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“God's love constantly impels us to find new ways forward.”
—Pope Francis, Laudato Si'
Dear Friends — I remember so very well the winter evening when I was 8 and doing homework and my father advised, “Always sit with the light in front of you, so you can see what you are doing.” I’m not sure he realized the profound life truth of that statement in 1956. Or maybe he did because my father was a very wise man. During these times of a pandemic, deep political division, uncertainty, broken social bonds I have been thinking a lot about those words of my father, about sitting with the light in front of us. What does that mean in this time of uncertainty and vulnerability? It’s not always easy to tell light from dark unless of course you’re sorting the laundry. We Sisters believe God’s love and light is in front of us impelling us to find new ways forward. We also know that we have to let go of control and our own ways before the light can reveal the new ways ahead.

We canceled our annual fundraise. We sold our farm in De Soto. We changed our annual summer gathering of the Sisters and election of Leadership to June of 2021. We have been using street and building signs at Tau Center in Kirkwood, MO, to communicate our social concerns with passersby. Here, the Sisters of Tau Center remove their masks to social distance and stand in solidarity with all who mourn during a special week of prayer when the United States hit the 100,000 death toll due to Covid-19. We have been using building and street signs at Tau Center in Kirkwood, MO, to communicate our social concerns with passersby. Here, the Sisters of Tau Center remove their masks to social distance and stand in solidarity with all who mourn during a special week of prayer when the United States hit the 100,000 death toll due to Covid-19.

Life continually invites us to change and newness... to say goodbye and to say hello. Jack Zimmerman brought his passion and spirit to Tau Center for one year before being called to move on in order to provide care for his mother. In the short time Jack served as our Franciscan Farm Coordinator he extended Franciscan hospitality and service to Farmer’s markets and food pantries, to retreatants and organizations, to four-legged and two-legged neighbors. A deep respect and sense of beauty surrounded all that Jack did. We are grateful to Jack for connecting us more deeply to our Franciscans for Earth commitment.

Readers of Franciscan Spirit experienced his generous and deep spirit through his articles, so much so that we invited him to continue writing and sharing. We are grateful that Jack has taken on the role of our monthly Franciscan Blog writer. Check out the home page of our website (fsolph.org) for his beautiful and timely reflections.

Pamela Allen, a highly experienced RN, joined us as Health and Wellness Coordinator last Fall. We welcome Pam as she conducts health assessments for each of us, creates electronic health records, provides medical advocacy for our Sisters in assisted and skilled care, advises us on insurance issues and medical services, and assists with long term care planning for our retirement and health needs. Pam brings a personable spirit, deep faith, diverse knowledge and a real commitment to wellness. We are grateful she is part of our Tau Center staff.

Franciscan Sisters don’t retire. In this society, a good percentage of the women in our Community would be labeled ‘senior citizens,’ yet most are still very active in the workforce, serving in paid and unpaid ministries as long as health allows. But for everyone, eventually time can take its toll and require we move on from the skill sets honed for decades, leaving dedicated careers after years of service. Many of our Sisters come back to the home of the Community, St Louis, Missouri, to find new ways to serve or to volunteer. Those in need of nursing care move to one of the residences at Cardinal Ritter Senior Services (CRSS) in St Louis.

The eleven Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help currently living in the assisted living and skilled care facilities at Cardinal Ritter Senior Services are: Sisters Barbara Mary, Sister Clarice, Sister Consilia, Sister Elaine, Sister Francine, Sister Grace, Sister Kathryn Ann, Sister Lucie, Sister Margaret Ann, Sister Therese and Sister Victoria. Even under quarantine, these Sisters remain very much an active part of the Community.

For lack of a better term, these “Senior Sisters” at CRSS are at the heart of our Prayer Team. At their last meeting, the prayer requests given by each of these Sisters are permitted to focus energy more fully on their conversations with God. Our Perpetual and Annual Memberships of Prayer envelope lists (those acknowledged by our greeting cards) are distributed Community-wide, as are the intentions submitted through a prayer request on our website, those posted on our Facebook page, and the many scrawled on donation envelopes — all are passed along to every one of our Sisters. The working sisters trust that when their busy schedules permit only a glance at the list, our Senior Sisters are giving it their all.

Before the pandemic, the community joined together to celebrate Jubilees, holidays, and Feast Days with gatherings at CRSS, and funeral services were being held there so that the retired Sisters could take part. Also before the days of social distancing, the Leadership Team of Sisters Renita, Rosalie, and Cheryl, held a monthly meeting with these Senior Sisters. After attending Mass together, Community news was shared, questions were answered, opinions are discussed, and bread was broken again.

Like the rest of the world, Covid-19 has very much changed these regular routines. None of the Sisters’ lives have been impacted more than our retired Sisters. Like those in care facilities around the world, they are often required to remain in their rooms for their own safety for extended periods. We so appreciate their difficult situation, their cooperation, and their sweet devotion to our ministry of prayer.

If you would like to reach out to one of these Sisters with a note or a card, please mail it to: FSOLPH Sister _______ St Casimir Parish, St Louis, MO.
The little farm that keeps on giving

After much discernment, the Franciscan Sisters decided this past winter to part with their beloved property in DeSoto, MO. Originally purchased in 1985 as a retreat and recreation facility for the Sisters and their families, the large house and ample acreage transformed over the past decade into an educational facility dubbed Franciscan Farm. Maybe you visited the beautiful grounds to experience God’s Creation through one of our Come & Be mini-retreats. Or you joined us in planting or harvesting something from the demonstration garden during one of our children’s potato digs, through a University Master Gardener planting or harvesting something from the demonstration garden during one of our children’s potato digs, through a University Master Gardener

or maybe you just dropped in for a friendly visit to walk the grounds, work the soil, or sit by the lake.

Our Franciscan Farm has been a lot of things to a lot of people. Sisters from across the country have gathered for meals under the huge porch. Schools have bussed students to our “outdoor classroom” for field trips. DeSoto Farmers’ Market customers have enjoyed locally grown, sustainably raised, produce including tenderly nurtured heirloom varieties. As of this Spring, Franciscan Farm was officially purchased by a young family from St Louis. Within the incredible mid-century modern home, lasting memories are being made anew. The timber can again foster wild imaginations, and the meadows will provide an epic place to run and play.

The Sisters are using the proceeds from the sale to create new programs teaching Care for Our Common Home. In addition, they will be able to continue their support of national and regional organizations that do advocacy for immigrants and the poor, as well as local nonprofits that provide direct services. Last year, funds were distributed to 36 entities on top of the ongoing commitment the Sisters have made to Marian Middle School and the English Tutoring Project, both in St Louis. This funding is an important way to live the Sisters’ mission of empowering others to live the Gospel with hope and joy. The additional funds have also enabled the Sisters to create a new relationship with a congregation of Sisters native to Haiti. The Franciscan Sisters of St Antuan in Fondwa celebrated their 23rd Anniversary last fall.

They live and provide services in a very poor area that was severely impacted by the earthquake in 2010. While staying in shanties and working to rebuild the modest motherhouse that was demolished by the 7.3 magnitude quake, these women religious direct catechetical centers, vocational training schools, a vegetable farm, and health clinics. In addition to committing to a large annual donation, our Sisters are praying for and corresponding with their newfound friends. Although additional funds from the sale were expected, what was a surprise were the many ways Franciscan Farm continued to provide. Former Farm Coordinator Jack Zimmermann used his many connections to dispense the ‘belongings’ of the property to deserving organizations where they can continue to do good. The tracy truck was donated to Saint Isidore Catholic Worker Farm in Wisconsin to serve their organic gardens, cows, chickens and bees.

According to their website, “the Catholic Worker Movement began in 1933, when journalist Dorothy Day and philosopher Peter Maurin teamed up to publish and distribute a newspaper called The Catholic Worker.” This paper promoted the biblical promise of justice and mercy. Grounded in a firm belief in the God-given dignity of every human person, their movement was committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, and the Works of Mercy as a way of life. It wasn’t long before Dorothy and Peter were putting their beliefs into action, opening a “house of hospitality” where the homeless, the hungry, and the forsaken would always be welcome. Over many decades the movement has protested injustice, war, and violence of all forms.

Today there are some 228 Catholic Worker communities in the United States and in countries around the world. In another example, the Farm’s gardening tools, pots, minerals, benches, and other supplies were donated to the Sunrise Elementary School District in DeSoto, MO. There, an outdoor garden “providing students with hands on learning along with an array of opportunities for them to interact with a natural environment” has been established. This outdoor classroom is a 22-acre “Certified National Wildlife Habitat” teaching sustainability and allowing for learning in several ecosystems. The students maintain bee hives, extract honey, and sell it locally. An after-school Garden Club meets weekly and the young members learn the value of growing fruits and vegetables, create compost from school lunches, and sell produce at a farmers market. The land also provides a wooded walking trail in which the tree species have been labeled, birdhouses hung, and a new bat area is being installed near a pond to increase interest and awareness.

All of this “Good” would not have been possible without the many wonderful individuals and organizations who helped to create Franciscan Farm, tend the land, and support the programs through the years... too many to name without surely missing someone. We hope that you know how appreciative the Sisters are, as a Community, for the good will, for the hard work, blisters and sweat, for the guidance, creativity and problem-solving, for the financial and moral support, for the promotion and the cheer-leading, and most of all, for the prayers that have so generously been shared.

About thirty years ago, we Sisters were engaged in a process calling us to articulate just what was unique about our congregation, what gifts we inherited from our courageous foundresses, and how we had been blessed by the graces showered upon us since our founding in 1901. Over a three year period, we systematically reflected on such questions individually and then gathered in our local groups to discuss. The time given to this process was blessed, and as a result of our efforts we drafted the Mission, Charism and Spirituality statements we proudly proclaim today (see pg 3 for a summary). We were also asked to discern “our story” through Scripture. Overwhelmingly, the Sisters identified “The Road to Emmaus” from Luke 24 as key to their vocations and life journeys.

Since that time, we have all embraced the Emmaus journey in our lives. Prints of Robert Zund’s painting, below, hang in many of our homes and offices. Little did we know then how many roads the Congregation would travel — divestiture of our Motherhouse, building our Tau Center, moving Sisters to Cardinal Ritter Senior Services, selling our Franciscan Farm, and on and on. Walking down each of these roads has us saying the same words that the two disciples on the road said to the stranger, whom they later recognized as Jesus — “Stay with us.”

Actually, the road all of us walk each and every day is the Road to Emmaus. Like the two followers of Jesus in the story who were confused and grieving, we sometimes have days of difficulty and confusion, struggling to make sense of some occurrence in our lives.

“A third man came along and joined them entering into their conversation, but they failed to recognize the companion as Jesus.” We all had experiences where we chose to be hospitable and welcomed someone into our lives on a given day, and later appreciated them for their gift of sharing and presence. We then recognize and thank God for inserting that person into our lives at just the right time and place — That is Emmaus! The travelers then offer hospitality to Jesus saying, “‘Stay with us; the day is almost over, and it is getting dark.’ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.”

We also know the joy of chatting with friends over a meal, providing satisfaction to our hearts, our minds and our spirits. That is Emmaus! Emmaus is every Christian’s story. “If Emmaus is correct, then Christ surrounds us... Yes, he stays with us through the entire journey of our life.” — R.J. Ferlong.
A look back through the years at Franciscan Farm, the beautiful property in DeSoto which was sold this Spring. The Sisters will miss the many educational, recreational (and nutritional) opportunities it provided, and the wonderful people who joined in on the work and fun!
OPPORTUNITIES & EVENTS (NEW!)

We’ve gotten creative. Everyone can join us now, no matter your locale!

*Registration is necessary via our website, www.fsolph.org/events, or leave a message with your event choices and contact info at (314) 965-3700, x104.

SEPT ECO-FILM - Cooked

Watch the film for free on "demand" from your device, anytime 9/8-15 via a link,* then join a Zoom discussion 9/15 at 7pm.

The first 50 to register are invited to screen this searing investigation into the politics of "disaster" by way of the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave, in which 739 residents mostly elderly and black — died over the course of a week. Watch the 82-minute film at your convenience through the website, www.fsolph.org/events, or leave a voicemail for Sister Cheryl with your contact information.

The past several years, we have delivered various lessons from St Francis of Assisi in cities throughout mid-America. The pandemic has given us the opportunity to extend our spirit-filled storytelling and thought-provoking activities to anyone with a computer and internet. Sign up today to learn something so necessary in these trying times...how to find "perfect joy" amidst the current chaos.

JAN ECO-FILM - Biggest Little Farm

*Join us Tues, 1/12 at 7pm via Zoom!

The first 50 to register are invited to screen this searing investigation into the politics of "disaster" by way of the deadly 1995 Chicago heat wave, in which 739 residents mostly elderly and black — died over the course of a week. Watch the 82-minute film at your convenience through the website, www.fsolph.org/events, or leave a voicemail for Sister Cheryl with your contact information.

Follow the true story of John & Molly as they trade city living for 200 acres of barren farmland and a dream to farm it in harmony with nature. Breathtaking cinematography and captivating animals, bring an urgent message to heed Mother Nature's call for better living and a healthier planet.

Laudato Si’ Circle

A Laudato Si’ Circle is a group committed to the process of ecological conversion, a deepening relationship with God, Creator, and with all members of Creation. We currently gather via Zoom the second Monday of the month at 7pm, and gather monthly in person for reflection and discussion and action in compassionate love and concern for our common home. For info, or to receive an invitation link to join us, leave a voicemail for Sister Cheryl with your contact information.

Season of Creation 9/1–10/4

Join the Franciscans For Earth Facebook group for a new reflection each morning.

Join in Prayer: praise for God's provision, repentance for our greed and complicity in the suffering of earth and its creatures, intercession for those vulnerable to climate chaos, and releasing all we have back to God.

Join in Practice: audit your own mistreatment of Earth, and commit to new practices individually and collectively

Join in Advocacy: encourage local governments to include climate justice and steps to a green economy in recovery plans

In Action: participate in civil action to put pressure on governments to produce justice and create a just recovery plan

There are countless good reasons and seemingly endless ways to pray. The saints, scripture, our families (hopefully), our own hearts, the glory of the created world and our Lord all speak to us, if we are open to hearing it, about the value and importance of prayer in its myriad forms.

The Francis of Assisi experience calls us to do just that. This dynamic film at your convenience through the website, www.fsolph.org/events, or leave a voicemail for Sister Cheryl with your contact information.

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It would be very difficult to deny that racism exists in the United States. It shouldn’t take a video of George Floyd’s tortured death at the hands of a police officer to bring about change. But we are all human and tend to push the ugly, the painful, and the embarrassing aside until we are forced to acknowledge it. We have been pushing aside the sin of racism, in all forms, since before this country was born. We have generations who have been raised to believe that prejudice, the injustice it brings, and the fear it leaves are acceptable parts of life. Too often, violence is the tragic result. Changing others is difficult, sometimes impossible. Changing society’s policies, systems, and laws is absolutely necessary, but slow. We do have total and immediate control over one thing — ourselves. We can change. We can open our hearts, and really educate ourselves to overcome learned notions and biases. We can work for not only equality, but for equity, in our everyday decisions and interactions. We can choose for whom we vote, where we shop, and with whom we share. We can show respect for the dignity of others, no matter how they look, where they were born, or how they pray. Let us make a commitment to find Christ in everyone we meet, so we can set a better example for the next generation.

In our call to tend to the heart of the world, everyone we meet, so we can set a better example for the next generation, we can show respect for the dignity of others, no matter how they look, where they were born, or how they pray. Let us make a commitment to find Christ in everyone we meet, so we can set a better example for the next generation.

Our racist system targets people of color for poverty, imprisonment, violence, and death. Primarily white institutions police black communities and communities of color. Primarily white institutions hold power in a criminal justice system that utterly fails to impose accountability on police officials and armed white citizens who kill unarmed black people. There is no justice. How, then, can there be peace? We, the elected leadership of religious congregations of women in and around the St. Louis area, stand in unity with those who feel the rage and despair of this moment. As majority white communities and communities of color.

We deplore all random acts of vandalism and other acts of violence and death. Primarily white institutions police black communities and communities of color. Primarily white institutions hold power in a criminal justice system that utterly fails to impose accountability on police officials and armed white citizens who kill unarmed black people. There is no justice. How, then, can there be peace? We, the elected leadership of religious congregations of women in and around the St. Louis area, stand in unity with those who feel the rage and despair of this moment. As majority white communities and communities of color.

We call for a citywide day of prayer, mourning and self-examination to away protections for those who bring violence and death to unarmed black people. We call for and commit to REAL change to bring REAL peace, the peace that comes when all have enough, when all are treated with respect.

We deplore all random acts of vandalism and other acts of violence and terror. These acts do not promote peace, justice, or respect.

Every person is a precious child of God. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tony Robinson, Trayvon Martin. So many others. We know this. We see this. We grieve. We are angry. We move on. It happens again.

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Every person is a precious child of God. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tony Robinson, Trayvon Martin — precious children of God. We call for a citywide day of prayer, mourning and self-examination to be held on June 6, 2020, on racism and how we are called as individuals and a civic community to act now.

Signed, the elected leadership of the following religious congregations: Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Sisters of Loretto/Loretto Community Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, South Central Leadership Team Sisters of the Good Shepherd Province of Mid-North America Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, MO Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province

Help us further our Gospel Mission:

1. The CARES Act made tax deductible gifts possible for 2020. Under the coronavirus stimulus package, filers may be able to deduct up to $300 for charitable giving, on top of the standard deduction! There are also new business incentives to donate.

2. Leave a Legacy — remember the Sisters in your will

Directly name the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Kirkwood, MO, in your will, and let us know! You will automatically be added to our perpetual prayer list.

3. Donate Stock for a possible tax break

Gifting securities or annuities to the Franciscan Sisters may provide tax advantages over donating cash. Ask your financial planner.

4. Change to Amazon Smile

Replace Amazon with Amazon Smile and designate the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help as your beneficiary. Each time you shop, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your purchase to the Sisters.

5. Give “In Honor,” or “In Memory” of a loved one or “In Celebration” of a special event

Need a gift for someone who has everything? Celebrate their birthday or anniversary, retirement, or graduation, or just someone you love! By donating to the Sisters in their name.

Want to memorialize a loved one in a special way? Let us know and we will extend the acknowledgment to family members and include them in prayer. You may even be able to deduct the gift from your taxes. Consult your financial advisor.

6. Perpetual Membership of Prayer

Each member shares in the grace of the Eucharist Celebration offered twice a month, in the daily prayers and good works of each of our Sisters. For this $25 donation, a family member will receive a beautiful gold presentation booklet with a personalized certificate inside.

For more information, contact Sister Connie at (314) 965-3700, x109, or sconnie@folspgh.org.

Until we meet again....

Sister Mary Philip Patin, OSF 1927–2020

Sister Mary Philip Patin died on Tuesday, April 28, 2020 at the age of 93. A private burial took place in Resurrection Cemetery on May 1. There will be a memorial Mass and celebration of Sister’s life at a later date.

Born in Sand Lake, Michigan, Sister Patin entered the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in 1948 and made final vows in 1953. She ministered as a teacher, principal, teacher aide, and organist. In the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Sr. Mary Philip served at Immaculate Conception School in St. Augustine, Holy Family School in St. Louis, Holy Spirit School in Port Hudson, Holy Ghost School in Berkeley, and others.

Sister Erlinda Gurule, OSF 1939–2020

Our dear, sweet Sister Erlinda Gurule went home to the Lord on Tuesday, June 30, 2020. Sister was from a large, very close family in Cebolla, New Mexico. She received her call to be a Franciscan Sister at a young age, and loved being a Franciscan Sister of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. This year marked her 60th Jubilee.

Sister Erlinda was a gifted teacher, shown by the “Teacher of the Year” and “Outstanding Educator” awards she received as she worked with primary students throughout the country.

Her classrooms were in St. Louis, Chicago, Ohio, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado and Louisiana. In addition to her special talent for teaching children to read, hundreds will remember her for helping them learn the Sign of the Cross and praying with them for First Communion, while seldom raising her voice. Sister Erlinda was admired for her saintly spirit — strong, yet gentle — and for never uttering an unkind or judgmental word. Her later years were claimed by Parkinson’s Disease, but she never complained and offered all to Jesus. One of her most endearing characteristics was her wit and her quiet chuckle. She was buried at Resurrection Cemetery in St Louis with plans for a Mass and celebration of Life to follow.
Save our common home! To receive this via email, or to be removed from the list, please send your contact information with your specific request to info@fsolph.org

IN CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF LAUDATO SI’ BY POPE FRANCIS, we introduced a new, beautiful line of Franciscans For Earth acknowledgment cards that include a one-year Membership of Prayer

Sympathy. Get well. Congratulations for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, promotions, retirement, graduation, jubilee, new baby, housewarming, or just because.

For the suggested donation of $5, your loved one/s are remembered in the daily good works and prayers of all of our Sisters across the country, and in the Celebration of the Eucharist at our retirement facility twice a month for one year. In your name, we mail the acknowledgment of your choice to whomever you specify.

Order online today at www.fsolph.org/request or leave a message at (314) 965-3700, x104.