



Associate Program

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Volume 6

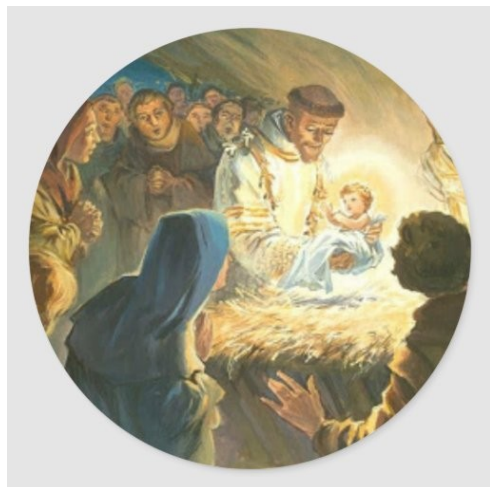
Issue 22

December 2020



Pax et Bonum

## The Associate Alliance



We can learn from what Saint Francis of Assisi did 800 years ago when he thought about how to celebrate Christmas and discover true joy. He reimagined the nativity scene and brought the story of our Savior's birth to life for the faithful to understand in a deeper sense the reason for the season. In contrast to the bright lights, the vibrant sounds, and the fresh scents that we are accustomed to during the Christmas season, the nativity scene that Saint Francis recreated was to help us meditate on the simplicity and the humility of the birth of our Lord. Because, after all, Jesus Christ, our King, the Son of God, entered into history by way of a manger, a feeding box for

animals, in poverty and in desolation, surrounded by that barnyard smell. God, who gave us the gift of Himself, chose to become poor for our sake.

As Saint Francis stood before the manger that night of the first nativity scene, he was so moved that, according to Saint Bonaventure, "he was bathed in tears and radiant with joy." Christmas traditions, rituals, and even decorations do a lot more than just bring back memories of childhood jubilation. They have the power to move the senses, helping us remember the true meaning of Christmas. And so if preparing early for Christmas will yield to a deeper transformative experience, beyond the fun childhood memories of Christmas mornings, then let the holly hang, let the Christmas lights twinkle, and let the Christmas bells ring early. May that extended time along with the Christmas traditions help us better prepare our hearts. May they help us remember that the true source of our joy lies not in these ephemeral and material manifestations but in the gift of Christ himself to the world.

When Saint Francis meditated on the birth of our Lord, he was overcome with joy. May we, too, make the time to find that same joy this Christmas. "Emmanuel"- God with us!

The Saviour of the world has come down from heaven. Let us rejoice!

This proclamation, filled with deep rejoicing,  
echoed in the night of Bethlehem.

Today the Church renews it with unchanged joy:  
the Saviour is born for us!

A wave of tenderness and hope fills our hearts,  
together with an overpowering need for closeness and peace.

In the crib we contemplate the One  
who stripped himself of divine glory  
in order to become poor, driven by love for mankind.  
Beside the crib the Christmas tree, with its twinkling lights,  
reminds us that with the birth of Jesus  
the tree of life has blossomed anew in the desert of humanity.

The crib and the tree: precious symbols,  
which hand down in time the true meaning of Christmas.

Paula's journey with the Alleganys began at the age of nine when she attended Immaculate Conception Preparatory School in Jamaica. After completing high school and a year of business school, she entered the congregation in Jamaica, then went on through her postulancy and canonical novitiate in Allegany and Piscataway.

In 1984, she took a leave of absence to discern her vocation. While her physical presence was no longer with the FSAs, she never left the Franciscan way of life.

Her professional training was in nursing. With over 40 years as a nurse, she is now reaching a new crossroad in her life: retiring as of December 2020.

She developed her own sense of community with her fellow nurses and her ministry was developed through journeying with dying patients, helping them in accepting and welcoming Sister Death. Even so, she felt as if something was missing, so she sought out the Associate program. She says that it has felt like "coming home," to talk, share, and be with like-minded people who seek out and follow Franciscan-Clarian spirituality. Being an Associate is actually empowering and challenging Paula to become something more than she already is, allowing her to bring something special to the California Nurses Association where she is on the Board of Directors for over 200,000 registered nurses.

It is said that when God closes a door, He opens many windows ~ the Associate program is definitely an open window that Paula claims for herself.



Paula Lin

## Helping One of Our Own

*Sheila Vincent*

2020 has definitely been a year for the history books. On top of everything else that has been experienced, there have been 13 hurricanes. Hurricane Eta, a Category 4, tore a wide path of destruction through Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala on November 3. Eta later swept across much of the US South, dumping heavy rains and gusty winds across Florida and the Carolinas after making landfall north of Tampa Bay. Hurricane Iota hit the area again and created more disasters.

The death toll in Honduras alone is estimated at more than 50. Damage from the torrential rains caused flooding from storm surge and nearby rivers and landslides in areas of higher terrain which left many homes unlivable. More than 120 people are dead and hundreds of thousand are homeless as entire communities remain underwater throughout Central America.

Miami Associate Alba Luz Mejia comes from Honduras and her family's home was severely impacted. They have lost pretty much everything.

The Tampa Bay Associates quickly decided that this year's Christmas donation was going to be sent to Alba's family. "Charity begins at home," as they say, and an Associate in need is a call for action.

From the generous hearts of this small but committed group, \$1,000 was collected and sent to Alba in Miami. It's a start.

Should any other Associate community wish to join in this effort, please contact Alba for more information.



Alba's family lost almost everything due to Eta. The waters went all the way up to the roof, which caved in.



*Varma Childs*

At our October meeting, Sr. Jeanne Williams joined in to help us recognize our gifts and discern our call to one or more of the leadership roles necessary for the community. Described as “Discernment - A Journey to Wisdom,” Jeanne outlined the four stages of the discernment process before our meeting.

In the beginning, she asked us to think about a time and/or an event when there had been an awareness that God was present and then to hold that thought.

The four discernment stages, which happen simultaneously, are:

- \* Things are meant;
- \* Signs;
- \* The heart speaks;
- \* There is a way.



As Jeanne elaborated on each of these, she spoke of her own experience with cancer and the wonderful results from the use of a drug prescribed by a new oncologist, which has given her new life and energy when all seemed hopeless. God was truly in that!

She asked if others had experiences of knowing that God was present. Mary Laubenthal and Gerri Mullin both shared. A computer malfunction unfortunately prevented Sr. Beth from sharing.

The presentation worked! All the leadership positions were filled, with some offering to help with more than just one thing. Sr. Jeanne's great story telling and explanatory skills made the day.

## Simple Gift

*Kathy Doyle*

My sister Diane lives in Colorado and has a friend who does mission work all over the world. I met Evelyn when I visited there in 2019, after her return from a mission trip to the Ukraine. Since we are Ukrainian, we asked Evelyn to come and tell us about her Ukrainian experiences.

As she was leaving that night, I gave Evelyn some money for her next mission trip, to use for whatever she thought was needed by the people. I recently got a thank you note from her: she had gone to Tanzania and helped in the schools. She used my money to buy 200 erasers - apparently, they are a treasured commodity for the school children. Little things can mean a lot!



## Community of Pires do Rio Celebrates the Feast of St. Francis

*Claudio Alves de Oliveira*

Despite the pandemic, the community of Associates of Pires do Rio-GO, didn't hesitate to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis and the Triduum over the course of October 1-3. On Sunday, October 4, there was a beautiful Mass, celebrating St. Francis of Assisi. The church in Pires do Rio is a Franciscan parish so there are many who are devoted to St. Francis. There is even a chapel dedicated to our saint and to the Franciscan Order as well. The Associate community sent a message to the members of all Franciscan groups which said:

“He always sowed peace; like a giant sunflower, Francis was always turned towards God, his beginning and his end. Even at the moment of his death, he called out to his Sister Death. Within us are many seeds ~ how have we sown them? The world is a large plantation of God's ~ may we be like Francis and sow peace, love, joy, forgiveness, patience...”

The world misses and longs for Francis,” said Pope John Paul II when he visited Assisi. “We all must learn to live the values of Francis.”

## A Season of Change

Kathy Doyle

Just as the sisters are preparing for Congregational change with Chapter 2021, associates also find themselves closer to the edge of tomorrow. In preparation for the challenges, Jeanne Williams and Kathy Doyle offered a Visitation/Day of Reflection to the Associate Communities in the US and Jamaica. It had a three-fold purpose:

1. to visit each community and to give Jeanne a chance to say goodbye, as she was retiring July 2020;
2. to provide a mechanism for the associates to reflect on what it means personally to be an Allegany Associate, how that has impacted their lives, and to discern where they see their community in five years. Each associate and community determined that they wanted to continue to bring the richness of the Allegany charism to the people they meet and to share it with the world;
3. to propose a new, more collaborative model of leadership – the Charism Development Team: Leader (LAC), OnGoing Formator, and Initial Formator. As part of the process everyone was asked to list the traits, characteristics, virtues, qualities that they associate with leaders/leadership and then were challenged to assess if they truly possessed some of them and were willing to share those talents with their local community.

Miami was the first stop in October 2019. At that time, Sisters Lucy, Michele, Colleen and Jo were leaving the area. Carol Lang offered to be Initial Formator in Miami before her untimely death in June. Marcia Gill and Margaret Rorick, along with Ella Pulido, now form Miami's leadership team.

Next was Allegany/Olean in November. MaryKay Tambash and Sr. Beth McGinnis are the co-leaders.

In early February 2020, Kathy joined Jeanne in Tampa. Leslie St. John is the new LAC for Tampa, Marion Tarallo is now the On-Going Formator and Sheila Vincent is the Initial Formator

In mid-February only Kathy was able to meet with the North Carolina associates. Bobby Ann Caldwell remains the LAC.

And then COVID hit.

We finally had a Zoom meeting with New Jersey in June. Sandi Klose's term expired, so Robin Roche and Laretta Chiarini agreed to co-lead.

Jamaica's program was in July. Currently Margaret Jarrett in Kingston and Michele Robinson and Anna Sattaur in Montego Bay lead their respective communities.

The Chapter theme, "Behold, I am doing something new - Listen," reminds us that God is about new life. Associates have been called at this moment in history to present the life of our congregation in new places and new ways. We find ourselves entrusted with their mission and charism, claiming them as our own in a world desperately in need of them.

*"We are challenged to bring to the world the presence of the Christ. Like Mary, we listen to God's invitation and trust in God's promise. Like Elizabeth, we need to be open to the unexpected despite our age. Like Joseph, we need to be attentive to dreams that lure us beyond the law to extravagant love and fidelity."*

*(excerpted from NACAR Dec. 2018)*

May we continue to give witness to God's love as we journey with Francis, Clare and the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany.



*For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven.  
Ecclesiastes 3:1*



# A Reflection from Pope Francis

Sheila Vincent

Gather your family and friends as darkness falls tonight. If you have decorated your Christmas tree, have a ceremonial lighting of it. If not, you might want to light several candles. Use this blessing from the Pope to bring peace and good cheer to all those gathered:

In turning on the light of the Christmas tree,  
we wish for the light of Christ to be in us.  
Let there be light in the soul, in the heart;  
let there be forgiveness of others;  
let there be no hostilities or darkness.  
Let there be the beautiful light of Jesus.  
May there be light be in our hearts,  
in our families, in our cities,  
in our countries, in our world.

And now, with this wish, let us turn on the light.



# South Jersey Adopts a Family for Christmas

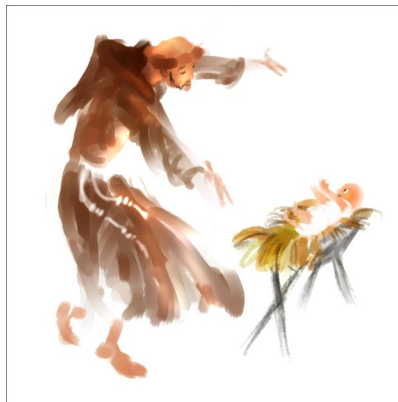
Robin Roche



The South Jersey Associates adopt a family every Christmas Season. This year even though our gatherings are small due to the pandemic, our hearts are still big and we were still able to provide gifts and gift cards to our adopted family. Laretta Chiarini hosted the gathering where we collected gifts and she also took a picture of our presents from Santa.

Pictured left to right are: Jeanette Poole, Mary Jaques, Jo Mary Pescatore, Sr. Pat Sheeran, Pat Simmons, Joan Hoolahan and Jane Kopas. Several others also contributed but joined us via Zoom that day.

We pray all of us and our families have a safe, healthy and blessed Christmas season.



**The Associate Alliance** is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.  
Editor/Translator: Sheila Vincent      Contributors: Claudio Alves de Oliveira; Varma Childs; Paula Lin; Kathy Doyle; Robin Roche

Please send articles & photos to: [svincent@comcast.net](mailto:svincent@comcast.net)    ♦    Deadline for next issue: Jan. 25, 2021