



FRANCISCAN  
SISTERS  
OF LITTLE FALLS  
MINNESOTA

# Our Journey

SPRING 2004 • Vol. 22 No. 2



One day Francis met a leper, and his first impulse was, naturally to avoid the poor creature. But reflecting that God wished him to love those whom he had hitherto despised, he dismounted from his horse and not only gave the leper money but embraced him tenderly. He returned home full of unutterable joy at having thus conquered his feelings.

*Energy, Spirit, Peace...the Franciscan way*

# Our Journey

SPRING 2004 • VOL. 22 No. 2

*Our Journey* is published three times a year by the Community Relations Department of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, for donors, friends, relatives and employees. This publication shares the journeys of our sisters and associates as they work in joyful service in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare.

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**Our Mission:**

We, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, are a community of women religious whose members are called to a life of prayer, simple living and service to those in need in the spirit of Saints Clare and Francis of Assisi. We are committed to nonviolence as we work to heal and serve the poor, the oppressed, the abandoned and the most vulnerable in our society. We seek to build communities of peace and justice wherever we are called to serve.

## Dear Friends,

I just read a story via e-mail of a taxi driver who took the time to escort a frail, elderly woman to his cab and then found out she was on her way to a hospice. “I don’t have much time left,” she told him. He turned off the meter and drove her around the city to re-visit places that held memories for her and then brought her to the hospice. At the end of the e-mail was a message that reminded me of our theme of conversion:

We’re conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware—beautifully wrapped in what others may consider small ones.

That is what conversion is about:

- small moments or actions that invite us to a heartfelt response,
- moments that break through our self-protective armor and our busyness,
- moments that invite us to see with new eyes and to feel with a new heart.

How many times have we been rushed and too busy, but something told us to stop and spend a moment with another person only to find that it opened our eyes and hearts to a deeper reality? How many times do we hide away from the invitation to love in our minds, in external trappings, even in our prayer?

God calls us in the midst of our daily lives with all our personal concerns and agendas. God invites us to “turn off our meter” and to be with another with care and with patience. It might mean taking time to listen to an elderly neighbor, to laugh with a child, to treat a teenager with respect. Surely it also means pausing in prayer and silence to listen to God and to realize how much God loves us. Once we let ourselves be touched by God’s love, we are changed. The love we’ve known changes everything—how we see, how we receive the other, how we make choices—everything!

We look at the saints—Francis and Clare—and see their extraordinary conversion and the holiness of their lives. Yet, they were simply people who were willing to listen and be changed by God’s love. They would say to us, “Stop, listen, receive your Beloved, and see the face of Jesus in every person’s face, in every blade of grass, and in every encounter with another.”

May you “turn off your meter” and see the goodness abundantly present in your life and in the lives of those around you.



*Sister Bea Eichten*

Sister Bea Eichten  
Community Minister

# Conversion of Life

by Sister Elise Saggau

*The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body.<sup>1</sup>*

The asceticism of Francis of Assisi can be intimidating to contemporary first world Christians. The disciplines of the ancient order of penitents in the Church involved the wearing of distinctive clothing, prescribed fasting, continence at times, and forbade bearing arms, taking oaths, and participating in certain social and political activities. These might seem archaic, even offensive to us today. Is there a contemporary understanding of “penance” that gets at the same fundamental experience of conversion that was intended by the medieval observances?

Clearly, some of these practices were then and are today authentic expressions of the Gospel way of life, which calls us to turn away from the values of a materialistic, greedy, and sometimes cruel society. For example, today’s fascination with Eastern spiritualities can lead us to new appreciation of fasting and simple living. New awareness about health and environmental problems directs us to use the things of the earth sparingly and deny ourselves many legitimate luxuries and conveniences.



Le Baiser Au Lépreux [The Leper’s Kiss]  
by Pietro Subercaseaux  
*Saint Francis of Assisi*, From the Water  
Colors of P. Subercaseaux Errazuriz,  
Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1976.

Violence in our societies leads us to “disarm” ourselves, refusing to have weapons in our homes or even to take on military roles.

To focus on external practices, however, may be to miss the point. “Penance” understood as “conversion of heart” aims at a profound “turning around” that changes us in the very core of our being. It is more than an experience of a changed attitude toward social values. Bernard Lonergan tells us that

*conversion . . . is a radical transformation on which follows, on all levels of living, an interlocked series of changes and developments. What hitherto was unnoticed becomes vivid and present. What had been of no concern becomes a matter of high import. So great a change in one’s apprehensions*

*and one’s values accompanies no less a change in oneself, in one’s relations to other persons, and in one’s relation to God.<sup>2</sup>*

This is the kind of experience to which St. Francis testifies in his *Testament* when he describes how bitterness was changed to sweetness for him when he embraced lepers.

Clearly Francis’s “turning” was the beginning of an experience on which followed “an interlocked series of changes and developments.” Penance, in this sense, is a process rooted in a dynamic relational life. One never “arrives” at some kind of finish line, but lives daily the life of “turning,” renewing over and over the fundamental choice to be faithful. This was true for Francis; it is true for us.

Over the centuries, innumerable persons have followed Francis’s way of living the Gospel. Today, we still feel its attraction and continue to “run after” him.<sup>3</sup> We search our own lives and experiences for ways to express in our times what Francis and his followers expressed so well in theirs. We, too, are invited to a sincere and heartfelt effort to live the Gospel life, to surrender ourselves completely to Lord Jesus Christ, to share in His life, passion, death and resurrection in such a way that our very lives announce and celebrate God’s mercy in our own time and place.

<sup>1</sup>From *The Testament of St. Francis*, 1-3, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, I, ed. Armstrong, Hellmann, Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 124.

<sup>2</sup>Bernard Lonergan, “Theology in Its New Context,” quoted in *Conversion: Perspectives on Personal and Social Transformation*, ed. Walter E. Conn (New York: Alba House, 1978), 13.

<sup>3</sup>See “The Little Flowers of Saint Francis” (Ch. 10), *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, III, ed. Armstrong, Hellmann, Short (New York: New City Press, 2001), 583.

# The call to conversion

by Sister Maristell Schanen

The mystery of grace, the unresolved debate regarding free will and predestination, the eternal question: “Which came first?” That is the question that comes to mind when we consider conversion in our own lives. Did we first turn *from* something to something else, or, did we first turn *to* something? But the question is merely philosophical. Conversion is a life-long process and the question really does not matter. Perhaps the process is somehow both; conversion is something that happens to us. In her book, *Living the Incarnation*, Sister Frances Teresa says that Francis and Clare “used to talk about ‘the beginning of my conversion’ but never about ‘since my conversion’.” They used to look back with wonder at what God had done in their lives. Conversion is not our doing. It is our response to God’s grace working in us.

There seems to be an innate sense of the rightness or wrongness of attitudes and actions.

During early childhood, there is an abrupt consciousness of judgment about certain attitudes and actions. Perhaps it stems from some parental guidance, not even fully understood, which brought about the judgment when the connection was made with some attitude or action. Or there may have been some inchoate realization of possible harm to one’s self. If there were a turning away from whatever was judged inappropri-



ate, was it a choice of obedience or self-interest? Or, was there something beyond explanation at work? Again, it really does not matter. If such choice becomes a pattern, the person is changed. There is a new direction in life.

However, conversion in the gospel sense must at some point be a movement of simple but profound *turning to* God, a point where God is recognized as Transcendent Life, Light and Love—the True, the Good, and the Beautiful—a point that measures all else in those divine terms. In such a moment of conversion, there is no thought given to what we *turn from*. God is All. But conversion does not end there. One is drawn more deeply into prayer, poverty, humility and ever more conscious of one’s sinfulness.

The gift of the Incarnation, God with us, as told in Mark’s Gospel may illustrate this process of conversion. Jesus’ words to us are “Repent and believe the Good News.” Possibly for a great number of us the process of conversion begins with “repent” and may last a long time. It is an acknowledgment of our limitations, our weaknesses, our sinfulness. It is grace at work in our lives. Then, suddenly gifted with a powerful movement of grace, comes a flash of insight, a recognition that the call is to “believe in the Good News” of who Jesus is for us. At that momentous instant one is totally *turned to* God. All else recedes into the shadowy background. As with Francis, one’s heart says, “My God and my All”. It was not our doing. It was God’s doing and our acceptance in response.

*Sister Maristell Schanen resides in Belle Prairie, Minn., where she lives as a hermit. Following the example of Francis and the earliest days of the Franciscan Order, she spends much of her time in prayer for the community, the Church, and the world.*

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Mark your calendars: the next Spaghetti Supper will be held April 3, 2004, at St. Francis Convent, Little Falls. The event will include a silent auction, featuring antiques, quilts and collectibles. Proceeds go to the Pool Restoration Project.



# Welcoming the stranger

by Sister Tonie Rausch

*"My name is Tonie Rausch. I am your teacher. What is your name?"*

*"My name is Maria Gonzalez."*

*"Glad to meet you. I come from the U.S.A. Where do you come from?"*

*"I come from Mexico . . . I come from Somalia . . . from Peru . . . from Sudan . . . from Guatemala . . ."*

*"Very interesting! Welcome to our English class!"*

And so begins English class for refugees and other newcomers to the United States. Brianda Cediell, a longtime U.S. resident originally from Columbia, is team teaching with me at two sites in the St. Cloud area: one at *Centro Hispano* in Waite

Park and the other at Bethlehem Lutheran Church on the south side of St. Cloud. Presently, we are teaching six two-hour classes each week with about 28–30 students participating.

Adults, who have now struggled with living in the United States for two years or more, are especially hungry for learning the language of their new neighbors and co-workers. Some are absolute beginners, still confused about many things. Some wish to improve their pronunciation while others want to read and write the new language. Many are interested in a better understanding of the cultures of the American people.

For Brianda and me, it is a matter of systematically presenting

Sister Tonie Rausch with ESL student Maria Viera at *Centro Hispano* in Waite Park, Minn.



all aspects of the English language, according to the needs, desires and capabilities of each student, allowing for exchange among themselves and creating a spirit of congeniality in the classroom. Not a dull moment in these classes! Dramatizing, identifying pictures, expressing feelings, using the telephone, carrying on a conversation with hand puppets, working on proper pronunciation . . . all of this somehow catches the attention of the eager learners.

"Welcoming the stranger" was a very real challenge to Americans in the early days when many of our own grandparents arrived in this country. With large numbers of newcomers reestablishing themselves and their families in many of our cities and towns, we need to be involved in some way to welcome them and make them feel at home. That is our mission, too.

When I returned from teaching Maasai students in rural Tanzania last June, I soon became aware of the need for English teachers in the St. Cloud area. My first love is teaching, and I feel that God has led me back home to serve immigrants new to Minnesota. At this point, Brianda and I are volunteers, collaborating with the local St. Cloud Adult Community Education Center. With help from generous donations, we have managed to establish ourselves and are looking forward to expanding our work. Financial support is needed for the ongoing expenses of the program and to ensure its continued success.

## Associate movement continues to grow

Last fall 14 lay people were welcomed as associates of the Franciscan Sisters at Commitment Rituals in Little Falls and Starbuck, Minn. Lay associates are men, women and families who identify with Saint Francis and want to share in the spirit, mission and direction of the Franciscan Sisters in the context of their own lives and responsibilities. They are called to extend Franciscan ideals and

values to their families, churches and society. Most of the 215 lay associates in relationship with the Little Falls Franciscans are Catholic, but associate membership is open to people of other denominations and religions as well.



New associates and their companions in Sacred Heart Chapel, Little Falls.

## Conversion of heart

by Jeff Odendahl, *Franciscan Associate*

As a parent I am often frustrated when we are ready to leave on a journey and I call out to my children, “It’s time to go!” First, a deafening silence; then, after my second or third call, “Just a minute . . .” comes the reply. Often, a reminder several minutes later meets



with this same response—“in a minute . . .”

When I think about it, my response to Jesus is often the same: “Not right now, Lord. I do want to follow You, but just now I’m having too much fun with everything that’s going on around me. Couldn’t we wait until my time on this earth is just about up, Lord? Then I’ll be ready to follow you without any reservation!”

There is something both frightening and exciting in Jesus’ call to conversion. It is a call to give up what we “know” for what has been promised. I’ve always had trouble with that. Give up something I know is good for the promise of something that’s even better? A promise made by a person I haven’t “seen” about a

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## Franciscan Sisters address retirement needs

by Sister Elizabeth Roberts, Director of Community Relations

For over one hundred years the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls have served the needs of people in areas of health care, pastoral/spiritual care, education, child care and social services throughout the Americas and Africa. Such ministries were possible because of the generous support of friends of the congregation who believed in this work. Today the response of our donors to our annual appeal continues this long tradition of partnership in ministry. This financial and prayerful support makes it possible for the sisters to remain in ministries that serve the economically poor and marginalized of our societies and is key to the stability and success of such programs and services.

In addition to subsidized ministries, the sisterhood is facing substantial needs that pertain to the quality of life of its members. Mindful of its serious responsibilities relative to appropriate care of its elderly and ill members, the congregation has established a financial trust for the sisters' retirement needs. These funds and donations given for handicapped accessibility needs are now helping support a project that will see major renovations in the campus buildings that serve as sisters' residences. The changes will provide appropriate access for the handicapped as well as needed repairs and upgrades. The project is envisioned to take two



years and will result in facilities that serve better both the physical and spiritual needs of the aging sisters and the hospitality events that the congregation sponsors.

Another major project that has been needed for some time is the repair of the swimming pool that, under the auspices of St. Francis Health and Recreation Center, serves the recreational needs of the Little Falls area. Fund raising for this project has involved the local civic community and its various organizations, the Franciscan Sisters and their families, graduates of St. Francis High School, and numerous additional donors. Thus far, about half the necessary \$170,000 has been collected. Please consider a donation to the Pool Restoration Project.

For more detailed information about the Franciscan Sisters and their associates, their ministries and missionary involvements, Franciscan spirituality opportunities (including the 2004 Franciscan Scripture Calendar), and ongoing fund-raising efforts, see our Web site at [www.fslf.org](http://www.fslf.org)!

May the blessings of Saints Francis and Clare illuminate our pathways throughout this year.

## FRANCISCAN ASSOCIATES

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future that seems too good to be true? On the other hand, I've always been a bit gullible. But could I get a money-back guarantee with that?

If I'm sounding a bit facetious, it's because I know my response to Jesus' invitation to follow Him has always been a little ambiguous. Still, using the example of Francis and with the help of the Franciscan Sisters and other associates, I've been trying harder to let Jesus work in and through my life. Our Franciscan Life Group, a small group of sisters and associates who meet for prayer, discussion and mutual support is

helping me do this. Connecting regularly with others who are striving to live out their lives in holy ways is essential to my continuing conversion. Alone, I seem to lose my focus on living out the Gospel. This group challenges me to keep my focus on following Jesus. In short, for me, conversion of heart is an ongoing and daily process. As long as my "feet" are still in this world, I know I will be pulled toward the things of this world. But, with "a little help from my friends," I also know that my resistance to Christ's call will continue to weaken.

# What's blooming in the Southwest desert?

“Most Catholic adults haven't had significant opportunities to grow spiritually since they were confirmed!” says Sister Eileen Ghesquiere. In 10 years of ministry in Tucson, Ariz., her main focus has been working with adults to change that sad situation.

Sister Eileen finds that guided discussions are a very effective way for adults to experience faith formation. She's been facilitating a book discussion class for over 10 years that averages around 25 members. “We meet weekly (except during the summer) for two hours,” Sister Eileen explains. “I choose books by respected spiritual authors. Everyone reads the assigned section, highlights the parts that speak to their own personal experiences, and brings these ideas to the class. Because everyone has life experience, all can participate! My role is facilitator, as well as a teacher. Actually, we all teach one another as we share from varied insights and levels of spiritual growth. Over the years, we have become a strong community that happily welcomes new members as we begin each new book.”



Sister Eileen Ghesquiere

Most members of this class are engaged in volunteer parish ministry and/or outreach activities. Promoting Just Coffee ([www.just-coffee.org](http://www.just-coffee.org)) to support coffee-growers in Mexico, collecting clothing and toys for poor families, visiting nursing homes and promoting contemplative prayer are a few of their many expressions of faith and love.

## Renewing relationships

by Sister Carol Virnig

*A young woman (Sister Carol Virnig's niece) visits her birthplace in Bolivia and spends five months volunteering in her home country. Sister Carol helps her coordinate her mission work.*

Back in 1985 while I was a missionary in Bolivia, I had the joy of accepting a baby girl, who was being adopted by my sister and brother-in-law in Minnesota, Nan and Bob Iten. Ana María, born in a poor clinic, was small and frail. I saw her as a gift from God and just knew that she would be my family's delight the moment I held her in my arms.

Last August I was gifted with the opportunity to return to Bolivia with Ana María. Our first stop was a visit to the small mountain community of Cotaña where we found the grave of Ana María's birth mother. We even visited with the nurse who was present during Ana's birth and the woman who cared for her during the first few days.

After a little more touring, we arrived in Carmen Pampa where Ana María would spend the next

“So many beautiful people are blooming in this Arizona desert!” says Sister Eileen. “It's a great privilege to walk with each on their spiritual journey. I depend on them and on my Franciscan Community for prayers, ideas and support. Together, ‘we can do all things in Christ, Who strengthens us!’”



Sister Carol Virnig and Ana María Iten in Carmen Pampa, Bolivia.

five months volunteering at the educational center as well as other places. I worked with the principal and the Bolivian English teacher to arrange for Ana María to visit the rural high school for weekly classes. Ana María helped the students with their English and they helped her with her Spanish. It was a wonderful cultural exchange. Ana María also worked at a day care center, caring for children whose parents attend classes at the university. In December Ana María's friend and father joined her in Carmen Pampa for a couple weeks of volunteer mission work.

## Sister says good-bye to Arusha

by Sister Anita Jennissen

When I accepted the invitation to once again minister in Tanzania, I knew that it would be quite different from my previous experience. Working in the large city of Arusha would be a contrast from the small remote village of Kilomeni where I had served 13 years ago.

Arusha had indeed changed from the small town with only one paved street. Today many streets are paved, and the number of cars has greatly multiplied. New hotels have been built to accommodate the growth of tourism and the work of the United Nations and the International Tribunal.

Initially I ministered at the Spiritan House, a place of hospitality for missionaries. I enjoyed my job as manager and met many wonderful missionaries. Later I called Spiritan House home when I returned from ministering to sick AIDS patients.

I came to know another facet of the population at Mount Meru Medical Center. The majority of Tanzanians, both from the city and surrounding countryside, use this facility, as it offers medical services for a minimal fee. It is here that I, as a nurse and chaplain, found where God intended me to be. I was blessed with dedicated co-workers and the goodness of many benefactors who provided money for medicine and food for the patients whose families couldn't provide.

There are many flashbacks of

scenes from my experience with the sick. I found it very difficult to accept the way they resigned themselves to their surrounding conditions, never complaining when they did not get the care they deserved. For example, I could not understand how they accepted sharing a single bed with another patient whom they had never seen before and whose disease could put them in further danger. Was it because they were so poor with nothing and were grateful to get any help at all? I believe that it is more likely that when sick, weak and tired from hunger and illness, they can no longer fight for anything.

I remember some of the children who, upon seeing a white person for the first time, would cry out in fear. I needed to find ways to get them to laugh, and a small piece of candy would bring joy and a giggle to any child well enough to eat. How I loved to see little Daudy, a 4-year-old boy with serious burns, peek out of the hood covering his face and body when Sister Anita Jennissen with two patients in the hospital's orthopedic ward.

he heard my voice in the ward.

Many AIDS patients, as they lie dying, fear that they are damned to hell. A common belief is that people with AIDS are possessed by the devil. Strong ties to witchcraft and evil spirits hold many people prisoners of fear. I did my best to bring hope to these patients, and as I told them of the goodness, mercy and love of God, I could often see consolation and peace from the expression on their faces.

I know that my work, supported by prayers from our sisters in the States and the many benefactors who made it possible for us to buy medicines, supplies or even food, did make a difference for thousands of God's little ones. The work that has begun will continue through the dedication of Father Tomaso and the assistance of the Tanzanian Sister who has replaced me.



## Mexicans hold Saint Francis in high esteem

by Sister Janice Wiechman

Saint Francis is known and venerated here. I don't mean that his life is known but that there is a great devotion to him. Our first clue was that many, many people are named Francisco or Francisca. The popularity of the name is equaled only by that of Maria and Guadalupe. Then we heard about Real de Catorce as a place of pilgrimage to Saint Francis.

Real de Catorce is located about three hours from San Rafael. We decided to go and see for ourselves. We waited until after the Feast of Saint Francis to avoid the crowds of people visiting the site and set out with friends who were able to share some history along the way.

At one time Real de Catorce was an economic boomtown with 40,000 people. It was founded in 1772 on a *mesa* bounded by 10,000-foot mountain peaks. Before the 1910 revolution, the silver mines produced \$3 million annually. Exactly when and how the statue of Francis arrived and the devotion to him began is unclear. Perhaps it was the influence of Franciscan friars who worked throughout the area in colonial times. One legend tells of two rival miners. Mostly the men just argued back and forth. But one day when they were both very drunk, the rivalry escalated. They took up knives and were about to attack each other when they both felt a blow as if someone had hit them with a belt. They both heard the question: "Are you going to be friends or enemies?" After talking it over, they decided they would be friends and indeed became so. Later they wished to thank the man who brought them to their senses, but he could not be found. The event was attributed to the intervention of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Many people believe that Francis intercedes and helps their prayers get answered. For several weeks around October 4, Real de Catorce is invaded by hundreds of grateful pilgrims. As we did, they travel up the mountain on a stone road that may be as much as 300 years old. They continue through a tunnel to the other side of the mountain to a village built on steep hillsides. There they find Francis seated on a chair waiting to greet his grateful visitors.

This town, known mostly because of its shrine

to Francis, is also fascinating because of the history it holds. Its cobblestone roads, the ruins of large estates, the old church and an old cemetery give silent testimony to another time which brought two very different worlds and cultures together. Both still form and shape the country of Mexico.



Sister Janice Wiechman, Aurora Tovar, Paty Riviera, Sisters Pat Forster, Colette Toenies and Rose Mae Rausch at San Rafael Convent.

## Call to a new ministry

by Sister Ramona Johnson

God wraps His gifts to us in unusual shapes and forms. After 30 years of active missionary life in the Andes Mountains of Peru, in two small villages near Matamoros, Mexico, and nine glorious years among the poor in Durán, Ecuador, my tired feet and legs together with my loss of balance warned me that something was wrong. Even the immense love and caring of the Durán people, who brought me herbs and every form of natural medicine, failed to improve my condition. I was forced to see a neurologist. My diagnosis: ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease).

Last October my condition was confirmed at the Mayo Clinic when I returned to Minnesota. The

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## FRANCISCAN MISSIONS

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doctor informed me that I had symptoms for two to three years already, and that I had lived longer than 50% of all ALS patients. I find myself now in God's grace, adjusting among tears to daily rehabilitation. I welcome more time to pray, read and visit with all my sisters. Please join me in my saying "thanks" for all that has been and "yes" to whatever my future holds. Thank you for your prayers and support during my many years of ministering to the poor in Latin America. God bless you.

Sister Ramona Johnson with Franciscan Associates Vilma Zambrano, Siomara Lopez and Rinna Lopez in Durán, Ecuador.



## VOCATIONS

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### “Come and See” weekend welcomes high school girls to “hang out” at St. Francis Convent

by Sister Grace Skwira

Eleven bright and enthusiastic young women of high school age responded to our invitation to come and “hang out” with the sisters at St. Francis Convent. The young women were given



Sister Lillian Kroll, Teresa Fogal, Rebecca Udermann and Sister Jeanne Winter “hanging out” at St. Francis Convent, January 10–11, 2004.

the opportunity to learn about Saint Francis and his values and to hear about the lives and ministries of the Franciscan Sisters. The weekend included prayer, good food enjoyed with the sisters, sharing in fun activities, and lots of laughter and talking late into the night!

At the close of the weekend, one of the young women commented, “Being here with all of you was an awesome experience; it was nice to meet other girls who were not from my own town.” Another said, “The gift I take with me from this weekend is the light I saw in the sisters’ eyes and the smiles on their faces when they told me all about their lives; it was just so cool to hear about what the sisters did when they were younger.” It was obvious that these spirited young women and the sisters delighted in “hanging out” together.

# FRANCISCAN GIFT SHOP

Net proceeds from your purchase of items on this page go to support the ministries of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota. You can visit the Franciscan Gift Shop Monday–Friday, Noon–4:30 p.m., and Saturday, 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. at St. Francis Convent, Little Falls, Minn.

## 1. Clare's Well Cookbook

**Nourishment for the Body, Memories for the Heart, Healing for the Soul.**

It features favorite recipes for breads, soups, salads and dressings, vegetables, main dishes, vegetarian dishes, sweets and canning; stories about Clare's Well from staff, guests, friends and Annie the resident dog; and a special section of blessings and rituals. 189 pages, 6"x8.5" with a lay-flat spiral binding, paper, \$15.00



## 2. Franciscan Heritage Recipes

**A collection of favorite family recipes and inspirational quotations from the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota**

In addition to recipes for appetizers, breads, main dishes, salads, vegetables and sweets, the book features helpful hints, inspirational quotations, photographs of the sisters and personal stories and memories about each recipe. 306 pages, 4.25"x6" with a lay-flat spiral binding, paper, \$12.95



## 3. Canticle of the Sun

This full-color booklet is a tribute to the *Canticle of the Sun* by Saint Francis of Assisi as it is depicted in the stained glass windows of Sacred Heart Chapel. It also features a short story by Reeve Lindbergh about her mother, Anne Morrow Lindbergh's love for Saint Francis. 28 pages, 6.75"x4.5",



4. **Pink Lady's Slipper**



5. **Dogwood Blossoms**

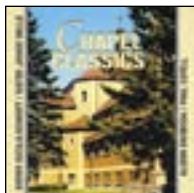


6. **Birch Tree**

The cards feature imagery from watercolor paintings created by Sister Mary Christine Wiener. All blank inside. 4.5"x6", 75¢ each

## 7. Chapel Classics

This 17-song CD compilation mixes traditional hymns with contemporary phrases from the Our Father prayer. Sisters Janice Welle, vocalist, and Cecilia Schmitt, organist are joined by Alison Swoboda, flutist, and Paul Cofell on guitar. \$12.95



## Franciscan Gift Shop ORDER FORM

No.	Qty.	Price Ea.	Total
1. Clare's Well Cookbook		\$15.00	
2. Franciscan Heritage Recipes		\$12.95	
3. Canticle of the Sun Booklet		\$7.95	
4. "Pink Lady's Slipper" Card		\$0.75	
5. "Dogwood Blossoms" Card		\$0.75	
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7. Chapel Classics CD		\$12.95	

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## Partnering into the Future

by Sister Bernice Ebner, Director of Gift Planning

Some estate plans are more effective than others. What many of the best plans have in common, however, is a well-crafted will designed to work in concert with other estate planning tools. There are at least seven things a carefully planned will can do for you:



1. A will can let you close the books on your earthly stewardship responsibilities. You've made careful decisions to conserve your estate during your lifetime and you naturally want to do the same at the time of death. Through your will, you can wrap up your affairs and "put your house in order".
2. A will can help you express your love and thoughtfulness to others. When a person dies without a will, those who are left behind must sort out the estate and make difficult decisions. What a difference when the bereaved are left with funeral instructions, an inventory list and a well-crafted will!
3. A will can remind your loved ones of your basic beliefs and commitments. The preamble can affirm not only your guiding principles, but also your aspirations for those who are left behind. Your words can provide comfort and encouragement. The way you distribute your estate can also express your commitments. Your will can be an inspiration.
4. A will can ensure that your desires are fulfilled. If you have dependent children, you can designate who will care for them. You can specify the person who will handle the closing of your estate. You can time the distribution of gifts to children and grandchildren and designate the giving of specific items to family members and friends. You can make provisions to support charitable organizations. A will puts you in the driver's seat and allows you to make

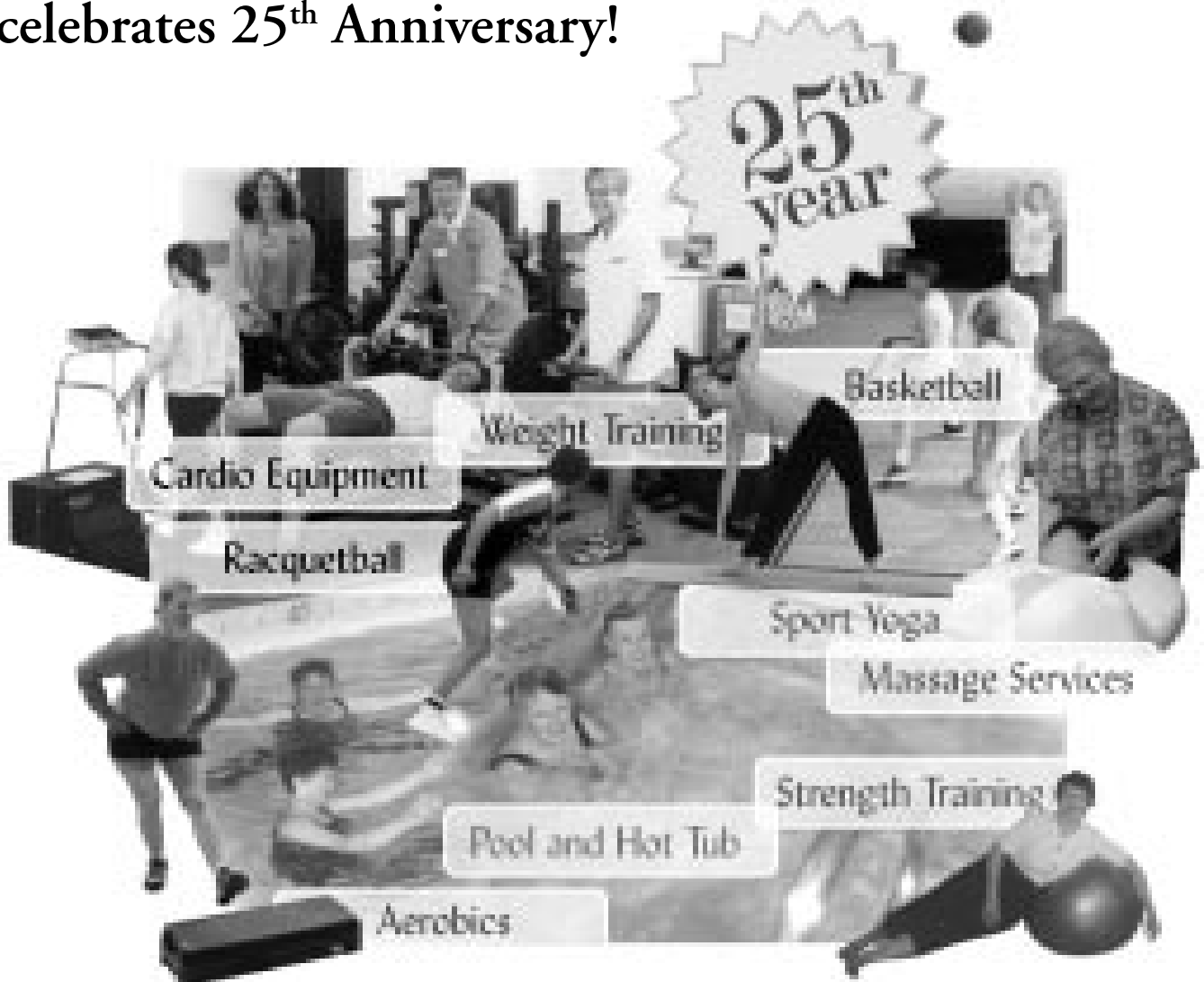
decisions according to your concerns and commitments.

5. A will can conserve your assets, ensuring that more is available to meet your objectives. In many states, a will not only reduces the administrative costs of probate, it can reduce, delay or even eliminate estate taxes. Wise stewardship means making sure your assets go as far as possible.
6. A will can ensure the pattern of your lifetime support to the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota. As you know, we depend on the regular giving of our many friends. In effect, we can't afford for any of our faithful donors to stop giving. That's why it means so much to us when we learn of thoughtful donors who use a will to fund our needs providing income for the future.
7. A will can provide peace of mind. You can relax in the knowledge that your temporal affairs are in order. Your will can also bring a sense of peace and security to others.

With all these benefits, one might expect that every person would have a will, however, of the 1.5 million persons who die each year in the United States, only 30 percent have a will. And many of those wills are defective. For most people, making a will is like preparing a tax return—they put it off as long as they can. I encourage you to call your attorney and make an appointment to have your will prepared or updated. Please do it today.

The Franciscan Sisters are grateful to all our donors who have remembered us in their wills, ensuring our future and helping us continue to minister to the people of God. If you have questions please contact me, Sister Bernice Ebner, director of Gift Planning at 320-632-0699.

# St. Francis Health and Recreation Center celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!



**W**e are proud to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Francis Health and Recreation Center! Each day over 150 people come to the center for exercise, recreation and fun! The sisters opened the center in 1979, after the closing of St. Francis High School, with a goal to promote health, wellness and physical activity throughout Little Falls and the surrounding area.

Some will remember the center's first programs that included Slim & Trim, women's volleyball and nutrition classes. Others will remember when the hot tub, yoga classes, massage services and racquetball court were added in the 1980s.

The center's biggest attraction continues to be the swimming pool and related aquatic programs. Aqua-

Robics and swimming lessons for all ages and abilities are available. Many people, especially senior citizens, benefit from exercising in the heated pool and take advantage of special Arthritis Foundation-endorsed classes to soothe sore joints. The pool also serves people in need of physical therapy and rehabilitation.

Thank you to our many donors who have enabled us to sponsor St. Francis Health and Recreation for the benefit of the Little Falls community. We also thank the many people who continue to donate to our Pool Restoration Project, moving us closer to our \$170,000 goal.

**Sister Mary Johnita**

**(Sophia)**

**Omann**

Sister Mary Johnita (Sophia) Omann, 86, died October 25, 2003, at St. Francis Convent, Little Falls, Minn. Born April 30, 1917, near St.

Stephen, Minn., she was the seventh of 11 children of the late Frank and Helen (Trobec) Omann. She was a Franciscan Sister for 68 years.

Sister Mary Johnita ministered as a teacher and organist, serving in Fergus Falls, St. Cloud, Little Falls, Breckenridge and Morris. In her last years she served as a medical record librarian at St. Gabriel's Hospital, Little Falls.



**Sister Mary Johnelle**

**(Frances)**

**Becker**

Sister Mary Johnelle (Frances) Becker, 71, died January 5, 2004, at St. Francis Convent, Little Falls, Minn.



Sister Johnelle was born December 11, 1932, in St. Michael, Minn. She was the fourth of six children born to the late Thomas and Anastasia (Kolles) Becker. She was accepted as a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota, on July 31, 1951. She made her first profession of vows on August 12, 1953, and final vows on August 12, 1956. She celebrated 50 years as a Franciscan Sister in 2001.

Sister Johnelle earned a bachelor

of arts degree in education and history from the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minn., a master of science degree in administration from the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, and a Certificate of Liturgy from Gonzaga University, Spokane, Wash. She also studied at Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, Mass.

Sister Johnelle ministered as an elementary teacher and principal, religious education coordinator, music coordinator, liturgist, organist, administrator of ministries for the Franciscan Sisters, and most recently, pastoral minister of Sacred Heart Parish in Sauk Rapids, Minn., where she had also served as principal of Sacred Heart School from 1979-1984. She also ministered in St. Cloud, Osakis, Alexandria, Morris, Anoka and Little Falls.

**Sister Mary Luella (Mary)**

**Mareck**

Sister Mary Luella (Mary) Mareck, 95, died January 12, 2004, at St. Gabriel's Hospital, Little Falls, Minn.

Sister Mary Luella was born November 7, 1908, near Albany,

Minn. She was the first of 10 children born to the late Frank and Mary (Tschida) Mareck. She was accepted as a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota, on August 12, 1933. She made her first profession of vows on August 12, 1935, and final vows on August 12, 1938. She was a Franciscan Sister for 70 years.

Sister Mary Luella ministered as a food supervisor, cook, housekeeper and a resident visitor. She served in Little Falls, Perham, Breckenridge, Alexandria, Morris and St. Cloud. In 1991 she retired to St. Francis Convent.



**T** VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

**Volunteer knows the importance of blood drives**

**D**onna Brooks moved to Little Falls six years ago from California and started volunteering in several places. As a widow of a career military man who served in three wars, she knows the importance of the American Red Cross and blood drives. Donna says, "It is a privilege to be a volunteer, and the bonus is that you meet such nice people."

Donna is a great example of our American Red Cross Blood Drive volunteers. They know they are providing a much-needed service. The Franciscan Sisters celebrate all volunteers!



**Donna Brooks, volunteer**

# Tutoring brings sister full circle

by Sister Rose Margaret Schneider

I feel truly blessed to be volunteering at the Evenstart Family Literacy Program in Richmond, Calif., where I tutor adults and children in mathematics and English. During the 2003 summer program I also had the joy of teaching creative dramatics and calligraphy. When I left teaching 28 years ago, I did not foresee myself returning to the classroom, but it seems I have come full circle and am loving the journey.

The Evenstart program is housed in a poor school in a poverty stricken area of Richmond where violence and crime are very prevalent. The majority of the participants are Hispanics. The program serves men, women and children, and provides child care for infants and young children while parents attend classes. The people are eager to learn and are so hard working—I wish you could see their smiling faces.

Zenaida, one of the staff members, cares for the children who come along with their parents. She and her family are also Evenstart participants. Zenaida attends evening ESL (English as a Second Language) classes at a local community college. I have the privilege of tutoring Zenaida in English and assisting her with her homework. Her three children also participated in the summer program; I had fun teaching them creative dramatics and calligraphy.

The Evenstart Program, according to the 1994 legislation, is intended to: “. . . help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational



Sister Rose Margaret Schneider and Zenaida, staff member and participant of the Evenstart program.

opportunities of the nation's low-income families by integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or basic adult education, and parenting education into a unified family literacy program . . .”

Recent cuts in government funding have resulted in reduced staff hours so my services as a volunteer are more important than ever. The generosity of our donors allows me to continue to volunteer, making a difference in Zenaida's life and many others. Thank you for helping me to break the cycle of illiteracy in Richmond, Calif. The people are wonderful and are so grateful for my help. It is a joy to be with them.

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