

Volume 20.3 Winter 2017

# Good NEWS

A Publication of

THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

## Franciscan Volunteers

*Committing a Year to Service*

Also in this issue:

- The School of Applied Theology:  
A Holistic Approach to Rest,  
Contemplation, and Prayer
- 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

**T**here is a longing in our hearts, a yearning for a deep connection and relationship with God and others and a desire for peace within ourselves. St Augustine expressed it well in his autobiography when he said: “God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.” (Confessions, I) This longing is powerful. At times it draws us inward, seeking places of solitude and silence. Other times, it propels us outward, pursuing unfamiliar places and fresh experiences that broaden our worldview. We all hunger for something MORE.



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

In this issue of Good News, we read about Sister Celeste Crine who serves at the School of Applied Theology in Oakland, California. There she meets and ministers with those seekers who are longing for renewal. She leads them in prayer, meditation, journaling, and retreat experiences. Sister Celeste's own peaceful spirit and prayerful presence is a model for the participants. Through the weeks of contemplation, classes, and rest, many undergo a deepening of their spirituality and a renewal of their souls. Their restless hearts find solace and fulfillment in the God who has called them to Sabbath.

Similarly there are many young people searching for a meaningful way of life. They want more than surface relationships, wealth, and power. They long for connection—deep and profound relationships that support them in becoming their best selves. They wish to make a positive impact on those whom they serve and on society. We have been blessed to meet these types of men and women in our Franciscan Volunteers: No Risk, No Gain program. You will read about the program and their experiences of community living and service. The volunteers participate in various spiritual and educational activities on the Franciscan charism. They explore Gospel values through a Franciscan lens in an unfamiliar place. Their restless hearts find peace through prayer, community, and service. As their lives have been enriched and their worldviews broadened, so have ours. We have all grown through these mutual, loving relationships.

May these articles stir your restless heart and may we all continue to grow in our union with the One who beckons us.

Blessings,

*Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF*





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*Sister Celeste Crine spends her days at the School of Applied Theology guiding prayer and retreat experiences, planning liturgies, facilitating reflections, teaching classes on Tai Chi and journaling, and providing a welcoming atmosphere to all who come. Many who come are seeking attentive rest, theological renewal, and spiritual transformation.*

Written by Deb Litman

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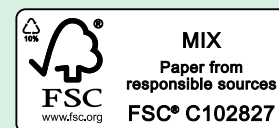
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Geneen Pintof

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.

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*On the cover:* Franciscan Volunteer Theresa Kennedy and Sister Monica Bauer have grown close during their time working together at Red Hill Farm—the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Farm sponsored and run by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Fostering such close relationships between sisters and Franciscan-minded young people is one of the primary goals of the Franciscan Volunteer program begun in 2015.

“THIS YEAR HAS BEEN SO REWARDING  
AND SUCH A FRUITFUL TIME. IT HAS  
EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS.”

# Franciscan Volunteers

## *Committing a Year to Service*

*Aquinas Center executive director, Bethany Welch, talks with volunteer Rachel Dunlap. Serving immigrant populations from around the world, the Aquinas Center welcomes more than 550 people through its doors each week, serving as a home base for activities ranging from community organizing to ESL classes. “It is a place of hospitality and inclusiveness, a safe place for people to be,” said Rachel.*



*Rachel Dunlap and Martina Hyacinth tend the community garden at the Aquinas Center. The garden helps supply fresh produce to needy South Philadelphia residents.*

After busy days at their respective ministry sites, Rachel Dunlap, Theresa Kennedy, and Mandee DeMarco head home for the evening. The twenty-somethings talk about the day’s events as they prepare dinner and then sit down to eat together in the house that they share. After cleaning up, the three women gather for evening reflection.

Rachel, Theresa, and Mandee are part of the Franciscan Volunteers: No Risk, No Gain program, which invites lay women and men to commit to a year of service, sharing in the charism and mission of the

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. The volunteers live simply in community with a focus on social justice, spirituality, and the Franciscan tradition. Begun in the fall of 2015, the volunteer program grew out of a long standing dream of many of the sisters and reached fulfillment after the 2014 Congregational Chapter. There the sisters challenged themselves to expand options for membership and other forms of association with the congregation. Now in its second year, the program has hosted a total of seven volunteers—four the first year and three the second. Although it is open to men and women of all ages and faiths, it generally attracts young adults

looking for a holistic service and faith formation experience. In the program volunteers dedicate 32 hours each week at a ministry site and combine this with community building, reflection, prayer, and Franciscan formation.

“We see it as a program that can help us further our mission,” said charism coordinator Sister Florence Hee, OSF. “It has been a while since we’ve had 20-year-olds journeying with us. This is one way we can reach young people and they in turn can reach their family members and friends. It has a ripple effect.”







*Rachel Dunlap and operations coordinator, Martina Hyacinth, work on a mural for the exterior of the Aquinas Center. Established in 2013 as a haven offering support and understanding for the immigrant communities of South Philadelphia, Aquinas Center serves as a sanctuary for people from a variety of cultural communities, including Indonesian, Vietnamese, Latin American, African American, Filipino, and Anglo-European.*

## Communal Living

Participants in the Franciscan Volunteer Program live in an intentional community with one another—providing mutual support, sharing experiences, and learning to negotiate the nitty gritty details of community living. They eat together at least three nights a week, taking turns doing the cooking. They also pray together daily and during special once-a-week spirituality experiences. They also play together at weekly community night activities where they gather to play games, watch movies, or take part in group activities. “For Franciscans,

living in community is vital,” said Sister Florence. “Being in relationship, supporting one another, processing together—it is integral to how we live.”

The volunteer program and particularly its director, Sara Marks, provides a great deal of support for volunteers. Sara presents a program on community living during orientation, encouraging volunteers to communicate openly with one another. She also maintains regular contact with participants throughout the year, serving as both guide and facilitator when needed. “All the volunteers have spoken highly of the gifts

*Program director Sara Marks speaks with volunteer Mandee DeMarco. “Sara has been fantastic throughout this entire experience,” said Mandee. “She is an excellent program leader and she has become a good friend.”*



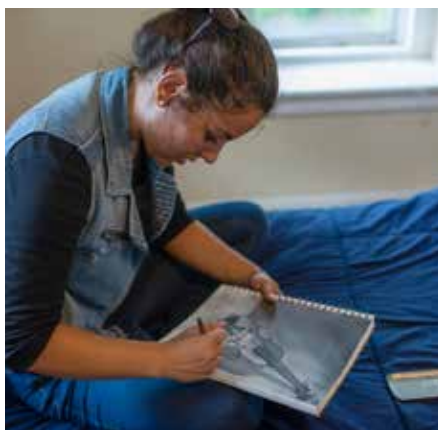
that come from living in community,” said Sara. “Learning how to speak up about their needs and give and receive constructive criticism—all while feeling empowered in a loving and supportive community—is a tremendously positive experience for them.”

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▲ (Left to right) Sister Kate O'Donnell, volunteer Mande DeMarco, Sister Jeanne Nisley, and Sister Florence Hee meet to discuss the congregation's statement of solidarity regarding the Paris Climate Agreement. Mande says she felt at home with the Sisters of St. Francis from the moment she met them. "I visited for the first time in February of 2016," said Mande. "Sara and the sisters were so welcoming that I felt comfortable right away."



The volunteer program is designed so that volunteers spend four days a week at their ministry sites, allowing ample time for prayer, reflection, and enrichment. Here Mande (above) works on a sketch in her room and (right) reads scripture and takes time to pray.



## "LIVING AMONG THE SISTERS, THE VOLUNTEERS CAN'T HELP BUT BE INFUSED WITH THE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT."

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The shared accountability that exists in an intentional community includes working together on community objectives. At the start of their experience together, Rachel, Theresa, and Mande composed a list of weekly goals they wished to accomplish during their time together. They wrote each goal on a slip of paper and placed it in a mason jar. Each Sunday evening, they would pull one goal from the jar and commit to it for the week. Goals have included tasks like reaching out to a new house of sisters they don't know well, taking part in a community service project together, and refraining from eating meat for a week.

The sense of community that the volunteers enjoy extends beyond the three of them to include their director Sara and the many Sisters of St. Francis with whom they have the pleasure of interacting. The sisters and volunteers get to know one another through ministry work, shared experiences, and celebrations. Volunteers eat some of their meals at the motherhouse, visit sisters in their homes, spend time with retired sisters at Assisi House, and join sisters for walks, birthday celebrations, and other activities. "I feel like I belong here," said Mande. "It is amazing to have formed such great relationships with these holy women



▲ The 2016-2017 volunteers created a "goal jar" at the beginning of their year of service, filling it with aspirations of what they hoped to accomplish during their time together. Each Sunday, the volunteers picked one "goal" from the jar and committed to it for the week. Goals ranged from the spiritual to the more practical and helped give volunteers the structure necessary to maintain focus on carrying out their objectives throughout the year.



who love and care about us and are willing to share their knowledge. It's like having 80 grandmothers!"

Rachel agrees. "The sisters are very inspiring," she said. "They are so welcoming, so hospitable, and they serve so selflessly."

In turn, the sisters find themselves as motivated by the volunteers as the volunteers are by them. "My experience with them has been very enriching," said leadership team member Sister Colette Gerry. "They are so full of joy and energy. They bring a lot of life and energy wherever they go."

## Ministry

In addition to community living, ministry is a very important part of the volunteer program. Participants live out Franciscan ideas and ideals through their work at individual ministry sites, each of which has a connection with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. "Mentors at each site show the volunteers how faith can be lived out in the work they do," said Sara.

*Keep up to date  
on what our Volunteers  
are doing by following  
them on Twitter!  
@NoRisk\_NoGain*

Mandee ministers at the Family Counseling Center of St. Paul's Parish in Wilmington, Delaware, a bilingual center that provides mental health services and culturally responsive counseling to the Hispanic community of the city. She feels that her experience has helped to expand her view of service. "A lot of what I have done has been administrative work or just welcoming people and making them feel comfortable through light conversation," said Mandee. "That was a

challenge for me at first because I had imagined myself doing something very hands-on at someplace like a soup kitchen. Working at this ministry has taught me that service comes in many forms."

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*Sister Ann David Strohming, Sara Marks, Rachel Dunlap, Sister Pat Smith, Mandee DeMarco, and Theresa Kennedy pray before a shared meal at the volunteer house. The sisters have enjoyed getting to know the volunteers and feel strongly that they are a tremendous asset to the community. "They are a breath of fresh air," said Sister Ann. "It is so exciting to see young people so dedicated, who want to be of service, to pray together, and to live the Gospel."*





# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for the men and women who commit themselves to a year of service with the Franciscan Volunteer program in an effort to gain a greater understanding of how they are called to live the Gospel message in today's world.
- Use the enclosed envelope to make a donation to help support our Franciscan Volunteers: No Risk, No Gain. This program would not be possible without the help of our generous donors.
- Find an organization in your community where you can be of service. Then commit to a certain number of volunteer hours each month.
- Make your own "goal jar" and commit to putting one goal into action each week.
- Challenge yourself to take risks to improve yourself or your community. Mother Francis Bachmann's words, "He who does not attempt something gains nothing," is a powerful reminder of the good that can come from pushing ourselves beyond our comfort zones.

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Rachel works with immigrant and refugee families at Aquinas Center in South Philadelphia where she acts as a welcoming presence, teaches English to adults, and works with high school and college students who come to the center to volunteer. "We try to deal with things on a systemic level," said Rachel. "We want to help those who come seeking assistance to become leaders for South Philly. We want to give volunteers an experience that will make them feel called to do more service."

Theresa has had the pleasure of ministering among the wonderful staff and plants at Red Hill Farm. She works there four days a week in the fall and spring and one or two days a week during the winter. "Working on the farm has given me a greater sense of oneness with creation," she said. "I feel that I have an impact on nature and it on me." During the winter months when there is less to do at the farm, Theresa spends two or three days a week at Assisi House interacting with the sisters in physical therapy.

## Spirituality And Franciscan Tradition

During their year in the volunteer program, participants are given time and resources that allow them to grow in their spirituality and faith. Although carving out time for prayer is a must, each volunteer group is given the freedom to determine how they will live out that commitment. This year's group decided to devote themselves to praying together each Monday through Thursday morning before going to their

ministry sites. The volunteers take turns planning prayer experiences which range from contemplative meditation to more traditional forms of prayer like the rosary or the Liturgy of the Hours. "Being able to pray each day with the people with whom we live allows us to frame our days in terms of God," said Theresa. "We also get Fridays off from our ministry sites to read, reflect, and enhance our spirituality."

Additionally, being exposed to one another's approaches to prayer has expanded each woman's ideas of spirituality. "It has been cool bringing together our prayer styles," said Mandee. "I tend to lean toward doing meditation and reflection. Theresa encourages us to do journaling and reading the hours. Rachel would often focus on the Gospel of the Day. I feel so fortunate to have had the two of them lovingly pushing me toward new ways to pray."

The volunteers also have the opportunity to take part in spiritual direction, an experience that helps them be in tune with what God is asking of them both during their year of service and beyond. "I never participated in spiritual direction before and I was a bit terrified not knowing what to expect," said Rachel. "But I feel like my spiritual director and I are made for each other. When I have struggles, I am able to



*The 2017-2018 Franciscan Volunteers—Bianca Martinez, Laura Anderson, and Rachel Dunlap (who is returning for a second year of service)—work on their community goals and the action steps that they will commit to during their year of service.*



*During their farewell Mass and celebratory dinner in August, the 2016-2017 volunteers take time out for a photo outside the motherhouse with program director Sara Marks. (Left to right) Mandee DeMarco, Rachel Dunlap, Sara Marks, Theresa Kennedy.*



*The first year's volunteers (left to right) Mikah Ochieng, Sabina Marroquin, Kathleen Lamontagne, and Neil Savoy enjoy a day exploring the sites of Philadelphia.*





*Volunteer Theresa Kennedy works alongside Sr. Monica Bauer harvesting bok choy for Red Hill Farm's CSA shares. Theresa spends long, busy days at the farm planting, harvesting, and working with customers.*



talk them out. I can be challenged to listen to what God is calling me to. It has helped me get more out of the year.”

In addition to their personal and community prayer experiences, volunteers benefit from a program of Franciscan spiritual education presented by Sara and various sisters. Topics include the history of the congregation, the Franciscan charism, care of creation, the life of St. Francis, and incarnational spirituality. Of course, simply being among the sisters provides the best lesson in Franciscan charism that the volunteers could hope to learn. “Living among the sisters, the volunteers can’t help but be infused with the Franciscan spirit,” said Sara.

“I have found that the Franciscan tradition really resonates with me,” said Theresa. “I have found my Franciscan heart.”

### No Risk, No Gain

For the volunteers and the sisters alike, taking the jump into the Franciscan Volunteer Program has been a leap of faith that has been worth the risk. “This year has been so rewarding and such a fruitful time,” said Mande. “It has exceeded my expectations.”

“I’m very grateful that we decided to do this,” said Sister Florence. “It has been really uplifting and enriching to see young people interested in learning about our charism

and looking to put Gospel values into practice. These young people are interpreting our charism in today’s society. It shows that the youth among us today can still be enlivened by the Franciscan way of being.”

As each group of Franciscan volunteers leaves the program, they take with them a deep and abiding understanding of how to live out Franciscan values regardless of what paths they take in their lives—thus growing the Franciscan family for generations to come. “No risk, no gain”—a quote from our foundress, Mother Francis Bachmann—stands as a reminder of our roots, calls us to the margins, and urges us to move forward with grace-filled hope for the future. ■

For more or to apply for the Franciscan Volunteer: *No Risk, No Gain* program, please visit [www.osfphila.org/franciscanvolunteers/](http://www.osfphila.org/franciscanvolunteers/).





Photo: Sister Rochelle Liu (second from left) and Sister Florence Petsch (far right) stood with the Dominican sisters and their associates once a month with signs calling attention to the evils of trafficking.

## 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.

### WASHINGTON

The sisters at **St. Ann Convent** in Tacoma have been working on a number of justice issues. One group of sisters, for example, has been working on raising awareness of human trafficking. In one of their early attempts, they stood on a street corner with homemade signs warning people driving by about human trafficking in their neighborhoods. The sisters also joined with others in similar endeavors. Several of our sisters joined with the Dominican sisters and their associates in raising awareness of this form of modern slavery. Others shared the issue with parishioners at St. Leo Parish in Tacoma, inviting them to join the effort.



### NEW JERSEY

Seven of our sisters from Assisi House attended the Spring Gala at **St. Francis Medical Center** in Trenton. Sisters Maureen Maguire, Denis Maguire, Ann Joseph Hartman, Albert Mary McSwiggin, Marian William Fitzgerald, Georgina Marmino, and Doretta Egan were the last of our sisters to minister at the medical center. One of gala's highlights is the Spirit of St. Francis Award acknowledging individuals who "represent the philosophy of caring as embodied by St. Francis." This

year's recipient was the spiritual ministry team. Looking back at the evening's events, Sister Maureen said she felt that both the celebration and Spirit of St. Francis Award—while honoring the current team—also honored all of the sisters who had served at St. Francis Medical Center.



### PENNSYLVANIA

August 21 was a grand day. It seemed the whole country was waiting to experience the first total or near total eclipse in many, many years. The sisters and staff at **Our Lady of Angels Convent** in Aston were no exception. We gathered on the occasion of the solar eclipse to praise our Creator for the abundant blessings on each of us, our country, and the world as we prayed, using "Light" from Illia Delio, OSF. Sister Florence Hee started off our gathering with the reading of the introduction to our corporate stand on Care for Creation. She was followed by Sister Corinne Wright whose reflection centered on the destruction that has been done to the Earth and on how we as human beings should respond to Earth's needs. Sara Marks passed out the required eclipse viewing glasses as well as some Milky Way bars and Starburst candies. We even had eclipse cookies courtesy of staff member Russell Moore and his wife, Bonnie.



Sisters Katheen Moffatt and Florence Hee along with members of the OLA staff enjoy the wonders of God's creation by taking a glimpse at the solar eclipse, and even had eclipse cookies, courtesy of a staff member.





*Sister Jean Rupertus (fourth from the right) received an award on behalf of Anna's Place.*

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Sister Jean Rupertus** and Anna's Place in Chester were among the organizations recognized for their work with victims of crime. The award was presented by Mayor Thaddeus Kirkland and the Chester City Council. When she accepted the award, Sister Jean said, "Anna's Place staff, volunteers, and neighbors wish to thank all of the Sisters of St. Francis who unanimously voted to open a ministry to our neighbors in 2009 and continue in a variety of ways to support our efforts to develop trusting relationships."



## OREGON

In August 1995 **Sister Mary Coakley** completed chaplaincy training at Providence Portland Medical Center and began working at the center a few months later. During her 22 years there, she worked with patients, families, doctors, nurses, and other employees. She was involved both in baby blessings and in end-of-life issues. And in each situation, her work was carried out with compassion and caring. During those years Sister Mary was officially recognized for her work—as recipient of the Mission Medal and as "Employee of the Month." In June Sister Mary retired. Her years of service were recognized by two separate celebrations—the first a luncheon held by the medical staff on the floor where most of her ministry took place and the second a luncheon held by the spiritual care department.

## IRELAND

**Sister Carmel Earls** is connected to two parishes in Dublin—St. Peter the Apostle and Immaculate Heart of Mary. Last year the parishes decided to follow Pope Francis' idea of taking the Church where the people are. The result was amazing! On Holy Saturday they used an empty unit at the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre. They set up a prayer space and had six priests available to hear confessions—and the lines were filled all afternoon! A Kiddie Corner provided coloring activities for the children and people stopped by the information table to ask questions, pick up a free prayer book, or say "Thank You" for the opportunity to pray, relax, or go to confession.

## OREGON

From its beginnings in 1887, St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton has seen a number of transformations. At one time a chapel with six beautiful stained glass windows was part of the hospital. Still later a new convent was built and the chapel was lowered to the ground as a free-standing entity. When construction of the new hospital was begun, engineers determined that the chapel would not withstand another move. Various parishes in the Baker Diocese received articles from the chapel and the windows were, for a time, placed in storage. Recently, however, they were professionally restored and given to St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Bend, Oregon, where they grace the narthex of the new church.



*Stained glass windows: (l-r) Sts. Margaret of Cortona, Anthony, Clare of Assisi, Francis of Assisi, Anne with Child Mary, Catherine of Alexandria.*





*Sister Celeste Crine directs a prayer ritual for participants completing a course entitled "Intercultural Church and the Arts." The ritual incorporated a variety of objects people brought to represent their cultures.*

## “THE EXPERIENCE HAS HELPED ME TO KNOW MYSELF BETTER; TO LOOK AT HOW I SEE THE WORLD; AND TO BE BETTER ABLE TO SEE THE HAND OF GOD IN MYSELF, MY MINISTRY, AND MY LIFE.”

In the quiet hours of the early evening, a group gathers in the garden among the roses at the School of Applied Theology (SAT) in Oakland, California. Led by Sister Celeste Crine, OSF, participants are there to practice the ancient art of Tai Chi. After beginning with ten minutes of contemplative focusing to prepare for greater presence and attentiveness, the group starts a series of slow, gentle movements that flow one into another without pause. Often described



*Sister Celeste Crine*

as meditation in motion, the ancient practice helps relax and strengthen the body, calm and focus the mind, and connect practitioners more deeply with themselves and with God. “The form of Tai Chi that I teach can be used as a meditation, a way of centering,” said Sister Celeste who has been ministering at SAT since June of 2011. “It is a way to help keep ourselves balanced in a busy world.”

Begun in 1960 as the Institute of Lay Theology and affiliated with the Graduate Theological Union, SAT offers Sabbath experiences to laity, priests, deacons, and men and women religious for a day, a week, a month, or a semester. As associate director and coordinator of spirituality, Sister Celeste is responsible for creating and guiding prayer and retreat experiences, planning liturgies, facilitating reflections, teaching classes on Tai Chi and journaling, and providing a welcoming atmosphere to all who come to SAT seeking attentive rest, theological renewal, and spiritual transformation.

**Why Sabbatical?**

The idea of sabbatical goes back at least as far as biblical times when rest was considered so important that God commanded it. Unfortunately in today’s society, Sabbath sometimes seems to get pushed to the back burner or beyond—squeezed out by the



*Integrating contemplation and movement, the ancient art of Tai Chi is a perfect fit within the SAT sabbatical program. Many guests at the school embrace the practice as a way to center themselves daily.*

# The School of Applied Theology

*A Holistic Approach to Rest, Contemplation, and Prayer*



*The School of Applied Theology, based in Oakland, California, offers daily, weekly, or yearly sabbatical experiences aimed at facilitating attentive rest. (Right) Program director Carrie Rehak shares a moment with a grateful attendee.*

demands of work, family, ministry, and the ever-expanding to-do list. In his recent encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that contemplative rest is integral to living meaningful lives—allowing us to encounter the world with openness, depth, creativity, generosity, and compassion.

The idea at SAT is to provide a holistic experience that integrates rest, contempla-

tion, prayer, and study so the depleted can be replenished and go back out to serve the church and the world. “It is counter-cultural to value rest so it is life-changing to be part of a community that is valuing it together,” said SAT director Carrie Rehak.

People at the SAT can customize their sabbatical experiences according to their unique needs. Many people arrive run

down and are seeking rest before they can move on. Some come for renewal—looking to refocus on spirituality or to rekindle their passion for ministry. Others are in transition and are contemplating what comes next. “It is a time to recognize what within you needs to lay fallow for a while so that new life can bud forth,” said Sister Celeste. She remembers one sister who came to SAT physically and emotionally exhausted. “She was a doer who had been working very hard,” she said. “By the end of the first semester, the sister said she was just beginning to feel more like herself. By the end of the second, she actually radiated a difference in her person.”

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► Attendees break out into groups for discussion. Sharing thoughts and ideas with others allows participants to broaden their perspectives and to see things from different points of view.

▼ During his course, “Intercultural Church and the Arts,” Father Eduardo Fernandez, SJ, explains the meaning behind this tapestry. A professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry at Santa Clara University’s Jesuit School of Theology, Father Eduardo was one of the summer presenters at SAT.



Others come to SAT for sabbatical need—ing rest for their psyches. For these folks, a calming of the mind makes it possible to shift away from intellectual grasping and to listen more closely to what resonates in their hearts. Open to being more contemplative, they allow God to do what God wants to do within them. “Many people find that when they stop generating, they are able to see how God generates,” said Carrie. “There is a real reorientation of what is their deepest resource.”



Sabbatical participants Robert Kaeding, Brother Cleophus Kyomuhendo, and David Martin lead attendees in prayer.

That was true for Brother Cleophus Kyomuhendo, CSC, who came to the School of Applied Theology from Uganda looking for renewal and a deepening of his spirituality. “The experience has helped me to know myself better; to look at how I see the world; and to be better able to see

the hand of God in myself, my ministry, and my life,” said Brother Cleophus. “It has given me the knowledge that I have something to offer with grace.”

Many people come to sabbatical during a time of change—from one ministry to another, from work to retirement, or from one stage of life to another. “We help them identify the transition that is happening,” said Sister Celeste. “For example, they may be moving into a period of their lives when they will be doing less. In that case we look at what they are losing and gaining and how they can view changes in new ways. What causes fear? What are their support systems? How can they change their attitudes?”

Marie Sabin came to SAT for her first of two semester-long sabbaticals after having lost her husband a few years earlier. She was seeking more time and space to reflect on her life and to look for a direction forward. “The program was a wonderfully rich experience,” she said. “It has helped to give me a vision and to ponder how I might translate that vision into action.”

## Learning, Praying, Sharing, Growing

Although SAT offers courses in contemporary theology—spirituality, mysticism, cosmology, scripture, the arts, and personal

development—from leading presenters throughout the Bay Area and across the United States, all their course offerings are optional. Participants are not required to take exams or complete academic assignments. However, most people find value in attending every course. “The classes are well presented and very insightful,” said Father Anthony O’Conner who came for a semester-long sabbatical from Nova Scotia where he works in parish ministry, lay formation, and university teaching.

In addition to specific classes offered throughout the year, participants take part in a regular routine of prayer and reflection directed by Sister Celeste. “She is extremely helpful in guiding our reflection,” said Marie. “She has a real gift for formulating questions for us to ponder and share.”

Participants take time to look within as well as to share their thoughts and reflections with one another. And because they come from around the world and from diverse backgrounds and experiences, they bring the depth and wisdom of years of religious life, family life, and ministry life with them. “The group experience has been excellent,” said Father O’Conner. “The various members of the group bring a wonderful richness to our discussions.”

Sister Celeste also guides two full days of prayer and one four-day retreat each



► Members of the sabbatical cohort celebrate at one of their monthly community Masses. Traditional Mass is just one of the many forms of prayer practiced by sabbatical participants. Others include prayer through art, journaling, meditation, and movement.

▼ Sometimes the program takes attendees to new, contemplative places—like the beaches of California or the majestic Yosemite Valley.



▲ Sister Celeste stops to marvel at a tortoise. Taking the time to appreciate the simple beauty in everyday moments is at the core of the sabbatical experience.

semester. These experiences foster broader and deeper soul work, combining presentations, liturgy, reflection, and sharing. “The retreats provide opportunities for participants to examine where they are in their journeys and to look at how their spiritual lives are deepening,” she explained.

Sabbatical participants also take part in a closing retreat at the beach in Santa Cruz. Sister Celeste plans the retreat, helping to direct the experience through prayers tailored to each individual, thoughts to contemplate in walks along the sea, and exercises that help participants to reflect on their sabbatical experience and to shape their focus as they go forward.

It is not only the experiences Sister Celeste creates, but also the example she sets with her own life that inspires those around her. “Sister Celeste is grounded with a deeply nourished spirituality and attentiveness to

what she does,” said Carrie. “She cultivates her body, mind, and spirit in a very holistic way and that spills over to all of us.”

## Taking It Home

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the sabbatical program for participants is finding ways to take the sense of renewal with them back into the world and to incorporate the lessons of sabbatical in their daily lives. “Everybody needs to make sure they have some time of sabbatical in their life—whether it is 10 minutes a day or one day a month when they can listen for what their spirit has to say to their heart,” said Sister Celeste. “It is a gift we give to ourselves. It may seem like a luxury but it is a necessity.”

Father O’Conner says he will take with him a greater appreciation for the importance of attentive rest. “Even on my day off, I will be doing something intentional, some-

# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Take steps to deepen your spirituality and prayer life by stretching yourself beyond your comfort zone. Sign up for a retreat. Try meditation, Tai Chi, or journaling. Our Franciscan Spiritual Centers offer fantastic retreat opportunities. Learn more at [www.osfphila.org/spirituality-and-prayer](http://www.osfphila.org/spirituality-and-prayer).
- Set aside a space in your home devoted to being rather than doing. Having a dedicated meditation space will serve as a reminder to practice stillness.
- Take a break from screens. Although there are benefits to being connected, the habit of turning to devices when you are bored or nervous may actually be robbing you of precious mental downtime.
- Schedule a “lazy day.” In a culture where busyness is glorified, a day off can feel like a guilty pleasure. In reality rest is an integral component of a balanced life. Taking time off will allow you to reflect, recharge, and emerge with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

thing restorative—not just flopping on the couch,” he said.

Marie plans to bring home the focus on empathy and the habit of reflection. “The value of the program is that it jolts you out of your customary way of being and thinking,” she explained. “You come away changed.”

For those who spend time at SAT, that change is as tangible as the transformation in a field allowed to lay fallow in order to yield more fruitful crops. Time and time again, those who come longing for rest and seeking transformation come away renewed in body, mind, and spirit. Or as Carrie says, “They come exhausted and depart radiant.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Everyone has within a piece of good news.*

— Anne Frank (adapted)

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## Sisters Take Corporate Stand on Care for Creation



The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia take great joy in announcing that the congregation, as a result of a recent referendum, have declared a corporate stand on Care for Creation by which we commit to ecological education of ourselves and others leading to concrete actions both individual and communal. During our congregational assembly held June 26-28, 2017, the sisters celebrated the passage of the corporate stand approved by members of the congregation. Although we have undertaken many environmental actions over the past 20 years, we believe that a public stand is important now because of the increasing harm inflicted on Earth and because of the call to defend creation issued by Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*. Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, congregational minister, shared the underlying rationale when she said, “We believe that all of creation is sacred and it is our moral obligation to care for her. This corporate stand reminds us and challenges us to act in accordance with our beliefs.”

## Sister Kathleen Renews Vows

On Saturday, August 5, the chapel at the mother-house was unusually full for the evening liturgy. The reason? Sister Kathleen Flood renewed her vows for one year! Prior to the vow renewal, Sister Kathy stood before the congregation as they raised their hands in a silent blessing. Following the vow renewal, both sisters and companions again blessed Sister Kathy, this time by singing the “Blessing of St. Francis.” Following Mass we continued the celebration with a special dinner.



*Sister Kathleen Flood renewed her vows at an evening liturgy at Our Lady of Angels Convent.*



*At OLA the jubilarians gathered for a group photo. (Front row, l-r) Srs. Kathy Dausen, Julie Keegan, Geralda Meskill, Kathy Parisi, Lisa Curran, Andrea Likovich, Anna Cosgrave. (Back row) Srs. Theresa Elitz, Patricia Warman, Christopher Marie Wagner, Mary Craig, Louise Quinn, Corinne Wright, Clare Wieckowski.*

## Celebrating Milestones in Religious Life

June was definitely a month of celebrations on both east and west coasts! Assisi House residents celebrated jubilee on June 11 with a beautiful liturgy followed by a delicious dinner. Music accompanied the meal and the dancing that followed. In addition to their “official” jubilee celebration, the sisters at St. Ann Convent in Tacoma also held a “pre-jubilee party” during which the jubilarians shared highlights of their lives and ministries. June 25 was Jubilee Sunday at the motherhouse in Aston. More than 250 people—sisters, Companions in Mission, and former members—gathered for liturgy. Later everyone shared a celebratory luncheon. During each of these celebrations, the jubilarians renewed their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience—vows they had first professed many years ago and which they continue to live out daily.





(L-R) Srs. Elaine Thaden, Kathleen Moffatt, Marie Lucey, Kathy Dougherty, Colette Gerry, Patricia Hutchison, Patricia Millen, Patricia Smith, Christine Still, Anne Amati, Maria Orlandini.

## 2017 Franciscan Federation Conference

Eleven of our sisters attended the 2017 Franciscan Federation Conference in Buffalo, New York. Presenters Andre Cirino, OFM, Josef Raischl, OSF, and Sister Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, addressed the theme: “Bonaventure’s Journey into God: Franciscan Inspiration for the 21st Century.” At Saturday’s banquet a member of each congregation was recognized for the ways in which he/she lives out the conference theme. Our honoree, Sister Patricia Hutchison, was recognized for the ways in which she “embodies the best of our Franciscan teaching tradition and exhibits in her ministry at Neumann University a personal, communal, and transformative presence as she engages and develops servant leaders.”



## In Memoriam

Sister Helena Joseph Balbach  
July 29, 2017

Sister Ellen Mary Meskill  
(formerly Sister Mary Assisium)  
July 20, 2017

Sister Mary Happ  
(formerly Sister Charles Marie)  
June 26, 2017



## Two Sisters Turn 100 Years Old!

Two of our sisters in Assisi House reached a significant milestone! Denise Gallagher from the County Office of Services for the Aging visited Assisi House to bring flowers and certificates of accomplishment to Sisters Catherine Georgine Portner and Kathleen Tobin for reaching 100 years. Both sisters were delighted and impressed Denise with their feisty banter about growing old gracefully. When Denise asked if they knew when the actual birthdays were, Sr. Kathleen joked, “10/10/17—now go play that number!” Sister Catherine Georgine’s big day was November 20. We wish both of them not only a happy and blessed birthday, but also our love and thanks for all they are to each of us.



Sister Catherine Georgine Portner (left) and Sister Kathleen Tobin (right) were honored by Denise Gallagher, a representative from COSA. Each sister will soon be celebrating her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

# FoCUS

► Sue's long tenure at the motherhouse makes her a familiar face to sisters who come for meetings and celebrations. That same sense of relationship carries over to her free time. On days off she enjoys family time, going out with friends from church, going on bus trips, and gardening.



## ASSUNTA FIDA

"SHE VALUES COMMUNITY,  
IS A GOOD STEWARD, AND  
GIVES LOVING SERVICE TO  
BENEFIT ALL OF US."

▼ One of Sue's favorite responsibilities is preparing and delivering refreshments to various meeting rooms and preparing the dining room for special events such as the volunteer "thank you" dinner



Assunta Fida (better known as Sue) first met the Sisters of St. Francis when her children attended St. Francis DeSales School in Lenni, Pennsylvania. Once the children were grown, she began talking about getting a job "just to keep busy." The sisters in Lenni told her about an opening in food services at the motherhouse in Aston. Sue met with Sister Euthalia, the administrator, and was hired. In fact, as Sue was leaving the interview, Sister Euthalia asked if she had brought her apron—and added that she could put Sue to work immediately!

That was 36 years ago. Today Sue continues her work in food services. Whether she's checking supplies, preparing the room and tables for special events, taking care of "setups and breakdowns" at lunch time, or any of the other numerous tasks to be done, Sue's work is carefully and competently carried out. She considers the motherhouse her "second home" and is very conscientious about being there to get her work completed. During the interview for this article, her thoughts were on her work. As we were discussing photos, she said, "I have to go...they might be short today." Even in snowstorms, Sue is noted for making it into work—getting her husband Ugo to drive her! Mike Sabolcik, assistant director of food services, has worked with Sue for 20 years. "She is a respected and reliable employee and is always there for any request that the sisters have," Mike said. "She is a 'yes' person and a 'no problem' person. We've worked together on special functions and they're on time every time!"

Sister Eleanor Moore, motherhouse administrator, sees Sue as someone who helps to share our Franciscan charism with all who visit. "She lives the Franciscan charism," Sister Eleanor explained. "She values community, is a good steward, and gives loving service to benefit all of us: sisters, retreatants, and visitors. Sue's joy radiates to each person she meets." Asked how she thinks she shares our charism, Sue said simply, "By being there when they need assistance, showing my faith, and helping my church."



◀ Six years ago Sue and Ugo celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with a special blessing from Father Cyprian Rosen, OFM Cap, and a loving greeting from Sister Regina Carmel McMonagle. Sue and Ugo are proud of their large family—three children (Marina, James, and Antonio), six grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren.



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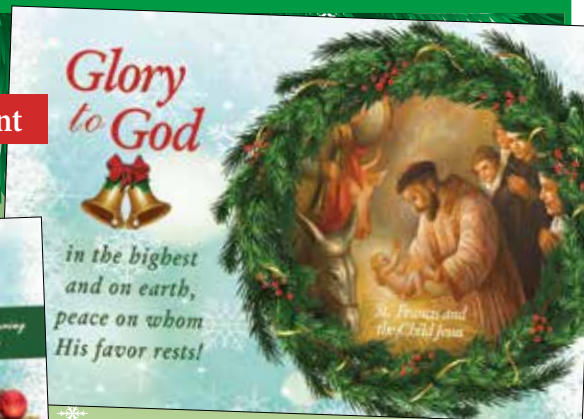
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Many would say there is no greater reward than being in service to others. The Sisters of St. Francis are no stranger to volunteering their time and talent where they are needed most. For a time, school sisters spent their summers volunteering at Bryn Mawr retirement home where many of our retired sisters resided prior to the opening of Assisi House. Here Sister Mary Berchmans Knapp (left) and Sister Angela Joseph Lowe (right) dutifully scrub the pots and pans after an evening meal. On page 4, read how our sisters are offering the Franciscan Volunteers an opportunity to serve others.



Annessa Stahler and Madison Allen inspect one of the bee hives.

## Bee-ing Franciscan

Summer 2017 marked the second year of our Summer Immersion Program—part of the Franciscan Volunteers: No Risk, No Gain Program. Our two volunteers—Annessa Stahler and Madison Allen—worked with Sara Marks, director of the volunteer program, and Rick Samyn and John Clemens from the L'Honey Project. Several of our sisters in the Tacoma area joined the volunteers either for meals or social activities. In addition to their experience working with the bees, the volunteers

experienced and discussed the spiritual aspects of working with nature and the importance of caring for Mother Earth and her creatures through words of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*. Read more about the volunteer program on page 4.



## 'Tis the Season



You still have time to order Novena Mass Cards to include with your Holiday Greetings to friends and family this year. But order now!

*See page 19 for details.*

## A Little Competition and Lots of Laughs

Guess what's happening in Assisi House, our retirement residence in Aston. Bowling! Residents Sisters Fran Acton, Mary Teresa Coll, and Georgina Marmino set up a Wii game in one of the living rooms and the rest is history. The sisters chose teams—like Topseys and Turveys—practiced, and held weekly games. Residents and staff came to watch the games and to cheer for all of the teams. What's next on the agenda? Rumor hints at game nights or golf!



Sister Alice Klein waits in suspense. That has to be a strike!