

USA CIRCLE NEWSLETTER



Missionary
Franciscan Sisters

Volume 1, Issue 3

Newsletter Date

GENERAL CHAPTER ~ 2011



The 20th General Chapter convened at Enrico de Rosso House of Hospitality in Rome on the evening of July 3, 2011. We may have been weary travelers yet we felt energized by the experience of being together, seeing old friends and new. When we gather in this way it is like a homecoming. After much catching up with old friends and getting acquainted with new, we were ready to begin the task of the Chapter.

We started with a three-day retreat facilitated by Sr. Chantal de Jonghe, rscj and Sr. Isabelle Lagneau, rscj. This was a beautiful time of Gospel-based reflection, prayer and faith sharing. The experience culminated in a very meaningful ritual celebrating a

deepening of our relationship with our foundress, Elizabeth Hayes. We were then ready to go forward with open minds and hearts wherever the Spirit would lead. And we were led, as always, in new and unexpected ways. At this point in our lives we are all aware of our frailties. We shared them openly, along with our giftedness. We felt a strong sense of pride in all the good we do despite these frailties and felt drawn to look at ways in which we can help one another. In acknowledging our weaknesses, we realized that **“our fragility becomes strength through collaboration and interconnectedness.”** GC 2011 Mandate



Special points of interest:

- *General Chapter 2011*
- *Congratulations Veronica and Terentia*
- *Happy Birthday Victor*
- *50th Anniversary Tenafly Gift Shop*
- *New Ministries for Nuala and Noelle*
- *Our Clare One Activity Center*

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Gospel-Based Faith Sharing



Dialogue with the Word

Small Group Sharing:

1. Read the day's Gospel
2. Spontaneously share a word or phrase
3. Read the Gospel once more

4. Have a period of silence
5. Share briefly how God's Word is speaking to you
6. Close with an appropriate prayer or song.

Let us recommit ourselves to daily Gospel-Based Faith Sharing.

Congratulations, Terentia and Veronica!

A Blessing from Us All

May your new work excite your heart.
Kindle in your mind creativity
To journey beyond the old limits
Of all that has become wearisome.



May this work challenge you towards
New frontiers that will emerge
As you begin to approach them,
Calling forth from you the full force
And depth of your undiscovered gifts.

May the work fit the rhythms of your
soul,
Enabling you to draw from the invisible
New ideas and a vision that will in-
spire.

May you come to know that work
Which emerges from the mind of love
Will have beauty and form.

May your work assume
A proper space in your life;
Instead of owning or using you,
May it challenge and refine you,
Bringing you every day further
into the wonder of your heart.

John O'Donohue



*May the Lord bless you and
keep you,
May he let his face shine upon
you and give you his peace,
May the Lord bless you.
Amen*

Sister Victor Celebrates 107th Birthday !!!

On September 14th, Sr. Victor Waters celebrated her 107th birthday at Tenaflly, surrounded by community, friends and the Leadership Team.

Still active, and looking young and beautiful, Victor truly enjoyed the festivities.

She is an accomplished crotchetier and still spends her time crocheting all sorts of articles. She is especially fond of making outfits for dolls to be used

as bed-top decorations. She has delighted many with these gifts.

On the occasion of her birthday, Victor was awarded a special medal from Mary McAleese, President of Ireland.

Victor, you are an inspiration to us all, and we look forward to joining you again next year on your ~

108th Birthday Celebration !!!



Tenaflly Gift Shop 50th Anniversary

A hearty congratulations from the whole community to Sr. Trinity and all her workers on the very special occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Tenaflly Gift Shop.

Your various fund-raising efforts have included numerous garage sales, concerts, a walk for hunger, to mention only a few.

You have also participated in several never-ending benefits for such causes as, Hospice, aid to Haiti, and Make-a-Wish Foundation.

With our deepest gratitude, we extend many thanks for all you have done for the Missionary Franciscan Sisters and the community-at-large since 1961.

God bless you always !!



Stillpoint House of Prayer, Bradenton,

In August, Sr. Noelle Hart arrived at Stillpoint House of Prayer to continue the mission started by Sr. Nora Brick many years ago. Perhaps the hardest job in the world is arriving at a new mission and trying to follow in the footsteps of a predecessor who was known and revered by everyone in the county. Noelle was not only faced with the spiritual aspects of the mission but also with the business/financial challenges. Two months later, Noelle tells us in her own words about her arrival and adjustment.

“My first day at Stillpoint was truly overwhelming... we served over 300 families and a total of around 700 people. A parish donated 250 backpacks for school children and we also gave out ten dollar Payless shoe cards. This enabled the children to go to

school with new shoes...”just like the other kids.” My thoughts were: ‘Good Lord ...there are so many people and especially families in need here in Bradenton.’ The volunteers here are just wonderful; they lend a personal touch to anyone who comes into this sacred place. Stillpoint is a place where everyone knows she/he will be treated with respect and dignity. We literally bless anyone that comes here and many times one can see a volunteer or myself saying a prayer for someone who asks for a blessing.

Three days a week we say the rosary and share prayer in Spanish. I hope in the near future to start a contemplative prayer group for the women who have expressed a need for it.

Since coming here I have arranged for a dentist to come one Saturday a

month to treat our people who are unable to pay to see a dentist. We also have started a counseling service to help those we serve to find landlords who won't cheat them and provide affordable housing. So all in all the ministry here is an attempt to alleviate some of the loneliness of the people of this area ...whether spiritually or materially... to let them know that there is a God who cares for them and that His care is expressed in our ministry here at **Stillpoint.**”



Enjoying Our New Digs



One midsummer afternoon the present and future Centre Street Community gathered for a ritual blessing of their newly-renovated third floor. The rooms were blessed as the cross was signed with holy oil on each door. Each sister sprinkled the holy water asking God's blessing on her room.

With a sense of gratitude and excitement

we're gradually becoming accustomed to our new surroundings and establishing a rhythm of prayer, ministry, meals and leisure. Six of us are presently living in our new quarters, with several others planning to join us in time.



Prophetic Religious Life: If Not Now... When?

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Violet T. Grennan, mfc
Executive Director
Religious Formation Conference

Outreach Ministry—Valdosta, Georgia



“I know the plans I have in mind for you...” (Jer. 29:11)

"I know well the plans I have in mind for you..." (Jer.29:11) This scripture quote is one of my favorite passages and it became more meaningful to me as I was trying to discern "life after Sudan." After much research, dialogue and prayer, I was looking at the possibility of accepting a ministry either with Catholic Relief Services or International Refugee Committee. In the meantime I received an email with a job description for Social Service Ministry in Valdosta, Georgia. I immediately deleted it! A few months later Sr. Terentia mentioned Valdosta to me and I quickly responded that I was not interested in it. Soon thereafter it occurred to me that I had not included that ministry opening in my discernment process. "When you pray to me I will answer you..." (Jer29: 12). God did answer me. Now, seven months later, I am happy, content, fulfilled and enriched with my ministry in social service in Valdosta.

In 1944 the first African American Catholic Church was built in Valdosta, Georgia, through funding from the parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Medford, Massachusetts. The mission church was named St. Francis and served that Catholic community until desegregation in 1968 when it merged with St. John the Evangelist Church. The former church is now St. Francis Center. We call it holy ground as we remember all the African Americans who worshiped in this place. The sacredness of the place is confirmed for us many times from the comments we receive from our clients. One woman even expressed, "there is an aura about this place, I love the peace and quiet."

St. Francis Center is an outreach ministry of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church and is staffed by many committed and dedicated volunteers. Our ministry is supported by our generous parishioners through donations of clothing, food, household items, and cash. Profits from the sale of clothing and household items goes directly back to the community we are serving as monetary assistance with utilities and temporary shelter.

We share our donated resources and services with local agencies like LAMP (Lowndes County Assisted Ministries to People); Pines Family Center, a substance abuse center for women and children; the Haven, a home for abused women and children; Birthright; the homeless and migrant farm workers. Our ministry to the migrant farm workers is in the process of being expanded. With the assistance of our parishioners and local merchants we are able to provide beds and other household furniture for families in need. We have a prayer room where we begin our ministry each day with prayer, reflection and sharing. This space is also available for anyone who would like "to come and rest a while."

My ministry also includes partnering with other churches and agencies for special events such as Community Block Festival, Thanksgiving and Christmas food drives, and Homeless for a Night. Workshops and presentations to the parishioners and school faculty and youth groups provide me the opportunity to raise awareness of the social teachings of the Church. Together we explore ways we can creatively continue not only to give direct service to the needy and marginalized, but also to become more involved in implementing social change.

We are celebrating the upcoming feast of St. Francis with a blessing of the animals and a free bag of clothing and refreshments to all of our clients.

Following in the footsteps of Francis and the spirit of Elizabeth Hayes, I am grateful for this opportunity to serve as Director of St. Francis Social Service Center and to make a reality our MFIC vision of outreach to the poor and marginalized, especially to women and children.



A Letter from Sister Donna



Dear Sisters,

Recently, the word violence keeps appearing in my line of vision. Violence is a word that evokes very disturbing images in my mind. Although violence can be explosive and destructive: it can also be subtle, and equally destructive, particularly in our relationships with one another and for the impact it has on the spirit of a person.

We most probably do not think of ourselves in this way, yet, every one of us has the propensity to be violent in certain situations. Violence leads to disharmony, disrespect and exclusion. It can happen in our families, the places where we work and in our community.

The ironic thing is that the one most affected is oneself. Violence comes from the heart and when our hearts are not peaceful we can become anxious and we know we are out of balance. Many negative things come from a restless heart.

As Franciscans, we also have the capacity to be inclusive, respectful, compassionate, gentle and forgiving. It begins with each one of us. Like Francis, are we willing to allow our hearts to be converted? How far are we willing to go to be a peacemaker?

God bless you,

Donna

Clare One Activity Center, Tenafly



From left: Mary Keane's sister, Vivian, Nora, Ellenita, back: Helena, Francoise, Noreen

Everyone appreciates some diversion in life, and especially in retirement, as the days can seem long without the activities we were accustomed to in our former ministries.

Our new activity room in Clare One, at Tenafly, is a beautiful setting for leisure, for visits with friends, for movies and videos, or for meetings with spiritual animators. The possibilities are endless.

Those who wish are provided with the creativity of arts and crafts. One doesn't have to be artistic to come to the meetings. Sometimes we just share stories and one sister likes to recite poetry. We often sing while we work; nobody complains of discord or

being off-key. It's a place where we can be ourselves. Perfection is not allowed here!

Our meetings start promptly at 3 p.m. with recitation of the Chaplet of Mercy. We pray for all those who need special prayers at this time. Our artistic activities are usually seasonal, so we cut and paste and sometimes do watercolor.

The results of our labors are greatly admired and are used to decorate the owner's door.

