



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

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The Associate Alliance



Hope in the New Year

As we start a new year, let us pay attention to hope. We should be waking up to how hope hovers and hangs in the air, how we miss moments when hope is softly knocking at the door of our hearts because we are too busy, or the external/internal noise of the world causes us to miss hope's arrival.

A new year invites us to tend hope and to continue to fan the flames of hope throughout the year to come. We don't, however, do this. Many times, especially with the continuing presence of the COVID pandemic, we get tripped up and trapped ~ with the new year, perhaps hope is packed up with the holiday ornaments.

What if we, you and I, are called to be "tenders of hope"? A brave, bold hope that doesn't try to dismiss painful reality, but refuses to say that God's beloved world is too broken for redemption. A brave, bold hope that doesn't try to deny the pain, but holds the light of hope for God's healing presence to enter that pain. A brave, bold hope that isn't interested in intellectual platitudes, but keeps singing songs of God's grace that grounds us and guides us toward the light.

Hope takes different shapes and forms within each of us. Hope is expansive and elastic to embrace all God's creation. Hope says there is no finish line when it comes to hope this side of eternity. We journey on toward our deepest desire of connection with the Creator and all of God's creation. Hope becomes the fuel that feeds our lives. God is the One who conducts, composes and will complete hope.

Yet too often in the world cynicism won't go quietly into that good night. People will keep pointing out why hope is foolish, because deep down they would rather pass on their pain than let hope change them. People will turn their backs on the shiny, small sliver of a flame flickering hope, toward the fear in the dark night because for some reason we tend to trust the naysayers and hope-singers and sharers.

To quote Roberson Davies, "The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend." We accept only what we can perceive. So if all the antenna of our life is tuned to stations telling us to be afraid and that hope won't work and that you should send them money so they can convince others ~ if we are not brave and bold enough to select another radio station ~ we will be stuck in the muck and mire of despair.

Hope still hovers, hums, and holds us right now. Draw as close as you can to your candle of hope. Feel the warmth. It is as real as what you just heard on the news. Hope is here. Hope longs to make a home in you so together we can share God's Good News and Gospel Grace medicine with the world which is hurting and hungry. Open yourself to hope; listen; pour hope a cup of tea or coffee and sit for a bit together. Tell each other what is deepest within you. Then, sing together! Because the world needs a new song of what is possible by God's grand entry into our world here and now during this New Year.

Questions to consider:

- What does hope long for in your heart/life?
- How might hope be embraced and embodied and expressed in your life now and throughout 2022?
- What hopeful and hope-filled ways can the candle of hope spark a light you will let shine every day?



Meet Marcia Gill - Associate from Miami, FL



Marcia Gill was born in Buffalo NY and she and her family moved to Miami in 1953. This resulted in Marcia's first encounter with the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany when she attended Corpus Christi Elementary. She attended Notre Dame Academy High School but Corpus Christi was her parish so she maintained contact with the FSAs. A desire to become both a nurse and an Allegany Franciscan, was nurtured during those years, and in the fall of 1959 she entered the community. After her formation period, she and Sr. James Kathleen (Pat Sheeran) were sent to live at St. Francis Hospital in Miami Beach, where Marcia had worked as a nurse's aide during high school. She and Pat attended nursing school at Barry College; subsequently Marcia was sent to work at St. Joseph's hospital in Tampa, where she remained until she left the community in 1967.

It was in Tampa that she met her husband, Jim Gill, and after moving to south Florida, they married in 1971. They were happily married for over 17 years, until his death in 1988.

Marcia's career as nurse and radiation therapy technologist spanned over 40 years. In 1998 she also became a Certified Healing Touch Practitioner which has since become her ministry.

In the early 2000s, Marcia reconnected with her childhood friend Sr. Lucy Cardet, who invited her to a Franciscan Associate meeting at the sisters' home in Miami Shores. This not only returned her to her Franciscan roots, but resulted in a conversion of spirit since she had not been attending Mass regularly for several years. The monthly meetings with sisters Michele Dolyk and Lucy were a homecoming for her.

Eventually, Marcia and Ella Pulido became co-LACs (local area coordinators) of the Miami Associate Community. When the sisters decided to close their Miami Shores home, Marcia, Ella and Margie Rorick formed an Associate Leadership Team (along with Carol Lang, who subsequently passed away) to continue the Associate Community in south Florida. Alba Solis Mejia began leading the Spanish Associate community.

Currently, Marcia is "semi-retired" and continues to serve through her Healing Touch work, mentoring students preparing for certification. She also conducts the choir at Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish in North Lauderdale FL. She loves gardening, birding and being out in nature. Currently, she is enjoying the "Bible in a Year" podcast with Fr. Mike Schmitz and her favorite scriptural verse is from Psalm 46:10:

"Be Still and Know that I am God."

South Jersey Associates' Christmas Project

Lauretta Chiarini

All our Associates look forward to the meeting when gifts for our Christmas family are gathered. Joan Hoolahan selected a family that would appreciate a "surprise visit from Santa" and she chose a family with young children. We each get the same family member every year, so we get to watch them grow. Since one child had wanted action figures for past two years, it was with joy that basketballs, footballs and soccer balls were on his wish list this year!

We gathered at Jen Mauro's home and we were all oohing and aahing at the pretty bags and wrapped gifts. Some members gave gift cards to grocery stores.

We left Jen's house with the spirit of Christmas in our hearts.



L-R: Jen Mauro, Edna Sucko, Joan Hoolahan, Anne Bock, Sandra Klose, Peggy Madison, Sr. Pat Klemm, Lauretta Chiarini, Jeanette Poole, Carol Ciesielski, and Robin Roche

Sheila Vincent

How is your breathing? Do you find time to notice your breath? I love letting my imagination loose to consider what I am exhaling out into the world and what I am inhaling into my being. What I am sharing and shining in the world and what am I feeding and fueling my heart/mind/soul/life with?

I would like to invite you to hold lightly the question, “What do I want to be today?” as important for grounding and guiding yourself with grace. I encourage you to spend time in silence.

Wait ~ keep reading, please. I know that silence is not exactly the most exciting suggestion. I know you would rather I talk about volunteering, saving the world, or even going to the dentist where the hygienist constantly asks questions which can’t be answered because she has sharp tools in your mouth. Yes, I would take that over silence any day. But silence is how God gets a word in edgewise and nudges us. How our soul catches up.

It has been said that there are two dimensions of silence – external and internal. External is when we get away from all the people and noise and stimuli and let our body come to quiet. Internal – which is harder to do – is when we calm and center our mind on God. We come to a kind of mental and emotional rest in God.

Prayerfully ponder when and where and how you can do this. Be intentional and thoughtful. While some people can practice the prayer posture of silence anywhere, I find I can’t be near my phone or computer because of the notification dings that are like Pavlov’s dog response of me reaching immediately to say or to type something. I find being outside helps as nature is healing to me. Find a good time for a sacred pause. You don’t have to do this for hours. Five minutes is fantastic. Ten minutes is fabulous. Even two minutes is great! You don’t have to be a monk to practice this. There is no grade. Be patient, open, honest with yourself and how you enter this practice.

I pray that in the stillness and quiet of you with your breath, you remember God is breathing on you a breath of life, filling your heart with love, and calling you beloved. May that rest within you and may you rest within the holy this day. *Amen.*

Reaching Out

Alba Mejia

INVITATION TO BELONG AND BECOME PART OF THE FRANCISCAN ASSOCIATES GROUP



The Miami community of Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY are welcoming new members. We are women and men who follow the spirituality of St. Francis and St. Clare, striving to live Gospel values and supporting the Sisters’ mission of caring for the Earth and advocating for social justice. Rejoice that the Spirit is alive and present among us today. The Associate Program is a sign of life and hope.

May each one of us realize our own goal of union with God and the building up of God’s Kingdom as we journey with St. Francis, St. Clare and the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. For more information for the English Group, please call Marcia Gill at 954-494-2849.

And for the Spanish Group, please call Alba Luz Mejia Solis at 305-495-0362

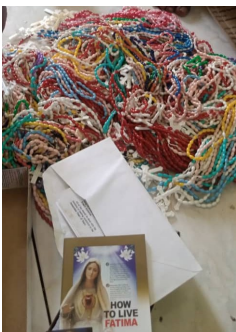
Looking for a way to get the word out about your Associate Community? An announcement was placed in the parish bulletin of St. Rose of Lima (Miami) and there have already been responses!

The announcement was in English and Spanish in order to better reach out to the entire congregation.

It’s not hard to do and definitely generates interest.

Rosaries for Uganda

Leslie St. John



Rosaries are in short supply in eastern Uganda, so “Rosary Makers” in the US ships them out when they have 300 made. The St. James Nursery and Primary School, in Mbale, Uganda recently received a donated supply and will be distributing the rosaries to the children soon. This is a project I undertook to help evangelize to the little ones of Africa,



Celebrating Christmas in Pires do Rio

Claudio Alves de Oliveira



Left:
The Community
celebrating after
Mass.

Right:
Glorinha and
Tininha show
their bag of
presents



The 100% vaccinated members of the Associate Community of Pires do Rio celebrated Christmas together at the home of LAC Maria Ivonir. The meeting began with a Mass celebrated by Friar Vilmar, with the readings being proclaimed by Sister Oneida, osf and Sister Helena Paula of the Franciscan Congregation of the Poor. There was a brief meeting to discuss salient issues relative to the community, followed by a delicious lunch. It was time of great joy and celebration especially since the community was unable to meet during 2020 due to the pandemic.

LAC Maria Ivonir (aka Nicinha) is an excellent hostess, even presenting everyone with a beautiful bag of images of St. Francis and Saint Clare! It was a very joyful and fun-filled day for everyone!

A Winter Prayer—Psalm 147

Carol Ciesielski

Look up! Look at the stars on a cold clear night.
 Each one, every one is known by God.
 Look up at the clouds over the hills.
 Feel the rain splash - every drop a gift from God.
 Look up to the mountains, there snow is falling;
 feel the blast of hail, the crisp beauty of frost.
 Every flake of snow, every crystal of ice
 its own unique complex pattern.
 Great is our Lord, incredible in power,
 endless in understanding.
 The amazing God delights in beauty
 but delights even more in setting people free.
 Look and see! God picks up people who are knocked down
 and gathers up those who are rejected.
 God heals people who are wounded.
 Praise the Lord! Sing praise!
 Look up! See how God cares for us.
 God blesses our children and feeds us with good food.
 God pours out peace on us like rain.
 The truth of His Gospel flows quickly over the world
 His Spirit like the wind into every place on earth.
 Look and see how God loves us!
 Great is our Lord, incredible in power, endless in understanding.
 Praise the Lord! Sing Praise!.

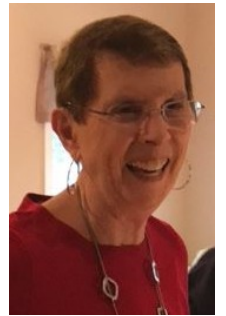


Every year the North Carolina Associates gets together for a Christmas party. In 2021, the get-together consisted of food, frolicking, and (best of all!) the acting out to the song the "Twelve Days of Christmas". It is the highlight of our time together, thanks to our 'director' Teddy Altreuter. The "tradition" was started many years ago by Rita Joan Phillips.

A good time was had by all twelve associates at Ellen Nash's home.

Passings

Our friend, North Carolina Associate Janet Mamura passed away peacefully at home on January 20. She bravely battled cancer for the past two years and was truly an inspiration in the way she handled it all. Although not able to participate in community gatherings lately, her friendship and deep spirituality will always be remembered. She was an Associate since 2016.



The Lord knows those who take refuge in him.

Nahum 1:7

Lenten Observances



Over the years, modifications have been made to the Lenten observances, making our practices not only simpler but also easier.

Ash Wednesday still marks the beginning of Lent, which lasts for 40 days, not including Sundays. The present fasting and abstinence laws are actually very simple: on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the faithful fast (having only one full meal a day and smaller snacks to keep up one's strength) and abstain from meat; on the other Fridays of Lent, the faithful abstain from meat. People are still encouraged "to give up something" for Lent as a sacrifice; recently the practice has expanded to "doing something extra." An interesting note is that technically on Sundays and solemnities like St. Joseph's Day (March 19) and the Annunciation (March 25), one is exempt and can

partake of whatever has been offered up for Lent.

Nevertheless, it is taught that, "If you gave something up for the Lord, tough it out. Don't act like a Pharisee looking for a loophole." Moreover, an emphasis must be placed on performing spiritual works, like attending the Stations of the Cross, attending Mass, making a weekly holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament, taking time for personal prayer and spiritual reading and most especially making a good confession and receiving sacramental absolution. Although the practices may have evolved over the centuries, the focus remains the same: to repent of sin, to renew our faith and to prepare to celebrate joyfully the mysteries of Easter.

Happy, Joy-Filled New Year

Sheila Vincent

At the beginning of the New Year, we say: 'Happy New Year'! But do we really think about the joy that should be a part of that saying? Do we turn toward, tend, and trust the ways joy shows up in our lives? We should be trying to notice the people who help share joy with us. We should see it as a candle called "Joy" and watch the flame dance before our eyes.

So today, engage in an activity that brings you joy. This could be singing or listening to music. This could be talking to a friend. This could be painting, writing, walking, gardening. This could be simply sitting in silence.

Sometimes joy shows up and other times we need to show up to that which brings us joy. Re-read that last sentence please. Sometimes joy just shows up ~ other times, we must show up to that which can cultivate and create joy within us. Everyone should have a "life-giving list" ~ these are postures, places, people, events, and experiences that bring life or joy. It could be things like playing guitar, being in creation, holding someone's hand...

What brings you joy does not need to be justified or rationalized or intellectualized. Accept and celebrate the ways you can **cultivate** joy right now. Or, as author Henri Nouwen says, "Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day."

How might you intentionally and prayerfully and hopefully and peacefully choose joy today?

House of Prayer for All People

Kathie Uhler, *osf*

The House of Prayer for All People (HoP) is open and receiving visitors!

Since the formal opening and blessing in July 2021, there have been two companions: one from June into September and the other during the month of October. The HoP apartment allows for one companion along with Sr. Kathie, who is the HoP contact person and permanent resident.

Interested in becoming a companion? Please contact me for more information:

kuhler@fsallegany.org

Since the opening, and as COVID has permitted, approximately thirty persons have spent time in prayer for peace and reconciliation in the HoP Prayer Room. The only icon in the Prayer Room is "The Map of the World," framed and mounted above the mantelpiece. This represents what our Creator God has bestowed equally upon all of us: membership in the human family, at home on our Planet Mother Earth. There is also the Peace Prayer plaque, a gift from the Allegany Franciscan Associates.

Please join us each day, even for a brief minute, in prayer for peace and reconciliation:

Mon-Fri, 7-9 am Mon-Fri, 4-5 pm Mon evenings, 7-8 pm



Welcome to
The House of Prayer
for All People!!

We who live at the
HOUSE OF PRAYER
are privileged to pray
for peace and reconciliation
FOR ALL PEOPLE
twice a day (Monday - Friday),
from 8:00 to 9:00 AM,
and from 4:00 to 5:00 PM,
and Monday from 7 to 8:00 PM.
*We welcome you to join us
in this intention wherever you
are at these hours.*



When you can,
come and join us
in the Prayer Room
at these times!
966 Trinity Lane
Gulph Mills, PA 19406



Blessing for Lent

Almighty and ever living God, you invite us deeper into your world, your people, your Lent. May this time be one of outward focus. Help us live a Lent focused on freedom, generosity, and encounter

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

Editor/Translator: Sheila Vincent

Proofreader: Kathy Doyle

Contributors: Alba Mejia; Kathie Uhler, *osf*; Lauretta Chiarini; Leslie St. John; Claudio Alves de Oliveira; Carol Ciesielski; Marcia Gill; Ellen Nash; Kathy Doyle

Please send articles & photos to: svincent@comcast.net ◇ Deadline for next issue: March 25, 2022