

Franciscan Voices

Living and Promoting Active Nonviolence and Peacemaking | December 2020

Extraordinary Times Require Our Response

Reflection by Sister Marilyn Huegerich, Vice President

The year 2020 has been memorable and one for the history books! It was a presidential election year, a year of racial injustices, climate warming, and the world COVID-19 pandemic. These extraordinary times challenge us to respond in new ways.

The charism of the Clinton Franciscan Family is conversion and calls us to change, to give hope for a better world. This hope can be found in our relationships and encounters. The experience of change includes contemplative dialogue that involves the heart and the head. Am I listening deeply to another's ideas or beliefs? Can I accept diversity found in the social and political worlds? Am I taking time to learn the issues and the sufferings of others?

We live in a global world and in a time of great diversity. Relationships and issues are interconnected, complex, and diverse. There is an urgency to move from isolation, simplicity, and individualism as our unjust systems reform. The pain and suffering of those we have encountered will transform our hearts and minds. The call to embrace diversity and to live



View of the sunset over the Mississippi River at Clare Cottage, Cordova, IL.
Photo by Joyce Zarnik, OSF

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Carmelites Welcomed to The Canticle



Clockwise: Sisters JonFe de Torres, Teresa Susan Dreyer, Joan McCorkell, and Jeannette Doran.

When faced with decisions that eventually led to putting their monastery up for sale, the Carmelite Sisters of Eldridge, IA, discerned a new way to continue their life of prayer and contemplation in the tradition of the Carmelite Order.

We, the Sisters of St. Francis, felt called to open our doors and graciously welcomed the congregation to Clinton. Sisters JonFe de Torres, Teresa Susan Dreyer, Joan McCorkell, and Jeannette Doran moved into The Canticle on September 28, 2020.

The Carmelites have been present in the Diocese of Davenport, IA, since 1911. The [monastery](#), located on 10-acres of farmland in rural Eldridge, has been their home since 1975.

“The process and the decisions we have made as a community and as individuals took years of personal and communal discernment, facilitation process, listening to each other, listening to our own inner workings, and most of all a lot of prayers,” said Sister JonFe, Local Superior of the Carmelite Sisters.

In 2018, the Vatican issued the document *Cor Orans*, which laid out new guidelines for contemplative communities of women. “Given our smaller number, the size of our property, and the new document, it is with sadness and grief that we

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Commissioning & Annual Fall Meeting

The annual Commissioning service for Sisters, Sojourners, and Associates was held on September 4. Residents of The Canticle gathered in the chapel while others from the Clinton, Chicago, and Western Regions attended virtually as a means to be together and present with one another as members were commissioned to their local communities and particular ministries.

Finding success in this new way of connecting, the Clinton Franciscan Family joined again on October 3 for the annual fall meeting. While advanced technology has changed the way we meet, our primary focus is still that we are in relationship and gathered for a common purpose.

Cathy Bertrand, SSND, facilitated the morning session on contemplative listening practices and the movement from “I” to “We.” She focused on order, disorder, and reorder stating

that “change happens, but *transformation* is always a process of letting go, living in the confusing shadowy space for a while.” There was an opportunity for contemplative dialogue in small groups.

In the afternoon, we continued our exploration of racism. Small and large group discussions were held to converse on what the Clinton Franciscan Family can do to become anti-racist. We have become more aware of the history and how policies and laws have been racialized, resulting in the disparities experienced today. Sisters, Sojourners, and Associates agreed to add “equal protection of the law” to our [Basic Human Rights and Income Inequality](#) corporate stand.

Photo: Sister Jan Cebula delivers a reflection during the Commissioning service on September 4.

Remembering Clinton Franciscan Associate

Jeanette Watkins, a Clinton Franciscan Associate from the former southern region, passed away on September 10 in Granbury, TX.

Jeanette was born November 19, 1930, in Jenkins, KY, the daughter of Orville and Sarah Price. Jeanette loved to dance. She actually met her husband, Jack, while doing the jitter bug at Eastern Kentucky University.

Jeanette was a lifelong, devoted member of the Catholic Church. She attended St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Lexington, KY, and organized several church events. She became acquainted with the Sisters of St. Francis through Sister Eileen Golby, who served as a pastoral associate at the parish from 1996 to 2012.

Jeanette wanted to increase her spiritual education so became an Associate on September 18, 1999. “Feeling closer to Francis and Clare gives me a warm and close feeling to God,” she wrote on her commitment form.

Survivors include her three children, Barbara (David) Townsend, Robert (Diana) Watkins, and William (Camille) Watkins; eight grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents and husband, Jack Watkins.



Jeanette Watkins
1930 - 2020

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faced the need to move into a more manageable space," explained Sister JonFe.

"There are a number of positive gains from being here with the Clinton Franciscans, including receiving a warm and friendly welcome and openness to having us come and live with them," stated Sister Teresa Susan. "This open warmth seems to be continuous and demonstrated again and again. It is a higher degree of tenderness than I expected and I welcome it and am comforted by it," she added.

Moving during a pandemic hasn't been easy. The Carmelite Sisters quarantined for two weeks prior to the move as a way to ensure that all were healthy before coming to Clinton. Now they are spending time together in their neighborhood planning ways to live out their charism in their new space.

The Carmelite Sisters freely respond to the call of the Holy Spirit by striving to live the Gospel values of Jesus in a contemplative lifestyle of prayer which incorporates a balance of community with solitude and silence.

"Each element is intended to balance each other... to complement each other," said Sister JonFe. "For example, solitude is tempered by the activities we do as a community. We pray together as a community and there is also quiet prayer, which in Teresian Carmelite tradition is referred to as mental prayer," she added. St. Teresa of Ávila, reformer of the

Sisters Keep Connected Via Zoom

When the pandemic forced lockdowns back in March, Sister Jan Cebula, President, began to host weekly virtual Zoom sessions with Sisters residing in locations other than The Canticule. The sessions offered a way to reflect and learn during the experience, and allowed the Sisters to stay connected with each other during self-isolation.

"The gatherings on Zoom have been a lifeline for me," said Sister Mary Lou Carlson, who resides in Oceanside, CA. "They have assisted me in getting to see other Sisters and hear how everyone is coping. They have given me a chance to really get to know our Sisters."

The sessions are now held bi-weekly and are a time for personal reflection and discussion. Recent topics of conversation have been based around our congregational studies on racism, white supremacy, and white fragility. The discussions help with looking deep into oneself in order to confront and change the deep-seated attitudes and practices of racism.

Sister Mary Lou added, "These sessions gave me energy to start finding other ways to fill my need for personal, intellectual, and emotional growth. I treasure facilitating a group for scripture study every Thursday, and participating in other Zooms."

Carmelite order, requires mental prayer two separate hours a day.

In her book [*The Way of Perfection*](#), St. Teresa encourages all who follow this way of life to keep improving by studying, reading, and other means to feed the mind and soul. Manual work, or engagement in productive activity, is also an element of the Carmelite life structure.

"We are all moving into the same reality of diminishment of community that calls for a joining of ways of life..."

- Teresa Susan Dreyer, OCD

Throughout the United States, there is a need for religious communities to create new sustainable structures that assure a future for religious life. Congregations are creating new ways for the mission of religious life to thrive well into the future.

"We are all moving into the same reality of diminishment of community that calls for a joining of ways of life, and a new creation of religious life expression. I am glad to be a part of that, and yet hold to the primary and important tasks and focus of our Carmelite vocation and charism," said Sister Teresa Susan.



Sisters Kathleen Holland, Annamarie Marcalus, LaVern Olberding, Pat Weldon, Barbara Rosener, Marilyn Shea, Mary Lou Carlson, Janet Ryan, Anne Martin Phelan, and Ida Green during a November 6th Zoom session.

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globally requires looking anew at the God who is calling us to solidarity with the human family, that is the body of Christ.

More than any other time of history, it is time to act beyond and outside of our own self-interest for the good of the world. As we conclude this year, we are being called to be persons and a community of contemplation, encounters, and action. Changing one's own behaviors, or inviting others or the government to change, requires the acquisition of new knowledge, deep understanding of alternative ways of being, and love of the person God loves.

Pledge of Nonviolence

All around us, it seems that divisiveness and political turmoil have risen to a fever pitch. It will take understanding, patience, and determination to heal the country.

Our Franciscan Peace Center invites you to join in [taking a pledge](#) to develop and sustain a sense of peace and nonviolence in all aspects of your life. Each week through December 21, we will share electronically a list of resources and suggestions on how to lead a more peaceful, just, and sustainable life as we move forward.

Making peace must start within ourselves and in our families, workplaces, communities, and other social groups. Each of us can commit ourselves as best we can to become nonviolent and peaceful people. As we journey toward peace, we can focus on what brings us together as opposed to what tears us apart.

Increased Risk of Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery involving victims who are forced, defrauded, or coerced into labor or sexual exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an increase in the number of vulnerable people who fall victim to traffickers. Since the pandemic has placed more children and youth online, predators are taking advantage of this.

The internet is a primary recruiting mechanism for child sex trafficking. Children who are already vulnerable have an increased risk of being groomed by traffickers on the internet. The [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#) experienced a 90.4% increase in cyber tipline

Remaining weekly pledge topics include:

- To Respect Creation: To treat the environment and all living things, human and non-human, with respect and care. Making sustainable choices.
- To Choose Nonviolent Entertainment: To select entertainment and toys that support nonviolent values and to avoid entertainment that makes violence look exciting, funny or acceptable.
- To Choose Information Sources Wisely: To be mindful of bias in media choices. To think and research credible sources before sharing on social media.
- To Stand Up for Justice Nonviolently: To challenge violence in all its forms whenever encountered, whether at home, at school, at work, or in the community, and to stand with others who are treated unfairly.

reports of online child solicitation between January and June 2020. There has been an unprecedented increase in calls to the [Polaris National Human Trafficking Hotline](#), too.

Overall, children are at a greater risk of all forms of trafficking and abuse during the pandemic because of an increase in factors such as stress, financial difficulties, food insecurity, and isolation.

Read this [guest editorial](#), co-authored by the [Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery](#), explaining how we can help eliminate human trafficking by addressing the systemic issues that leave children vulnerable.

Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

- Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, SJ

Excerpt from Patient Trust



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