



Associate Program

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

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Pax et Bonum

The Associate Alliance

Celebrate the Easter Spirit After Easter

Why is it so hard for some people to maintain a spirit of celebration? I ask this knowing that I am one such person. I find the struggles of everyday life and the penitence of the Lenten season easier than seven weeks of Easter celebration. Who can keep up a party atmosphere that long? Who can keep up the Easter spirit for seven weeks? And yet that is what the Church asks of us each year. So here are some suggestions to try to keep us “in the mood.”

- **Read the Acts of the Apostles:** Acts is full of adventure and fearless heroes of the faith. During the Easter season, readings from the Old Testament are replaced by the Acts of the Apostles as we focus on the early Church. The early years of Christianity were a roller-coaster ride. First, there were those post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, as he slipped in and out, going through closed doors, walking with apostles on the road to Emmaus, and showing up while they were fishing. Then there was Pentecost with the coming of the Spirit in wind and tongues of fire. After Pentecost, the apostles had adventures of their own. They were fearless in proclaiming the faith, which consequently led to them spending time in jail. Seriously, read through the Acts of the Apostles. Feel free to skip the speeches to get to the fun stuff. There were miraculous healings, multiple baptisms, times in jail and jailbreaks (Acts 5:17–26; 12:6–11), the story of Stephen, the first martyr (Acts 7), and the story of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9) and his ensuing adventures spreading the Gospel.
- **Plant a garden:** Really? Yup, get your hands dirty in God’s good earth ~ it’s beneficial for your spirit! Discover your need for God. Plant seeds, pull weeds, depend on the vagaries of the weather to grow things ~ a garden doesn’t grow in a day but is the result of hard work, inch by inch, day by day. Do your work then wait for God to do the rest. Don’t have a green thumb? Start a spiritual garden. Tend and nurture with prayer, kind words, and good deeds. Pull out the weeds of jealousy, greed, envy, pride, vanity, gluttony, and unchecked anger. Ask God to water your garden with the blessings God so freely bestows.
- **Pray for Peace:** Before Jesus went to his death, he prayed at the Last Supper “that they may be one, as we are one” (Jn 17:11b). He prayed for all of us who would come after him - a great prayer for unity. When Jesus appeared after the resurrection, his first words were, “Peace be with you.” The early Church at first experienced a time of peace and unity: “The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common” (Acts 4:32). This was a unity we can only dream about in our country so divided by partisan politics. Perhaps this is only a unity to be dreamed about, not realistic in light of our human tendencies. But it is still worth praying and yearning for. Perhaps the peace we are searching for is as elusive as that unity that Jesus prayed for, which is all the more reason to spend time in prayer for both.
- **Look Up:** A grandfather once gave his troubled grandson a kite. The grandson asked him years later why he had given it to him. “I wanted you to have a reason to look up,” the grandfather replied. Amid all of his troubles - amid all of our troubles - it can help to look up to the sky and remember there is more to this world than what we are experiencing. When Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles were left looking up into the sky. It’s hard to feel down when looking up. Jesus didn’t leave them alone. He left them with each other and the promise of God’s spirit.

With a few days until Pentecost, these are a few ways to maintain the spirit of Easter. And so we are left gazing at the sky, gazing upon God’s creation as we await the outpouring of God’s spirit at Pentecost.



Michelle Robinson

In March I had the privilege of visiting Poland, a country where up to 90% of the population is Catholic. How did I get this golden opportunity? In December, 2018, Fr. Franciszek Jablonski, a Polish priest, visited Jamaica. He is the coordinator of "Mission Animation" in the diocese of Gniezno, Poland. This means he promotes awareness and interest in missionary work. As people become more aware about missionary work they provide support, especially through prayer and funding.

As part of his duties, Fr Franciszek visits mission countries - thus his visit to Jamaica. My parish, Sacred Heart, in Montego Bay, has two Polish missionary priests. During his stay, Fr. Franciszek celebrated Mass and after one, we were introduced. Three weeks later I was invited to participate in Mission Animation.

My role was twofold. I highlighted the fact that Jamaica is only 2% Catholic and that we benefit greatly from the generosity of missionary priests, religious brothers and sisters from several countries, such as the U.S., Philippines, India, the South Pacific and, of course, Poland. My second task was to excite and motivate the various groups to become vibrant Catholics who actively transmit the faith by word and action. I illustrated from my own life how, despite being from a small Catholic community, it is possible to be a strong witness. I told them that my husband and I celebrated 30 years of marriage this year and that we raised four sons. I stressed the importance of family prayer as the foundation for strong marriage and family life. I recommended daily Mass and mentioned that I am a Franciscan Associate. I also spoke of participating in Eucharistic ministry, Catechesis, Lectio Divina, and volunteer work at Hope Hospice, among other things.

I visited a total of 14 schools where I saw mainly teenagers. The sessions were very interactive. Fr.



Franciszek prepared a power point with pictures which both he and I had taken, showing Jamaica's beauty. They saw some national symbols, listened to Jamaican music and saw pictures of our athletes. Everyone had heard of Bob Marley and Usain Bolt!

Apart from schools, I gave testimonies in four churches. The first Sunday after my arrival, I attended six Masses and spoke at each one. I also met with a men's group on March 19, the Feast of St. Joseph. I met with a group of women who prepare couples for marriage. Between March 22-24, I attended a Mission Animators retreat at a retreat house by the Baltic Sea.

On March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation, I participated in a Pro-Life conference organized by the local government. We discussed the status of marriage and family life in general. At each event, I had someone translating for me. The Polish language is beautiful to listen to but hard to learn!

Fr. Franciszek arranged for me to visit two very important religious sites. The first was St. Faustina's Chapel of Divine Mercy (and her relic) and the second was the Basilica of Our Lady of Czestochowa (known as The Black Madonna). The latter is a revered icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary housed at Jasna Gora Monastery in Czestochowa. I also visited an interesting town called Torun, home of the scientist Copernicus.

The Poles are extremely warm and hospitable and I thoroughly enjoyed my short stay. I spent most of my nights at the home of an elderly lady named Janina, who knew no English - yet we still managed to communicate. She was like a mother to me - before each meal she would say "Smacznego, bon appetit!"

The trip was one of mutual enrichment. I saw many young seminarians and admired their reverence and silence in church. I would like to see this practice restored in our Jamaican churches. My circle of friends has gotten wider and I am richer for it. Would I go back to Poland? Definitely!



News from Brazil



On the morning of Good Friday, members of the Associate Community of Pires do Rio participated in Eucharistic Adoration at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. Besides the Associates, the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor and other members of the local Catholic Community were present.



Associates from the Anápolis area (Joanópolis) gather to discuss "Laudato Si"



Associates of the community in Palmas gathered to celebrate the 160th anniversary of the Allegany Franciscan congregation. The Associates held their commitment renewal ceremony at the same time.

Herbal Medicine for the Poor in Anápolis

Vergilina Rezende



On April 23rd, Sr. Donizete and several associates went to Joanópolis (a suburb of Anápolis) and set up a production site to create natural remedies ~ in particular, a syrup made from medicinal herbs. They worked from morning until night!

It was a very special day, providing an opportunity to create real fraternal relationships.

The ladies of this community, the parish of Our Lady of Guidance, were very inspired and during the month of May, they have already

made an entire new batch of syrup.

This project is meant to help needy persons, especially children.



Miami Ceremonies

Carol Lang



L-R: Sr. Colleen Brady, Shirley Raymond, Maria del Carmen Saavedra, Patricia Somoza, Margaret Rorick. Front: Elysee Manshia, Marcia Gill, Sr. Lucy Cardet, Carol Lang, Sr. Michele Dolyk, Sr. Jo Streva

On April 7, 2019, the Miami Associates celebrated a combined bilingual (English and Spanish) commitment ceremony, welcoming Margaret Rorick, Patricia Estrada and Maria del Carmen Saavedra as new Associates. In addition, Carol Lang, Elysee Manshia, Ella Pulido, Shirley Raymond and Marcia Gill renewed their commitments for another year.

At this meeting, both the American and Hispanic Associates met at San Damiano House to review the discussions held at the recent Regional Assembly in Tampa. Each group reflected on "Round One" Community Reflections and the Landscape of our World - moving towards Chapter 2020. Of the topics listed, we suggested which ones "spoke to us" as an Associate community. Lively discussion ensued, as the group strongly felt that action must follow discussion. We stressed the need to connect with knowledgeable people/

sources on the topics selected and not rely solely on news from the media. We agreed that perhaps the most relevant question should be: What do you have a passion about?

Our combined American/Hispanic Associates decided upon the following subjects to be brought back to the next assembly:

1. The plight of migrants and immigrants, including detention centers for children.
2. Racism, discrimination, prejudice, bias and intolerance of any people who are different from us. This includes discrimination against women.
3. Sexual abuse and cover up in the church
4. Climate Crisis and Climate Denial
5. Abandonment of the elderly

As we enjoyed a shared meal together, Patty Estrada, one of our new Associates had an announcement to make: she will become a U.S. citizen next week. Congratulations, Patty!

Celebrating

Sr. Jeanne's birthday &
Sr. Colleen's 25th Jubilee
during the
Associate Advisory
Committee meeting!

Congratulations!



“Being righteous and just”

Claudio Alves de Oliveira



St. Francis of Assisi once said, “start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” It is this philosophy that the Associate Community of Pires do Rio has tried to follow as its mission, to bring the message of Jesus to all people and to do good.

Our community organized a project “Educate for Life” as part of the Campaign (CF) 2019, whose theme was “Fraternity and Public Policy” and whose motto was **“You will be saved by being righteous and just.”** (Is 1:27). We had several meetings during the campaign period and felt motivated to take a little of what we have to children - no one is so poor that they can give nothing and no one is so rich that he does not have needs. We know that the fraternity campaign is very comprehensive in its aspects and that the church in Brazil aims to stimulate the participation of Christians in public policies, guided by the light of the word of God and the social doctrine of the church to strengthen citizenship and improve the common good. Our intention is to do good and collaborate where we can and make ourselves available to help.

The group decided to organize a party for the children of the project Educate for Life, because we are aware that this project needs support as well as the presence of many social segments of our community.

It was a very festive and blessed morning, with all the students of the project present. Associate Maria Gloria Rezende Silva told stories about St. Francis, then we prayed, sang and danced with the children. The goal of the party was to honor the children who had had birthdays during the past three months. Besides goodies, the birthday celebrants were presented with a card and a small memento. We are very happy with this celebration and we are already preparing for another new event.

Associate Advisory Committee Meeting in Tampa, FL

Pat Klemm, osf



At the recent joint meeting of the Associate Advisory Committee and the Local Associate Coordinators, the issue of attendance at Associate community meetings arose. We were reminded of our obligation to attend Sunday liturgy and how it might apply to the Associates as well.

We know that it doesn't matter to God whether or not we attend Sunday Mass - it is not actually a commandment. Where the obligation begins is in terms of the worshipping community - we are obliged to be present to one another in support of our faith. It is difficult to live the Christian life alone. We should be willing to stand together as we give thanks and praise to God. We share how to apply that faith to our daily lives and are then sent forth as one body to carry into the world all that we have received.

There are lots of parallels to our gathering as FSA Associates. We should be present to each other as we try to live the Franciscan way of life. This life is also a life in community that means more than being a name on a list of members. It isn't something that can be lived independently without connection to each other. Associate gatherings are a time to tell our stories of how we are living as Franciscan women and men. They are a time for input that increases our understanding and inspires our growth in Franciscan-Clarian spirituality. We then go forth to live our Associate way of life in the midst of family, friends, neighbors and co-workers, having been strengthened by our coming together.

Obligation? It depends on how you look at it. Just as many people age out of their ability to get to Church but are still in an excellent relationship with God, some Associates are no longer able to actively participate in community gatherings but are still living the Franciscan way of life. We are not called to judge and, in fact, have an obligation to be sure that inactive members still feel a part of the Associate community.

When we changed from calling ourselves "groups" to being "communities," it was with this in mind. We are not simply a group of people who come together for support and action but a true community of people striving to live together in the spirit of Francis and Clare. May they help us do so.



Since many Associate Communities do not meet during July and August, our next issue will not be published until October 2019.

Please note the new deadline for our next issue ~ September 25th.

**Your articles and pictures make our newsletter possible ~
thank you for sending in news!**

The Associate Alliance is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.
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Vergilina Rezende, Margaret Jarrett, Marcia Gill, Sr. Pat Klemm

Please send articles & photos to: svincent@comcast.net ♦ Deadline for next issue: Sept. 25, 2019