

Franciscan Voices

Living and Promoting Active Nonviolence and Peacemaking | September 2022

— 2022 Summer Gathering —

After a two-year hiatus, the annual summer gathering of the Clinton Franciscan Family was held July 13-15, 2022, at The Canticle in Clinton. Over fifty Sisters, Sojourners, and Associates attended the meetings and special events.



Rebecca Ann Gemma, OP

Sister Rebecca Ann Gemma, OP, offered a day of reflection on Wednesday, July 13, on creating sacred spaces for reconciliation and repair of harm on multiple levels, which relates to the

congregation's 2021 Chapter Commitment Statement. Entitled *Another Way of Seeing, Another Way of Being*, Sister Rebecca shared insights and practices on the spirituality of reconciliation and peacemaking.

"To create a space for reconciliation and to repair harm on multiple levels, we need to first begin with the spiritual underpinnings that give us a foundation from which to move forward," explained Sister Rebecca. "Wounds remind us that our lives have been changed in some way. Wounds unattended to and allowed to become further festered can poison subsequent events," she added.

Participants explored ways of living, acting, and being by focusing on two practices of reconciliation - contemplative prayer and the creation of safe and hospitable spaces.

Contemplative prayer teaches patience in waiting, makes it possible to hold our own woundedness in the Spirit, and increases the capacity to imagine peace.

Sister Janice Cebula, President of the Sisters of St. Francis, agreed saying, "Consistent practice of contemplative prayer helps to open our own inner space, let go of superficial matters, sense the interconnection with all, and ground us in the Christ present in everything. This enables us to be more open to the humanity of the other, less judgmental, and able to listen attentively. Creating sacred spaces by accepting the humanity and experience of the other releases healing energy."

"Consistent practice of contemplative prayer helps to open our own inner space, let go of superficial matters, sense our interconnection with all, and grounds us in the Christ present in everything."

- Sister Janice Cebula

"It is within safe and hospitable spaces that the oppressed can dwell and explore their own wounds and come to imagine a different future," expressed Sister Rebecca. "It must be a place where the oppressed are not victimized again. That sense of safety is one of the most important things that an agent of reconciliation can mediate," she concluded.

Mark Clarke, of CommunityWorks, Inc., has been assisting the congregation for the past

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Mark Clarke

year with strategic planning for the future. On Thursday, July 14, he presented on the topic of vulnerability, highlighting the core elements of safety, identity, sense of security, and belonging.

"We live in very shifting times. That is why reconciliation and vulnerability are virtues. We often see vulnerability as a problem. For change to happen though, it requires vulnerability, perseverance, and resilience. Quoting Brene Brown, 'Vulnerability is not weakness. It's our greatest measure of courage,'" Mark explained.

"Vulnerability is not weakness. It's our greatest measure of courage."

- Brene Brown

Comparing vulnerability to the framework of Disney's Creative Strategy, he shared a pattern to face and deal with vulnerability in terms of vision, belief, risk, and courage. To shape going forward, participants reflected on congregational history and what enabled resilience over the years.

Participant Sister Jeanne d'Arc Untz shared, "As our community moves forward into the future, our vulnerability - our not being in control; our relationships with God, with others, and with ourselves - is the most important aspect of our Franciscan lives. Like Saints Francis and Clare, we live in Jesus the Christ who was 100% vulnerable. We, too, will be able to be those who bring about reconciliation, healing, and forgiveness."

Thursday afternoon, staff of the Franciscan Peace Center provided an update on their

ongoing advocacy and outreach efforts. A report was given on the progress and future activities of the Laudato Si' Action Plan. The Clinton Franciscans have committed to carrying out an action plan centering on three of the seven focus areas: eco-spirituality, cry of the Earth, and cry of the poor.

The summer gathering concluded with a business meeting for sisters and the celebration of Commissioning on Friday, July 15. With a theme of "Venture Along New Paths," Sisters, Sojourners, and Associates were commissioned to their local communities and particular ministries within the Clinton, Chicago, and Western regions.



Sisters Mary Lou Carlson & Kathleen Sadler offer a sign of peace during Commissioning

"I forgot how much I enjoyed being at The Canticle with the Clinton Franciscan Family, and the calm and peacefulness I feel when I am there. It was great to be back for this year's summer gathering!," voiced Sojourner Gail Burkamper.



Members of the Clinton Franciscan Family listen as Sister Janice Cebula offers a reflection during the Commissioning ceremony

Celebrating 2020-2022 Jubilees



Front, from left: Sisters Anne Martin Phelan, Hilary Mullany, Marjorie Wisor, and Janice Cebula.

Back, from left: Bishop Thomas Zinkula and Sisters Theresa Judge, Carmel Jacobs, Maria Zeimen, and Phyllis Morris.

The Clinton Franciscans were able to celebrate together in person and give witness to the lives and service of the congregation's 2020, 2021, and 2022 jubilarians celebrating 75, 70, 60, and 50 years of religious profession.

Jubilee Mass was held Saturday, July 16, at Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace Catholic Church with Bishop Thomas Zinkula of the Diocese of Davenport presiding.

Seven sisters publicly renewed their vows, including Sister Hilary Mullany, 75 years; Sisters Maria Zeimen, Phyllis Morris, and Marjorie Wisor, 70 years; Sisters Theresa Judge and Anne Martin Phelan, 60 years; and Sister Janice Cebula, 50 years. A special luncheon followed at the Tuscan at Rastrelli's.

Thrall Joins Franciscan Peace Center Team

We are pleased to announce that **Marsha Thrall** has been hired as the Director of Programming for the Franciscan Peace Center.

In this newly created position, Marsha's primary responsibility will be to develop creative and innovative programming both in person and online. These programs will focus on creating transformative skills and capacities to live out the principles of active nonviolence, our corporate stands, and Catholic Social Teaching. There will be a particular emphasis on promoting social justice, a healthy environment, and racial equity through active nonviolence.

Marsha joins a three-person team with Jennifer Kryszak, Director of Strategic Planning, and Laura Anderson, Director of Digital Outreach and Advocacy. The team is responsible for coordinating communications, collaboration, outreach and advocacy efforts, and designing initiatives and programs for the Franciscan Peace Center.

Since she began in June, Marsha immediately became involved with the Clinton Juneteenth celebration as well as leading a collaboration between several area organizations to set up a free community screening of the Disney film, *Encanto*, at The Sawmill Museum in Clinton on August 15.



Marsha Thrall

Previously, Marsha served in various interim Religious Education roles within the Unitarian Universalist Church in Brookfield, WI; Silver Spring, MD; and Coralville, IA. She holds a dual B.A. in Theology and Philosophy, with a certificate in Peacebuilding from Mount Mary University in Milwaukee, WI, as well as a Master of Theological Studies at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. She is currently in Ph.D. pre-candidacy at Chicago Theological Seminary.

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— Remembering Clinton Franciscan Associates —

Patricia “Pat” (Sazma) Outzen, an Associate of the Clinton Franciscans for over ten years, passed away on July 2 at The Alverno in Clinton.



Pat Outzen

Pat was born July 12, 1930. She attended school in Mt. Carroll, IL, before transferring to Mount St. Clare Academy in Clinton, graduating in 1948. She also attended one year at Mount St. Clare College.

She married Arnold “Arnie” Outzen on May 27, 1950, and together they had nine children.

Pat was a telephone switchboard operator and an elevator operator at the Wilson Building. Later in life, she worked at Guzzardo’s.

She committed to the Associate Partnership Program of the Sisters of St. Francis on October 4, 2011. On her initial application, she

expressed, “I am supportive of the Sisters of St. Francis active participation in peacemaking efforts, and their work in the field of nonviolence. I admire them so much for their work in these areas because I think it can sometimes be a mission difficult to embrace.”

Pat delivered Meals on Wheels and was an alumni of the Citizens Police Academy. She was also active with the Clinton Art Association, Clinton Women’s Club, Clinton County Democratic Central Committee, Holiday Network, and Desert Storm Support Group. She loved photography, quilting, spinning, and weaving.

Pat is survived by 8 children, 22 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, one sister, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, one daughter, one daughter-in-law, and one sister.



Eleanore (Birmingham) Kilcoyne, former sister and Associate, passed away on July 25 at The Alverno in Clinton.

She was born August 31, 1930, in Elma, IA, and attended Our Lady of Lourdes School where she was introduced to the Clinton Franciscans.

She graduated from Mount St. Clare Academy in Clinton, and entered Mount St. Clare convent in 1948. She remained a sister for 21 years, known as Sister Mary James Birmingham, and taught in Iowa, Illinois, and California. The Clinton Franciscans instilled a lifelong love for teaching, which Eleanore continued to do after leaving the order. After 30 years of teaching, she worked at Elmhurst College library until her retirement.

Eleanore was married to James Kilcoyne for 36 years until his death in 2007. They completed

the Lay Ministry Formation program and worked in parish ministry in Elmhurst, IL, and in Clinton.

Eleanore and James both committed to the Associate Partnership Program of the Sisters of St. Francis on January 8, 1989. When asked how to live Gospel values and active nonviolence and peacemaking in her daily life, Eleanore expressed “through striving to become more aware of the intolerance and hostility we find in ourselves, helping others by our example to seek nonviolent and peaceful resolutions to conflict, and speaking out against violence and intolerance when we must.”

Eleanore is survived by one sister, two brothers-in-law, and four step-children.



Eleanore Kilcoyne

Laudato Si' Action Plan Updates

In the [June edition](#) of *Franciscan Voices*, we announced our initial [Laudato Si' Action Plan](#) that covers three focus areas: a response to the cry of the Earth, a response to the cry of the poor, and ecological spirituality. The Franciscan Peace Center shares these updates:

♦ *Goal 3.4: Create or partner with others to sponsor 3-5 educational programs/materials to educate the public on facts regarding immigrants in 2022.*

On August 15, the Franciscan Peace Center co-sponsored an outdoor movie night with the screening of the Disney/Pixar film *Encanto*.



Encanto Movie Night

Partnering with several agencies within the Clinton community, the goal of this project was to shine a positive light on the contributions that our Latino(a) neighbors bring to the community. "It is exciting how quickly the community came together to make this happen. *Encanto* is a beautiful story that celebrates the rich diversity of our world, appreciating the unique gifts of every individual, and the importance of communication, making it a meaningful experience for the whole family," said employee Marsha Thrall. The event was held at the Sawmill Museum in Clinton.

♦ *Goal 4.5: Sponsor 3-5 public educational programs in 2022 about systemic racism and efforts to address it.*

In September, employee Marsha Thrall will be facilitating a four book common read that will focus on anti-Black racism and the critical complications that white supremacy imposes upon our society. Participants are invited to read and explore writings by Howard Thurman, Fr. Dan Horan, Shannen Dee Williams, and Osheta Moore.

♦ *Goal 6.3: Hold an annual event commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.*

On August 7, Sister Ruth E. Westmoreland led a commemorative prayer service at The Canticle for the anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

♦ *6.4: Research harmful environmental effects of the production of nuclear weapons and make information available to the public in 2022.*

A weekly content campaign was launched on August 8, and runs through September 5, to highlight the relationship between the threat of nuclear weapons and the threat of climate change. A series of infographics created by [Pax Christi International](#) have been shared each Monday via e-mail, Facebook, and our website. Content shared has talked about conflict, cooperation, responsibilities, and resources. The final infographic will be on vulnerabilities.

♦ *Goal 7.2: Select and sponsor 1-2 people in 2022 to be trained in restorative justice.*

[Catholic Mobilizing Network's](#) Circle Keeper Training with [Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation](#), where Sister Janet Ryan ministers, was held July 27-30. We were able to sponsor two individuals to be trained in restorative justice: Nicole Grant, who works at St. Ambrose University in Davenport, IA, as the Service & Justice Coordinator; and Tracy Abler, the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Coordinator for, and an Associate of, the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes in Fond du Lac, WI.



Tracy Abler, Sister Janet Ryan, and Nicole Grant

NETWORK & Pax Christi USA Celebrate 50 Years

On December 17, 1971, forty-seven Catholic sisters, including Sisters Marilyn Huegerich and Cortona Phelan, gathered in Washington, D.C., and the spark that would become [NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice](#) was ignited. Shortly after that gathering, NETWORK opened its doors in April 1972.



“The Sisters Council of the Diocese of Davenport [Iowa] asked if I would be interested in going to the three-day workshop in Washington, D.C.,” explained Sister Marilyn. “Sister Cortona was the president of the congregation at the time, and she gave me permission to go because she thought it would be a good idea for me to see Washington. She ended up joining me,” Sister Marilyn added.

Now celebrating 50 years, NETWORK has grown from a small lobby of Catholic sisters to one that reaches thousands of justice-seekers across the country. Through political ups and downs, the NETWORK community has continuously advocated for federal policies that advance racial and economic justice and promote the common good.

NETWORK’s 2022 publication, [“Celebrating Sister-Spirit: Our 50-Year Justice Journey,”](#) features an extensive timeline of their history (including “Nuns on the Bus” trips) and includes a story quoting Sister Marilyn and other foundresses on their initial call to action.



Grounded in the Gospel and Catholic social teaching, [Pax Christi USA](#) is an organization that rejects war, preparation for war, every form of violence and domination, and personal and systemic racism.

Pax Christi USA began in 1972 thanks to the initiative of a handful of U.S. Catholics

united by the purpose expressed in the international statutes: “To work for peace for all humankind, always witnessing to the peace of Christ.” The Clinton Franciscans have been members of Pax Christi USA for decades.



The organization has transformed and adapted as the world has changed, embracing a variety of issues and shaping their identity to faithfully spread the message of the gospel.

A 50th anniversary conference was held August 5-7 in Washington, D.C. Sister Janet Ryan and Franciscan Peace Center employees Laura Anderson and Marsha Thrall attended in person; employee Jennifer Kryszak attended virtually.

The topics of racism and white privilege permeated the meetings with renewed emphasis on anti-racism efforts. (It was in 1995 that Pax Christi USA first began to explore how white supremacy and white privilege impacted working for peace and justice and how to engage and work through anti-racist lens.)

Marie Dennis, former co-president of Pax Christi International, accepted the Teacher of Peace award on the final day of the conference. During her acceptance speech, Marie called for a deeper understanding of racism (and all other isms). She cited violence as the underlying cause of all evil and said that following the nonviolent Jesus is our only and final recourse in all of this. Marie last visited Clinton in July of 2017 when she spoke on “Active Nonviolence: Building Just Peace in a Polarized World.”

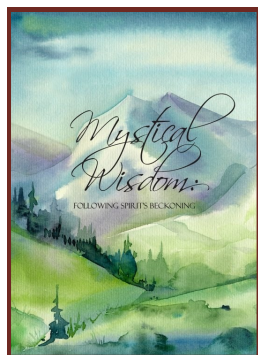


Laura Anderson, left, snaps a selfie with Marie Dennis, recipient of the 2022 Teacher of Peace award

2022 LCWR Assembly

Leadership Team members Sisters Marilyn Huegerich and Ruth E. Westmoreland joined nearly 700 leaders of congregations of Catholic sisters in St. Louis, Missouri, August 9-12, for the [2022 Leadership Conference of Women Religious \(LCWR\) Assembly](#). This was the first in-person assembly since 2019.

Entitled *Mystical Wisdom: Following Spirit's Beckoning*, the assembly encouraged women religious to explore sources of wisdom available to them that can help them navigate leadership with insight and spiritual depth.



The assembly included speakers and various processes where participants listened to one another, claimed their own internal wisdom, and learned how to apply that wisdom to the complexities and decisions that demand their energy and time.

The main speakers, theologians Constance FitzGerald, OCD, and Dr. M. Shawn Copeland, launched the exploration of mystical wisdom for these challenging times in a set of two conversations. They set their observations within the context of major world shifts and movements taking place: the failures of globalization, the mass migration of peoples, the increase of violence, the pandemic, and the findings of the James Webb telescope that gives us a cosmic vision of unimaginable magnitude.

Much of their conversation focused on the relationship between the loss of place being experienced worldwide and within the lives of women religious and the transformation of consciousness underway. Sister Ruth E. was impressed by a statement from Sister Constance when she spoke about the losses religious

women are experiencing: In essence, "Our loss is luring us to greater union with others who have lost - strengthening our communal soul. The boundaries of our souls need stretching. We desire it and we find it difficult. It is painful, but also exciting." Their conversations were augmented by a series of three dialogues among six LCWR members.

Another significant part of the assembly was a presentation on the learnings gathered from the five Collaborative Leaders Hubs of more than 550 LCWR members held during the spring. The awareness gleaned from these gatherings was the deep change leadership is currently experiencing that is part of the evolutionary process of religious life. LCWR's [Discerning Our Emerging Future](#) committee identified a series of shifts in the process and evidenced three: a shift in identity and understanding of charism; a shift toward re-imagining leadership; and a shift toward embracing the potential for all to live the life fully.

"Communal transformation was a phrase that I heard often," said Sister Marilyn. "We need something deeper than just living with one another. We are being invited to a deeper place, the communal soul of religious life. This is a process of losing and of gaining. The prophetic challenge is to be in communion with God and to use our collective voices in the world and in the Church for justice for all," she added.

Other highlights of the assembly included the LCWR members' three-year recommitment to an assembly [resolution](#) to use their collective voice, resources, and influence to establish justice at the intersection of racism, forced migration, and the climate crisis; an executive session focused on some of the important matters facing the conference and religious life today; and the recognition of the 50th anniversary of NETWORK Catholic Social Justice Lobby.

Season of Creation

The annual celebration of the [Season of Creation](#) takes place from September 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi. This liturgical season is dedicated to prayer, reflection, and celebration of God as Creator. It also celebrates and reflects prayerfully on the gifts of creation and the mission given to us by God to care for creation and respond to its needs and crises today.

This year's theme is, "Listen to the Voice of Creation." To listen to creation is to recognize that all communities, species, biomes, and ecosystems have agency, purpose, and a distinct voice. Creation speaks a language of love, of justice and peace, of living within limits, and of respect for the interdependence of all living things throughout all time. (Source: [Listen to the Voice of Creation: A Catholic Liturgical Guide](#); Dominican Center, Adrian, MI.)

We will observe the Season of Creation with four prayer services based on themes to contemplate our connection to the holy ground where we live: *Cinema Divina*, *Connected to Creation*, *Experiencing Creation Using Our Senses*, and a local *Earth Examen*. The prayer services will be shared with the Clinton Franciscan Family as well as posted on our website and Facebook page.



Sisters Janet Ryan and Maria Zeimen in the prairie

Annual Donor Report

Our [Annual Donor Report](#) for the fiscal period July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, is now available on our website.

Listing the names of our donors is one way to show appreciation to the many friends and family that have supported our congregation.

Thank you for your continued generosity!

Thrall continued...

studying Religion, Ethics, and Cultural Studies.

Marsha has also served in the AmeriCorps working on the problem of hunger within both homeless and underserved populations in Milwaukee, and also as a Community Education Coordinator for Clock Shadow Creamery, as well as numerous volunteer experiences.

"Last year, the Sisters of St. Francis made a seven-year commitment to transition to

Integral Ecology as part of the global Laudato Si' Action Platform. We especially look forward to Marsha's leadership not only in bringing that commitment to fruition, but to carrying the mission of active nonviolence into the future," said Sister Janice Cebula, President.

As Marsha stated, "I am excited about this opportunity to work with the greater Clinton community to live out my commitments to learning and organizing together to be agents of social equity."

Welcome, Marsha!



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