



Associate Program

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Volume 6

Issue 25

JUNE 2021



The Associate Alliance

Preparing for Chapter

What is it that we wish to discover during Chapter this year?

We desire to live the event of Chapter as an encounter with God, with ourselves, with our world, with Creation, with people, with the faces of our brothers and sisters, with that group of humanity which has been impoverished and abandoned and which challenges us to continue to move out of ourselves and witness the life of Jesus Christ to all .

How better to prepare ourselves for this event, if not by daring to embrace the mystery of encounter, that is, living an experience of encounter which leads us out and takes us beyond? In preparation for this event/ encounter that the General Chapter will be, everyone who is a part of the Congregation will be invited to be committed to key moments of preparation in order to live the experience of encounter. This preparation has begun during our Assemblies.

The world is moving towards religious and cultural pluralism, challenging our convictions and methodologies. This will not be just any encounter, therefore, but an encounter which urges us to go out, to go beyond our borders to make us experience other models of seeing and listening, from the perspective of experience; an encounter which helps us to discern prophetic calls, to become aware of new modalities of being mission through our presence, wherever we are.

We are being presented with an opportunity to continue our journey with courage and watchfulness so as to make daring choices that will honor the prophetic character of our identity, a special form of sharing in Christ's prophetic office, which the Holy Spirit communicates to us, the people of God.

Our choices are to be made on the basis of our charism and it will take the community beyond its borders, towards people, groups, and/or situations which it may not normally encounter, but which it would like to know. In the case of communities which cannot easily go out, (sisters who are elderly or ill, for example) the 'beyond borders' situation could come into the community through an invitation to stay together, to share, and to pray.

With open hearts, open minds, open souls, we must be confident that the Spirit of God is in every hard decision and that something new is simply waiting to be born.

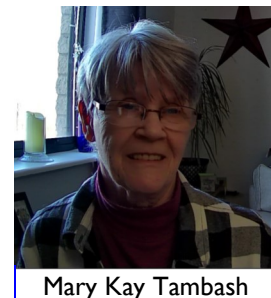
*There is a time
for everything
A time to begin
and a time
to step aside.
A time to
roll up one's sleeves
and work
harder than ever
and a time to admit
it is beyond us.
A time to pursue
new visions
and a time
to stop chasing
after them.
A time to let go
and a time to let come.
At no time
do we stop praying,
At no time
do we cease
giving thanks.*



Mary Kay was born in Olean, NY and has lived there all of her life except for two and a half years in Alaska. She is a mother of two, grandmother of five, and great-grandmother of three. Quite an accomplishment for someone who doesn't look a day over fifty! She lives in an apartment with her cockatiel, Frankie. On a summer evening one might see him in a carrier as she rides her scooter around the grounds of her apartment.

Besides being an Allegany Associate for seven years and co-coordinator of that community for the last three years, she has also been a member of the local chapter of the Secular Franciscans for 21 years and their local minister for three.

As an Associate, Mary Kay was asked by the Congregation to represent them on the Board of Genesis House in Olean and has done so for the past three years. Genesis House originated in 1995 as a shelter for the homeless and has the support of many interfaith churches in the area, as well as the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. When not busy with all of the above, she has hobbies to keep her occupied which include making greeting cards, wreaths, and other beautiful creations.



Mary Kay Tambash

The Christianity of Unruly Women

Margaret Jarrett

A little over a year and a half ago, I started a group called "Last Thursday Supper." We used to meet, pray, and share spirituality during a meal, but with COVID restrictions, we no longer gather together. I now write a monthly reflection instead. In honor of the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, celebrated on July 22, I share the following reflection:

Mary Magdalene has long been misrepresented as either being a former prostitute or a "fallen woman." The word "magdalen" is still defined in many dictionaries as "a reformed prostitute." She was actually an independent woman who followed Jesus and provided for him and his followers. Her role was not typical for women of the time, and for more than 1400 years she was misrepresented by the Catholic Church, from 591 until 1969. In 2016, she was declared a saint in recognition of her true relationship with Jesus - she was the first disciple to whom He revealed Himself after his Resurrection and He sent her to tell the brethren the Good News (John 20:17).



In the front line of the third march from Selma, led by Martin Luther King (March 23, 1965), walking between John Lewis on her right and Ralph Abernathy on her left, is an "unidentified nun." Many who were present have identified themselves over the years, but she never came forward. We do not know her name but she could have been an "unruly nun." This was three years after the Vatican Council II encouraged women religious to engage with the world by looking at where people were suffering and in need. Many sisters responded by changing the way they dressed and by engaging in social justice ministries as the "unidentified nun" clearly did. Her dress is short, her headgear is simplified and her hair is visible, unlike the portrayal of her in the movie "Selma." She was not in the background nor asking for permission to be there; she was up front, actively demonstrating her support for justice and equality for all. It can seem that the traditional hierarchical churches are uncomfortable with women who do not conform to a traditional biblical role. They are women who listen to what God is saying to them and respond in the best way that they can. These are the unruly women, who are either misrepresented or unknown to the world, who witness to the truth by their lives and actions, who choose to follow faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus, prepared to speak truth regardless of consequence. Being a Christian comes with many challenges, and if being branded as an unruly woman is one such challenge, are we willing to find a way to embrace that?

Citing words from John Lewis: "Walk with the wind and let the power of everlasting love be your guide."

Letter from Margaret Mary Kimmins, osf Congregational Minister

Dear Associates,

Peace and All Good!

I write to you with heartfelt gratitude for who you are to us and what you do with and for us. The value of your presence at Assemblies, on Zoom calls, in meetings and at Chapters enlivens our spirit and is most welcome. We are impressed and grateful for having active Associates in Jamaica, Brazil, Bolivia and the United States. I have participated in many of your meetings and activities over the years and am always impressed with your spirituality, your awareness and action to reach out to those in need, your concern for our world, and of course, your joy in being together!



When I think back to the 1984 Chapter when it was decided to have an Associate Program and the institution of that Chapter directive in 1985, with Helen Lodge, OSF, as the first Director, I now can see this evolution as a path to further transformation and our openness to listening to the Spirit all along the way.

My hope for our future with you is that some of us may live together in community, that we attend to systemic change regarding social justice issues, especially as they pertain to those who are marginalized, promote interculturality, a global awareness, integral ecology, our common home, and that we attract more people to the Franciscan/Clarian way of living.

Please be assured that your presence invigorates us and enables us to see more clearly the signs of the times. You are really our partners in mission and charism.

Gracias, Obrigada, Thank you

I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me

Sheila Vincent

The US is bracing for a 20-year high in numbers of migrants arriving at the southern border, including thousands of children who are being kept in government-run detention facilities. As of late March, Customs and Border Patrol agents were holding more than 18,890 unaccompanied children in custody, according to US media. Department of Homeland Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has said the camps, which are often compared to jails or warehouses, are "no place for a child." At least 5,000 children have been kept for over 72 hours, the legal limit after which they are meant to be transferred to the custody of health officials in the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Mr. Mayorkas blames pandemic restrictions and abnormal weather in Texas for the delay. Lawyers who represent the children, and lawmakers who have toured the camps, say that they are being held in cramped and overcrowded conditions.

The Biden administration has allowed unaccompanied children under the age of 18 to enter the US while their claims are processed. The children, however, have been seen huddled together and sleeping in foil blankets on mattresses on the floor. Many have only the clothes on their backs.



Through Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Laredo (Texas), donations may be sent to a Humanitarian Respite/Immigration Center, in the form of much needed clothing, as well as money for food for the children there. The Executive Director of the Center sent us a donation list of necessary items (an Amazon wish list), so if any other Associate community is interested in joining us, please contact me (svincent@comcast.net) or Linda Dees (peaceto you7@juno).

See Linda Dees' article on page 4 for more information.

Notes on Minor Solitude

Sheila Vincent

Reading about Thomas Merton, Trappist monk, social activist, writer, theologian and philosopher, I realized that he was a virtuoso of the solitary life. It occurred to me that we should sometimes be reminded that solitude can be woven deeply and intrinsically into our social selves. Social media, digital communication, and the connectivity of the virtual world mandate that we be in view, present and available nearly always, making it easy to equate solitude with reclusiveness and withdrawal.

Perhaps we should consider an alternative view - that solitude and social interaction are not necessarily exclusive but, rather, circumstances that mutually sustain and inform one another.

“A man who studies happiness must sit alone like a sparrow upon the house top, like a pelican in the wilderness,” wrote Thomas Traherne, a 17th century English poet and theologian. The statement suggests not isolation or withdrawal but a solitude that grants a sense of inner composure, that sense of clear self that allows for meaningful interaction in the exterior world. It is something which is a more momentary manner of being alone that restocks the spirit, a solitude that is not an orchestra silenced, but a series of faint and minor notes. A solitude of perpetual flowering, a generative image that captures the deep core of interiority from which our beliefs and behavior emerge.

Solitude can, therefore, be episodic, incremental, occasional, momentary, nuanced, a sliver of spiritual nourishment, a quick step away, a slighter thread that can be woven into our social beings. It may be simply a chair by a window or a moment's reflection on a porch - any time that leads us to spiritual tranquility.

A Time to Begin and a Time to Let Go

Kathy Doyle

After 25 years, NACAR (North American Conference of Associates and Religious) has begun the process of dissolution, to be effective June 2022. The challenge of limited human and financial resources has led to this reality.

The Allegany Franciscan Sisters and Associates have supported and benefitted from the organization for many years. It provided ways to engage with associates and Associate Directors from multiple congregations in Canada and the US. There have been in-person retreats, webinars, and Creative Conversations on topics of mutual interest. They also fostered the creation of regional groups. The women in these groups share their hopes, dreams, challenges, advice, and best practices for the betterment of each respective Associate Program.

The programs slated for this year are still going forward. Over the years and up to the present day, many of our Associates have participated in their presentations and have used their resources.

The following is the closing statement in their Notice of Dissolution: *“Believing that God is serious about the future of the Associate way of life as a transformative presence in the church and the world, we know that you will continue to live your many different charisms. It will be through you and as you work together, for and with one another that the mission of NACAR will resonate and live on. We have plowed and harrowed and will leave the ground fallow. We dream of its restored fertility when the seeds of NACAR as a catalyst now unsown may take root in new ground and come to new life. We leave space for new possibilities and pray for those who will become the stewards of this new life.”*

Matthew 25:35

Linda Dees

After learning of horrible conditions at the Detention Center in Laredo, Texas, the Tampa Bay Associates decided to help the immigrants being held there. Following instructions from the Diocesan Catholic Charities Executive Director, items on their Amazon wish list as well as a \$100 cash donation for food needs were sent. Shoes of different sizes, backpacks, blankets and children's items were included in their “care package.”

I was a stranger and you welcomed me

Passings

On the morning of April 7th, Associate **Jean Lue** from Montego Bay, Jamaica, passed away at St. Joseph Hospital in Tampa, Florida. Jean was brought from Jamaica to St. Joseph's Critical Care Unit in February for medical treatment after contracting COVID.

She had been an Associate for many years, having worked with the FSAs at the Clinic in MoBay since 1963.

May Jean enjoy rest in the arms of God who has been her constant light and strength.



Jayne Dougherty, former FSA member and associate, died on May 8th from COVID. She lived in the Boston area for a while and worked with Sr. Clare Bertero as Regional Director of DREs in the Diocese of Boston. Jayne later retired to Florida and lived in an adult care facility. Sr. Melissa Scholl describes her as a woman full of love and compassion.

Into your hands, God, we entrust Jayne. Welcome her into eternal life!



Graced Crossroads

Kathy Doyle

When on the cusp of retiring in 2012, searching for something meaningful to occupy my 'retirement', I got a phone call. Would I consider becoming Co-Director of the Allegany Associate Program? While the phone call was unexpected, the idea was not. I had already decided to call the sisters and see if there was something I could do - so I literally jumped at the chance.

And what a ride it has been! Jeanne Williams, my "sister from another mother" and I were so tuned into each other that everything we did was always a real collaboration. It was wonderful traveling up and down the East coast to meet with the US associates and attend conferences. Visiting and meeting the associates and sisters from Brazil and Jamaica and seeing their beautiful countries was a once in a lifetime experience. A highlight, that still warms my heart is the 2014 celebration of the Associates' 25th anniversary at the Motherhouse.

Working in the Associate Program has been challenging: addressing the needs of the associates, enhancing the associate way of life, and balancing my personal life, but I never felt conflicted and always knew I had the comforting support and encouragement not only of the sisters and associates but of Gus, my husband of 55 years.

I discovered, when I represented the Allegany Associates at different events, that our Associate Program is light-years ahead of other religious congregations in their embrace of associates. By allowing associates to have a voice at their Assemblies, participate in Chapter and Chapter planning, serve on Boards, apply for grants, etc., the sisters have demonstrated the Franciscan ideal of what it means to be in relationship, always seeking the good of the other.

I have been personally nourished and spiritually enriched during these nine years as Co-Director. Watching the Associate Program move into the 21st Century, especially with Zoom (yes, we are finally 'getting it') has been as gratifying as it has been essential.

Now I am at another crossroad; a natural evolution between what was and what is to come. I am as excited for my next undertaking (whatever that may be) as I am for the possibilities that await the Associates and the Associate Program. I am a firm believer in the theory that God operates by the "Law of Mutual Benefit" – that God will take care of me as well as the ministry I am leaving. While you can change your job title you cannot change the way of life that has been so deeply embedded in your being. I may no longer be the Associate Co-Director, but I will always belong to the Allegany family, with more love and gratitude than I can express.



Kathy Doyle

Meet and Greet Sessions

Kathy Doyle

When we can't get together in person, COVID has taught us that Zoom is a 21st Century way to continue a relationship and to enhance and develop new ones. Instead of being isolated, some of our associate communities have grown, because they were able to connect with those who had moved, lived far away, or otherwise could not participate in person. We even established a completely virtual associate community which now has four women in formation.

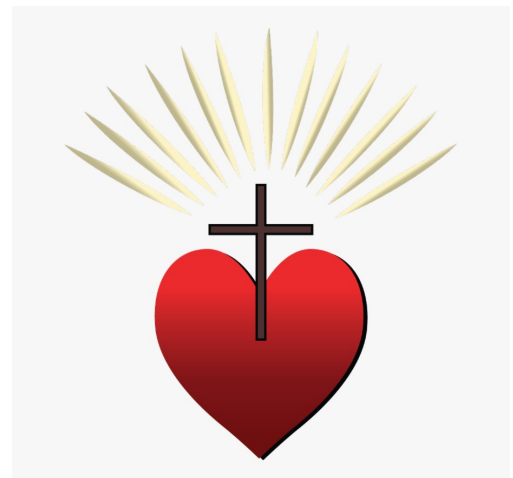
As a follow-up to our Associate Advisory Committee Visioning Retreat with Florence Hee, we formed a subcommittee to organize "Meet and Greet" sessions over the summer between the six English speaking associate communities in the US and Jamaica. They will do more than just put faces and names together. Since these gatherings would not be part of their regular monthly meetings, an agenda was prepared that will encourage associates to get to know one another, beginning with a reflection on Franciscan relationships followed by one or two interesting facts about each associate. In small groups they will share how and why they became associates, why they stay, and what the associate way of life means to them.

Each community will have the opportunity tell their "story"— how they came to be, who was there, changes made along the way, special projects they do as a group or individually, etc. There will be time for questions, explanations, and discussions.

The good thing about maintaining the same format for all of the meetings is that once the associate and the community prepare what they wish to present, they can simply repeat it for the other four sessions. Pairing two associate communities at a time will keep the total number of participants to between 20-30 people and will allow for meaningful sharing in the small break out groups.

Sisters who generally participate in associate meetings are also welcome. The first round will pair Allegany-Olean/South Jersey, North Carolina/Tampa and Miami/Jamaica.

Having traveled to all these communities as Associate Co-Director, I have seen and experienced the uniqueness of each one. I am excited for the associates to make these connections and discover that for themselves



From May 18-20th, NACAR offered a virtual retreat for its members entitled: *Associates as Charism Carriers: Embracing the Call to Leadership*. Seven of our associates and sisters, along with over 200 others, took advantage of this opportunity to have time to listen and reflect on the role of associates as carriers of the charism.

Sr. Carol Zinn, SSJ, was the keynote speaker and inspired all with her words of wisdom. The retreat was facilitated by two associates, Linda Mastro and Amy Kulesa, who did a wonderful job of planning our time, preparing the sessions and prayers, and setting the tone for the sharing that took place in small breakout rooms.

On Tuesday, Carol focused on our *Vocation Life and Vulnerable Love* as charism carriers. She stressed our commitment to the future and compassion lived out loud as embracing the call to leadership.

On Wednesday, Linda's first session was on *History and Legacy – Charism as Inspiration for the Future*. Amy's was on *Discipleship and Personal Call Amidst Changing Structures*.

On Thursday, Linda addressed *Our Evolving Vocation* and Amy, *Servant Leadership: Call as Gift*.

There was ample time for personal reflection and sharing in the breakout groups. Each time we gathered in a group the members were different, so everyone got to know a good number of associates from different congregations.

Some quotes from Carol's first presentation are:

- You have the opportunity in a given situation to be as big as God wanted you to be on the day of your Baptism.
- Charism is a spark – a gift of the Spirit – only a spark - given for the world to light up the flame of the Gospel.
- All vocations are response to Gospel call. We are charism carriers from our Baptism.

She quoted Pope Francis asking “is the Gospel my daily manual – is the life of Jesus my model?” Does the charism help me to build up the Body of Christ?

Carol defined vulnerable love as being open to all of life. Jesus always chose love over fear, mercy over judgment, inclusion over exclusion regardless of the cost.

In her second presentation she spoke about leadership as a commitment to the future; we are to live fully in the now with an eye on tomorrow. Compassion is to be lived out loud – we are to dismantle privilege, deconstruct polarization and disarm violence.

Association is with the charism, not the sisters. Associates need to be developing their own structures, even having their own chapters. We are called to be attentive to the Spirit in all things. Our job is to keep living the charism, not just come up with strategies for continuance.

Some quotes from Linda and Amy:

- The charism will move and breathe as it will.
- Associates are not helpers but co-workers and disciples. We are not called to be spectacular but faithful.
- Our early founders were flawed as we are, not perfect, not completely formed. The spiritual life is an evolving vocation.
- Charism is a favor given by the Spirit. We should not be afraid to be first, or afraid to fail.

We were invited to reflect on our congregation's history and our own personal timeline of our spiritual life and connection with the congregation. What have we learned from the founders of the congregation about leadership? What shifts are we seeing today? Our personal vocation is the heart of what we bring to our role as associates. It determines how we will carry and express our charism in the world. In summary I quote a reading Carol quoted from Rilke's Book of Love Poems to God: “Flare up like flame and make big shadows I can move in. Embody me.” Thus were associates challenged to assume leadership for future interactions.

Facing the Future Without Fear

Khalil Gibran

It is said that before entering the sea a river trembles with fear.
 She looks back at the path she has traveled, from the peaks of the mountains,
 the long winding road crossing forests and villages.
 And in front of her she sees an ocean so vast
 that to enter there seems nothing more than to disappear forever.
 But there is no other way. The river cannot go back. Nobody can go back.
 To go back is impossible in existence.
 The river needs to take the risk of entering the ocean
 because only then will fear disappear,
 because that's where the river will know
 it's not about disappearing into the ocean
 but of becoming the ocean.



Strategies for Staying in Touch

Claudio Alves de Oliveira

The pandemic in Brazil is still out of control and the community of Pires do Rio is still not able to meet nor work on group projects. The members have stayed in touch through the use of Whatsapp and by continuously praying for each other.

May 22 was “Hug Day” and what the group did was to create a folder which was sent to each member. This way, virtually, everyone was “hugged” with a prayer and much love.

It has not been easy to live in this isolation but we seek out ways to be together, through prayer, caring and trying to provide assistance. One thing we have done: every time Claudio goes out and sees one of the associates, he takes pictures and posts them on Whatsapp. We get to “see” each other but still maintain social distancing, protecting one another.

Unfortunately Brazilians are still suffering a lot from the pandemic and vaccines are few and far between. Let us pray that all people will be able to be vaccinated in the near future.

Quotable Quotes

May you use the gifts that you
 have received and pass on the love
 that has been given to you.

St. Thérèse de Lisieux



To be blessed, we do not need to
 become occasional heroes, but
 witnesses day after day. Witness
 is the way to embody the wisdom
 of Jesus. That is how the world
 is changed.

Pope Francis



The next issue of the *Associate Alliance* will be published in October, 2021.
 Be safe and be well!

The Associate Alliance is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.
 Editor/Translator: Sheila Vincent Contributors: Margaret Jarrett; Mary Laubenthal; Margaret Mary Kimmins, osf;
 Kathy Doyle; Michelle Robinson; Linda Dees; Pat Klemm, osf;
 Claudio Alves de Oliveira

Please send articles & photos to: svincent@comcast.net ♦ Deadline for next issue: **Sept. 24, 2021**