



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Associate Program

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The Associate Alliance



Prayer for Easter Love



Passion of the Earth II© Sr.
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Love-flowing, life-giving, and life-changing God; in You we find our passion and purpose. In You we find our curiosity and creativity. In You we find possibility and promise and potential that we can never exhaust or fully explore in our lifetime. Continue to let Your love guide and ground our lives. Grant us wisdom to let Your love into our hearts, roam around our lives, and even rearrange our minds. Let Your love be the fuel that feeds our actions and words. Continue to call and challenge us to be love in this world. To see moments when we can let loose Your love with another. Continue to invite us to be extravagant with love.

The seeds that have been sown in the soil of our souls still need time and space to grow and take root before we can begin to harvest them. Help us tend the seeds of love for You, for others, and especially for ourselves. Help us receive Your love, notice how others offer affirmation and affection, and how holy love permeates and persists within the well of our soul. Take our lives and let them be part of the beloved community; take this moment and this day so that Your truth might have the final say.

All this we pray in the name of the One who embraced and embodied love, showing us the way to be love: Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Jesus was born, grew up, lived His life,
taught us about love and community.
He died on a Cross, sacrificing Himself
to show humanity the meaning
of true love.

In return, He received only pain.
Jesus suffered, was humiliated, whipped,
punished for having done only good.

He suffered silently, giving us a beautiful example of humility.

He did everything out of love, he accomplished His mission.

He lived out His Passion, died and was buried.

He did not, however, die forever.

There was a promise: on the third day He would return to life!

He was resurrected and brought us Salvation
without any cost to us,

spilling His blood for an ungrateful humanity.

May Easter come bringing a resurgence of peace!

May all Christians understand its significance.

May it be an Easter of renewal of faith.

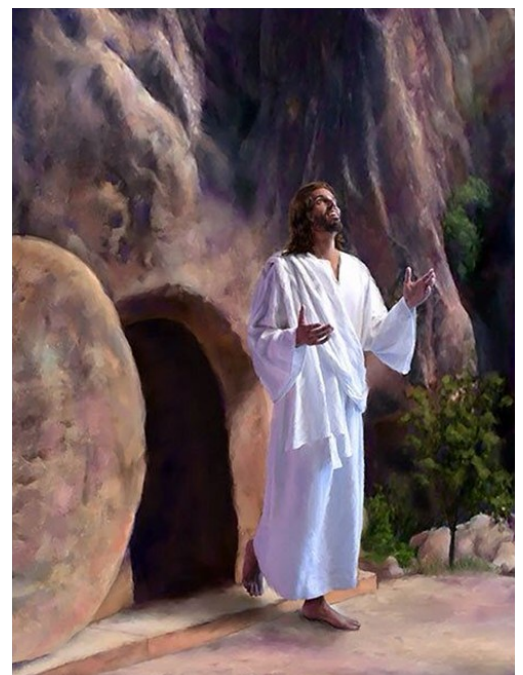
May humanity finally recognize

that the truest form of love

is to lay down one's life for another.

Easter, Proof of Love

Claudio Alves de Oliveira



Meet Maria das Graças Reis - Associate from Cristalândia, Brazil



Associates of Cristalândia

Maria das Graças has been an Associate in Cristalândia since being invited to participate in a meeting back in the 90s. She already had a relationship with the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, having studied with them since the age of 10, attending St. Francis School.

Her relationship as an Associate with the sisters developed almost identically to that of the men of Emmaus: “Jesus drew near and walked along with them.” (Luke 24:15) It was by walking along with the sisters that she began to build up her Franciscan spirituality.

The presence of the sisters in her life has been very important for her spiritual and personal growth. Much of who she is as a person today is due to their teachings. She is very grateful!



Maria das Graças Reis

Pope Francis' Prayer for Peace

Marcia Gill

Lord God of Peace Hear our Prayer!

We have tried so many times and over so many years to resolve our conflicts by our own powers and by the force of our arms. How many moments of hostility and darkness have we experienced; how much blood has been shed; how many lives have been shattered; how many hopes have been buried? But our efforts have been in vain.

Now, Lord, come to our aid! Grant us peace, teach us peace. Guide our steps in the way of peace. Open our eyes and our hearts and give us the courage to say, “Never again war!” “With war, everything is lost.” Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.

Lord, God of Abraham, God of the Prophets, God of Love, you created us and you call us to live as brothers and sisters. Give us the strength daily to be instruments of peace, enable us to see everyone who crosses our path as our brother or sister. Make us sensitive to the plea of our citizens who entreat us to turn our weapons of war into implements of peace, our trepidation into confident trust, and our quarreling into forgiveness.

Keep alive within us the flame of hope, so that with patience and perseverance we may opt for dialogue and reconciliation. In this way, may peace triumph at last, and may the words “division,” “hatred” and “war” be banished from the heart of every man and woman. Lord, defuse the violence of our tongues and our hands. Renew our hearts and minds, so that the word which always brings us together will be “brother,” and our way of life will always be that of Shalom, Peace, Salaam!



Leslie teaching how to pray the Rosary

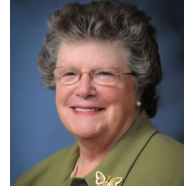
Mission Trip to Uganda

Leslie St. John

Associate Leslie St. John recently travelled to Uganda to visit the St. James Nursery and Primary School, in Mbale, Uganda. She distributed rosaries to the children and taught them how to pray the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

Leslie also visited the Ugandan Martyrs' National Shrine in Kampala. The Shrine was built to honor 22 Christians murdered between 1885-1887 by order of the king Kabaka Mwanga.

Margaret Boland, New Jersey Associate, passed away on Tuesday, February 1, 2022, after a return of cancer. She served as Associate Superintendent in the Department of Catholic Schools, retiring after more than 35 years in the Diocese of Trenton. Margaret Boland was a member of Saint Luke's Catholic Church until her death and was an Allegany Associate for 25 years.



Easter, A Time for Hope

This year Easter weekend arrives both resonant and relevant, prompting us to consider the costs of human folly and delusion and what a second chance should look like. It focuses on sacrifice beyond understanding, about relationships in all their many forms, and about the renewal of a world gone awry. Above all, it offers hope and possibility after a period of profound pain, loss and sorrow.

The COVID-19 crisis has delivered, along with its human and economic ravages, a season of wholesale soul-searching. It has created an enforced period of stillness. It has encouraged contemplation. Not least of all, it has inspired an assessment of what's vital and what's not. All around the world, as nations cope with the coronavirus that has killed millions and idled the global economy, people on their own, in their families, on streets and online, have been taking stock and seeking solace. Overwhelmingly, men and women have sought something beyond self-interest, something greater than themselves.

It's been said that religion is something we study, while spirituality is something we experience – and something best experienced through gratitude. If so, there is a lot of it going around.

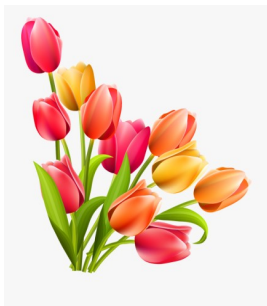
With the rise of populist authoritarians around the world in recent years, there have been irrational attacks on expertise, on public institutions, on the value of government. Now, those views simply don't hold true. Now, we recognize the power of the collective, the need for experts, and for leaders humble enough to put aside partisanship and meet the occasion. In all, there's been a recurring reprise recently of ancient teachings, time-honored verities about the perils of self-seeking and the long-term cost of short-term thinking.

If life is essentially about relationships, this Easter - given the state of things - prompts us to reconsider not only our personal relationships, but our relationship with the natural world. The COVID-19 crisis reminds us that humanity is another kind of animal, inextricably connected with other species

Easter is not about going back to the old normal, but the going forward to be better, live better, love better. It heralds new opportunities, a chance to dispense with old grudges, prejudices, ill will and unworthy acts.

The author Mary Gordon has written that, to her, the importance of the Resurrection is that "it insists on the primacy of life over death. For me, the meaning of the Resurrection is the possibility of possibility."

This Easter, in a world needful of hope and inspiration, that's a prayer as good as any.



The Miami Associate community met together via Zoom on February 27. This was the first meeting since last October as it had been collectively decided to “pause” the group for awhile. It was with great joy, therefore, that meetings were resumed, checking in with each other and catching up on each other’s activities. The best news was that Margie Rorick has taken her house off the market, so we still have Clare House as our meeting space when we resume in-person meetings.

We began with prayers for the situation in Ukraine and prayed Pope Francis’ Prayer for Peace.’ (see page 2 of this issue). One of the statements which stood out for us is: “Instill in our hearts the courage to take concrete steps to achieve peace.” We re-read the Chapter Directional statement and agreed that supporting Alba’s work at the Trailer Park was in keeping with “Defend all created life with preferential option for those who live in poverty, on the margins and excluded from society.” Collections will be taken at our meetings and each Associate is also free to send donations to Alba. We also prayed for the soul of Alba’s father, Victor Mejia. At the time of our meeting she was in Honduras for the funeral and to be with family.

What was missed most of all was being in each other’s presence, praying together, having extra time for meditation after discussions and, of course, sharing a meal together – important to every Franciscan gathering! The plan is to have one more meeting via Zoom (March 27th) and if the COVID situation remains stable, to resume meeting at Clare House on April 24th. We look forward to being together in person with great joy!

The Challenges of Being an Associate During COVID

Claudio Alves de Oliveira

The world has been living with the pandemic for two years and what were the repercussions on our communities of Associates? What have we learned in this time of so many difficulties and challenges?

COVID has put “normal” Church life on hold, with many people still deprived of access to the sacraments. It was a test of faith that we had to face. After months of confinement, members of our Pires do Rio community are gradually returning to activities. For months we lived a life restricted to Whatsapp, we had no face-to-face meetings and attended online masses, receiving only spiritual communion. Many associates are still afraid to go to church, or go in a restricted way, due to fear of contamination. Currently, in Brazil and particularly in Pires do Rio, the number of cases has been reduced, which has brought us a certain tranquility and new hope.

It is precisely at this moment that we need to reflect: what will our new path be like? We need to ask, “What is essential?” That is the question. We need to discover what is essential for our community to recover, regenerate and allow the Holy Spirit to ignite us, as an essential dimension of our Mission. If Christ is walking with us in this difficult time, where does He want to take us?

Two years ago, COVID hit Christians around the world and followers of all religions hard. The confinement coincided with Easter, drawing people away from the precious lifeblood of the sacraments at the height of the liturgical year. Now, however, we await a new Easter and the signs of a new life, and the possibility of a Church emerging from the crisis more focused on its main mission and on trusting in the promise left by Jesus to “do works even greater than these” (John 14:12).

The pandemic may have forced Church buildings around the world to close, but the Church itself never closes. As Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”. Our communities may even have felt discouraged, but let us remember the words of St. Francis: “And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy Gospel. .” (Testament of St. Francis – 1226).

May all communities of Associates be strengthened and renewed in faith and mission.

To the best of my knowledge there are two members of the Allegany Franciscan family with a direct connection to Ukraine: Sr. Michele Dolyk and myself. Sr. Michele was born in Ukraine and emigrated to the US as a child. She believes that in this terrible time, members of her family still in Ukraine were trying to get to Poland and hopefully have made it.

When my grandfather and his sister left Ukraine in the early 1900's they had to leave his sister's daughter, Katherina, behind with her grandmother. The plan to bring her to the US later did not happen. Katherina grew up, married, and died in Ukraine in an area between Kyiv and Chernobyl.

Fast forward to 2022 ~ Katya, Katherina's granddaughter, married Misha; they live in Zaporizhia on the Dnipro River. They have two daughters, Rymma and Zhanna (now 14 & 16). In 1993, when the Soviet Union collapsed, Katya visited the US with her mother - she was 7. On occasion, when relatives traveled to that area they did meet up with Katya.

With the prospect of imminent fighting some US cousins and Katya connected via Facebook and Messenger, using the translator apps. Misha and Katya decided that she and the girls should leave while Misha stayed to fight. Katya left with a neighbor who had relatives in Poland.

On March 5, she messaged us from Poland: "My husband is in Zaporizhia. The last evacuation trains left yesterday. The city is alarming. Explosions are heard (in) the city. I am in the apartment where I am calm, I hope the muscles recover and I get enough sleep. My children are with me. I left the house for the safety of the children. I am very scared and anxious, yesterday I was hysterical. But I must not show my fear." On March 10 she wrote: "I got to an apartment in Gdansk. It's all right, I'm safe. Everything is fine with us, as far as it can be in the current situation. We have food, warmth. In Poland, train travel is free for me for some time." Her lodgings are also free to allow refugees time to make other arrangements, but she must vacate by March 19.

On March 12, she said "We are well. I don't know why, but I really want to sleep. Apparently, tension and anxiety exhausted me. Today and tomorrow are holidays in Poland. Today I did the cleaning, cooked food. We are all calm. I've been looking at housing websites and haven't found anything yet."

The US cousins (there are about 25, plus our families and friends), are sending Katya money. She got a bank account in Poland to pay for food, clothing, and rent. We are exploring how to use Amazon to get her the things that she needs that can't be found in Poland. A cousin in Tennessee has a house where they can live. We are contacting our legislators to advocate for her coming as soon as possible; the State Department has not yet developed a plan to resettle Ukrainians with US ties, so it may take several months or longer.

If you are interested, there is a link to a 28 min. video done in 2020 of the beautiful city of Zaporizhia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XKYUWSSKbbs>. It is hard to imagine that it will soon be rubble.

Thank you for your prayers and support. Slava Ukraini! Glory to Ukraine!



The Flag of Ukraine



Katya, Rymma, and Zhanna



Free the Girls

Kathy Doyle

This is the 5th year that I have been collecting new and gently used bras for *FREE THE GIRLS* (FTG). The organization was created to assist women exiting sex trafficking as they re-enter their communities through sustainable economic empowerment and holistic reintegrative services. Women who complete the two-year *FREE THE GIRLS* program use the money earned from bra sales to build homes, open businesses, attend school (themselves and their children) and work in occupations that help others.

Why bras? There is a strong demand for used clothing in poorer countries. Bras are especially valued and command top dollar in the marketplace. They are easy to store but complex to make, so they don't compete with local goods. Setting up a microbusiness can be as easy as hanging out a half-dozen bras from an open umbrella in a marketplace. My brother saw this very thing while vacationing in Costa Rica.

This year's bra collection (324 of them!) held special significance because Mozambique is one of the three countries where FTG operates and is where three of our Allegany sisters are currently living and ministering.

If you are interested in doing something similar, it's easy! Contact Kathy at memadoyle@gmail.com.



Check out their website:
<https://freethegirls.org/>



A Final Lenten Prayer

Myrnamae Engleton



Let me be in the presence of God.
 Shift my focus from me to God.
 Oh God, You created the heavens and earth and everything in between.
 Oh God, You called me by name. Here I am to enjoy You, glorify You.
 Oh how powerful, wonderful and magnificent You are!
 I daily give You my worries and concerns and in return You provide all my needs.
 You pick me up when I am down; You strengthen me when I am weak.
 With my imperfect self I call on Jesus and You restore my sinful soul.
 Oh God, You are my God.

I cherish Your faithful love knowing that Your demeanor is constant -- loving, gracious, joyous, hopeful.
 May I walk with You into illuminating eternal bliss.

Amen

The Associate Alliance is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.

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Please send articles & photos to: svincent@comcast.net ♦ Deadline for next issue: May 26, 2022