of personal reflection, Sister Connie Davis and Companion Phyllis Petryk got together for faith sharing.

developed the theme, “Sharing Faith, Fun, and Ministry,” with presentations on the role that each of these elements plays in who we are both as Christians and as women and men attempting to live out the gospel message in our lives. During the day participants had time for both personal prayer and reflection and for small group sharing on a variety of topics. The “fun” part of the day allowed time for gathering in small groups for games or for conversation. To learn more about our Companions in Mission program, visit <http://www.osfphila.org/companions/about>.



On Wednesday, October 1, 2014, a Mass was held for the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia who founded St. Joseph Hospital/Medical Center in 1864.

St. Joseph Hospital Commemorates 150 Years

One of our earliest healthcare ministries was St. Joseph Hospital in Baltimore. The facility opened in three row houses on Caroline Street in 1864. Eight years later a new hospital replaced those houses. In 1965 the hospital moved to its new facility in Towson and in 2012 joined with the University of Maryland to become University of Maryland St. Joseph Medical Center. Although the Sisters of St. Francis no longer sponsor the facility, the Franciscan spirit is still pervasive. In 2014 St. Joseph’s commemorated its 150th anniversary with a year-long series of celebrations.

Hall of Fame Honorees

Recently a number of our sisters in the Philadelphia area have been inducted into the halls of fame associated with either their own educational institutions or with their ministries. Sister Cass Feuerstein was inducted into Little Flower High School Hall of Fame. Earlier she had also been inducted into the hall of fame at her elementary school—St. Helena's School in Philadelphia. St. Helena's criteria is summed up in a single statement: "in recognition for their lifetime achievements." Little Flower High School states that nominees are considered for "excellence in Catholic witness, leadership, community service, volunteerism, social work, public service, medicine." Sister Cass' years of service—still ongoing—in healthcare, social services, and with our elder sisters definitely make her a fitting recipient! Sister Linda Sario was also honored recently by her high school alma mater—St. Hubert Catholic High School. Inductees were selected on the basis of six different categories. Sister Linda was selected as an inductee under the category of Catholic witness in recognition of "her continued commitment to and passion for incorporating her faith into her personal and professional work." During the awards presentation at Neumann University's homecoming weekend, Sister Marie Therese Carr was inducted into the Sports Hall of Fame along with members of the 2007 volleyball team. Sister Marie Therese served for many years as chaplain of the volleyball team and was recently named "chaplain emeritus."

Published—Archivum Franciscanum Historicum

As part of her work as congregational archivist, Sister Helen Jacobson is often contacted to provide and/or verify information regarding our history and missions. Recently she received a request to preview an article on the history of our congregation and the hospitals that we founded or staffed from 1860-1910. The article was slated for publication in the *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, a publication highly valued in Franciscan circles. Sister Helen spent several intense weeks and untold hours researching, editing, rewriting, and, in some instances, adding informative details to produce an accurate and balanced account. As a result of her expertise and diligent efforts, the article, "The Hospitals of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, 1860-1910," was published in the January-June 2014 issue with Sister Helen designated as the coauthor along with Christopher Kauffman.

Recognize a name?
Would you like to reconnect
or send a congratulatory note?
Send communications to
Florence Smith
609 S. Convent Road
Aston, PA 19014
communications@osfphila.org

CELEBRATING

Jubilee

AS SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF
PHILADELPHIA

Congratulations to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia celebrating milestones in their religious life! Join with us in congratulating them on many years of service to the people of God as Sisters of St. Francis.

75 years
Professed 1940

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER KATHRYN MILLER

70 years
Professed 1945

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANN ROSAIRE BRADLEY
SISTER MARY FRANCIS MADAIO
SISTER ANTHONY CELINE O'LEARY
SISTER ANTHONY EILEEN REIDY
SISTER ELIZABETH FRANCES SCULLY

50 years
Professed 1965

GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

SISTER ESTHER ANDERSON
SISTER JANICE MIRIAM BAHL
SISTER DEANNA BARTOLOMEI
SISTER MARY ELIZABETH COLEMAN
SISTER JUDE CONNELLY
SISTER CELESTE CRINE
SISTER TERESA FRAWLEY
SISTER MARY PATRICIA JOHNSON
SISTER DOMINICA LOBIANCO
SISTER KATHLEEN MCCABE
SISTER DANIEL MARIE MCCARTHY
SISTER BRIDGET McNAMARA
SISTER JO ANN MCPOLIN
SISTER ALBERT MARY MCSWIGGIN
SISTER KATHLEEN MARIE MOFFATT
SISTER JULIA MULVIHILL
SISTER RUTH BERNADETTE O'CONNOR
SISTER MERCEDES ROJO
SISTER CLARE CHRISTI SCHIEFER
SISTER AUGUSTINE SERRANO
SISTER JEAN WICKENHEISER



In Memoriam

Sister Rose Immaculate Waller
October 21, 2014

Sister Agnes Schilling
(formerly Sister Ildephonse)
October 22, 2014

Sister Miriam Grace Devlin
October 26, 2014

Sister Adele Siwak
November 6, 2014

Sister Inez Cecilia Kockler
November 11, 2014

Sister Joan Schmal
(formerly Sister Joselle)
December 22, 2014

► Jeff and Geneen feel that it is important to think about others as much as about yourself and to experience the reality that each person is different and unique. This is the reality to which they try to expose their children.



FoCUS

JEFF AND GENEEN PINTOF

▼ In his work with the golf committee, Jeff (second from left) helps secure donors, plan the day's events, and attract additional golfers—all for the purpose of raising awareness of the sisters' work.



"GENEEN AND JEFF WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO APPRECIATE WHAT THEY HAVE AND TO EXPERIENCE BEING WITH THOSE WHO ARE NOT SO FORTUNATE—TO KNOW THEM AS PERSONS WITH GIFTS AND TALENTS."

—SISTER MIRIAM EILEEN MURRAY

Many organizations outsource work. It's rare, however, that these individuals become involved in efforts to further the organization's mission. Geneen and Jeff Pintof are a rare exception. Jeff's relationship with the Sisters of St. Francis began in 1998 through the company hired to print our *Good News* publication. A few years later Geneen was hired to design the magazine, a role that quickly grew to include additional design projects. As their family grew, however, Geneen limited her work to *Good News*.

These connections were only the beginning. Through *Good News*, Jeff learned about the congregation's work. A golfer himself, he began participating in the congregation's annual golf tournament. Golfing soon evolved into service.

"I wanted to get more involved," Jeff explained. "I joined the golf committee

11 years ago and have served on it ever since—either as chairperson or on the sponsorship group." Over those 11 years, the tournament grew from a \$25,000 fundraiser to one that generates over \$100,000 yearly.

Geneen's work brought her to the motherhouse frequently where she came to know the sisters. Learning about the need for volunteers to host monthly bingos at Philadelphia's Project H.O.M.E., Geneen jumped at the chance. For the past 10+ years, this service has become a monthly event for Geneen—and in recent years—for the three younger Pintof children.

Sister Kate O'Donnell sees Geneen—and by extension—the Pintof family—giving true witness to our Franciscan charism of relationship to all. "She is able to reach each one of the folks at bingo with special loving care," Sister Kate explained. "If anyone has a special need, she is the first one to help them. She has a lovely way with people and supports her children in reaching out and interacting." Sister Miriam Eileen Murray agreed. "It is a joy to watch them relate to our sisters and brothers—serving food and drinks, helping those who might need it, and spending time chatting with folks," she said. "Geneen and Jeff want their children to be present and interact with their sisters and brothers who are in need because that's what Christians and Franciscans do."



◀ Nate (8), Ben (10), and Ella (6) help to serve snacks at the Project H.O.M.E. bingo. They also sometimes donate their candy, toys, and clothes to those who have less than they do. (not pictured: Samantha, 21)

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- ____ 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:

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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



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Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



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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.

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____ E-MAIL _____



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Red Hill Farm is 15 years old!

Sixty members attended the anniversary celebration at the farm. Chef Alex Garfinkle created a lovely five-course dinner with fresh, home-grown vegetables. Guests were treated to a wine-tasting before dinner and a local musician added her sounds to the beautiful evening. Attendees viewed the film, *Fridays at the Farm*, and had the opportunity to visit with some of the original farm members. Proceeds from the evening will be used to purchase an additional hoop house.

► *Caring for creation is all part of being Franciscan—dating back to St. Francis himself—and our sisters are no strangers to hard work out in the farms and fields. Seen here, Sisters Nora McCarthy and Marie Joseph Kerr work a large vegetable garden that they started from seedlings while missioned in Zambezi, Zambia, in the late 70s. The sisters also gathered and ate fish from a near-by river, making delicious meals for themselves and others. Starting way back from our very beginning, we had sisters farming land and growing their own food. Therefore, it was not a strange request when Sisters Libby Pepe, Kathryn Dougherty, and Monica Bauer decided they wished to live a more sustainable, Earth-friendly lifestyle. Read about how they are making this life-choice a reality on page 12.*



Sisters of St. Francis Open Their Doors to Public Tours

A sparkling gold cross atop an orange/red dome has attracted many people from near and far to Our Lady of Angels Convent (OLA), the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia (609 South Convent Rd, Aston, PA 19014-1207). We know that there are many more people who drive past the convent every day and wonder who and what exist behind those giant doors in the big castle-like structure. Here is your chance to find out. The Sisters of St. Francis invite you to tour the OLA facility and chapel. Beginning with the New Year 2015, on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 1 P.M., we will host a short historical presentation and a tour of the first floor buildings and chapel followed by light refreshments and time for questions and answers. Your hosts will be Sister Kathleen Parisi, OSF, and several other sisters who live at the motherhouse. In order to prepare for our guests, we ask that you call the receptionist at (610) 459-4125 to provide your name, phone number in case we have to cancel, and the number of family or friends who will attend. If this is not a good day for you, call Sister Kathleen at (610) 558-7714 to select a date and time for a group tour for at least six people. Tours may be scheduled Monday through Friday.