



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Associate Program

Volume 4
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The Associate Alliance

Retreats, Celebrations & Community Cheer



Pearl Anniversary Celebration - Tampa, FL



North Carolina Christmas celebration



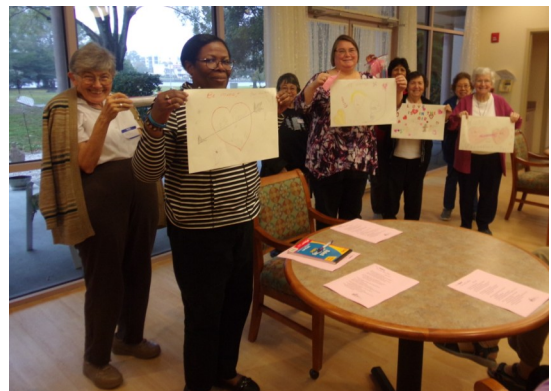
Christmas Festivities - Pires do Rio, Brazil



Retreat Day in Jamaica



Retreat Day in Miami, FL



Retreat Day in Tampa, FL

God is annoying because ...

... He doesn't accommodate His schedule to mine.



(The Creator sure gets a lot of criticism when His agenda seems to be at odds with ours)

St. Peter Claver School receives a Comfort Closet

Sheila Vincent



One of three carloads of toiletries

With exceptional assistance from the sisters of St. Anthony Convent (St. Petersburg) and St. Elizabeth Convent (Tampa), as well as financial support from sisters in Miami, the Associates of Tampa Bay were able to collect fifteen (15) boxes of items for the children of St. Peter Claver School. Toothpaste, tooth brushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant, lotions, hand sanitizers ~ a virtual pantry of toiletries ~ were delivered just before Christmas. Even a closet was included!

St. Peter Claver is a school with an abundant number of low-income students. Established 125 years ago, it is the oldest historically African American school in Florida still functioning. It operates only from funding through the community. The school provides three meals a day year round, as well as resources and

outreach to families in need of assistance and support.

The Associates felt that the kids needed to know that they are loved and cared for and that there were people who were willing to help them in any way possible.

Enough items were delivered to keep the Comfort Closet stocked for a while. It was decided that, if necessary, another collection would be made just before Holy Week.



Students, faculty and staff of St. Peter Claver School



Mondays seem to be the best day of the week for the residents of the Atria Assisted Living Facility. That is when New Jersey Associate Sandi Klose makes sure everyone is dressed warmly and assists them with getting in and out of the bus, helps them with their menu and reminds them about their checks... and also helps them remember what they ordered! Every Monday, unless it is a holiday, that's the routine.

Numbering anywhere from six to fourteen people (it depends which restaurant they are going to), she has become good friends with all of them - witness the smiles in the pictures!

Sandi began doing this when her Mom was at the facility. After she passed away, Sandi just continued. She also takes communion there, so she knows quite a few of the residents.

New Associate in Jamaica

Margaret Jarrett

The Kingston Associate's newest member is Hermine Huie. She is the current president of the Sts. Peter and Paul branch of the Catholic Women's League.

The seed of Hermine's deep connection to Franciscan values was planted by her mother who was an active Third Order member and would take the young Hermine to meetings and devotions. Her desire to know more about living Franciscan values inspired her to become an Associate. She has vowed to spread our Franciscan-Clarian charism by sharing with young people, especially those preparing for confirmation. She will also share with fellow members of the Catholic Women's League and participate in Associate activities.

After making her commitment and receiving her pin, she was welcomed by the community with the singing the Franciscan blessing.



Hermine receiving her Associate Pin from Jean Fong-Kong

Meet Teddy Altreuter ~ Associate from North Carolina

Teddy Altreuter has been an Allegany Associate for about 15 years. An avid tennis player and self-proclaimed “poor golfer,” Teddy is a busy gal. While she loves everything she is involved with, she is particularly passionate about helping immigrants feel welcomed and treated with justice and peace in their new homes in the US. She has worked for many years for the Brunswick County Literacy Council. (BCLC) having served on its Board for seven years and tutored for many more years in one-on-one programs with adult beginning readers. For the last several years she has focused on students learning to read in the Council's English as a Second Language Program.(ESL) Most of the students in this program are Hispanics from Central and South America but she has also been working with several young women from Vietnam. Recently, the St. Elizabeth Mission Society donated to a program of the Literacy Council, the class Teddy teaches to prepare students who have, or are working to achieve, legal status to be ready to take the Citizenship Test. Attendance is from one to five students each week in this class.



Teddy feels that it has been a privilege to get to know these people who find the time and the courage to come out each week while facing very difficult circumstances of their lives. All of them have children and all of them work at menial and physically demanding jobs. They come to class as often as they can manage, often bringing their children with them. It's inspiring to see how the children take care of each other while the class meets and how patient and loving the parents are to their children.

A Living Rosary in Araguacema

Suzete Arruda

On the first day of the year, we celebrated the Solemnity of Mary and during the Mass, the community prayed the rosary and attempted to understand it through the staging of and reflection on each mystery. One lady played the part of Elizabeth, a gentleman represented Zachariah; a 1-month-old baby represented Jesus while a couple were Joseph and Mary. It was enriching, profound and rewarding, creating a feeling of great intimacy with God. The scenarios were taken from the Gospel of St. Luke.



Lent - More Than Just Giving Up Chocolate



From the time we were children, our first question for Lent was often, “What are you giving up for Lent?” Giving something up for these 40 days is a custom that, when we were younger, helped us enter into the season with a sense of purpose and a greater awareness. As adults, we might want to consider looking at Lent in a deeper way. We are probably much more settled into our behaviors and patterns of life and sometimes giving up something is where we begin - and end - our reflections on Lent. It can be tempting to say “I am giving up chocolate” but without more reflection, it can become simply a way I show God how strong I am. It is more about me than any conversation with God.

Lent isn't simply about us “giving up” something. The real grace is when we recognize that Lent is a season in which God wants to *give us* something. God wants to help us transform our lives and make us more free as people - not just freer with God, but in the way we live our lives and love our families.

This year we might reflect and ask the deeper question: What is God inviting me to change this Lent? How do I know what God might be stirring in me? I begin by listening to the movements in my heart. Where am I feeling uncomfortable with the choices I am making? With the things I have done? With the habitual ways I respond? The Lord will be speaking to me in those small nagging moments of discomfort in my heart.

Asking what we would like to change about ourselves this Lent requires a little reflection. What pattern of behavior in my life needs changing? What do I need *more of* in my life? Patience? Unselfishness? More loving behavior toward my spouse or children or friends? Each of us can think of something that gets in the way of our being loving and self-sacrificing. The results of that behavior are never good and always divisive.

We can imagine a Lenten practice in which each of us would tell members of our family - those whom we have most offended - that we are sorry and ask them to help us to work with us to bring more unity and peace to our family life. We can ask: What would it cost me to change this behavior? What would it mean if I didn't walk around my family acting crabby all the time? What if I decided to be much more loving and patient with this Lent? What if I did decide to “give up” something really destructive in my life, like alcohol, overeating or too much time on-line? As I reflect, I might realize that changing a particular way I live is coming to me as a call from God and I don't have to do it alone. God is moving my heart to reflect on these changes and God will remain faithful and help me to stay open to the grace being offered to me for change. It may be something that I don't *want* to change or acknowledge, but that's where talking to God can make the difference. I am not doing this alone; I am doing it with God.

In asking God for help, we might ponder one of the many healing Gospels, like Mark 2:1-12. In this story, a group of friends carried a mat with a paralyzed man to Jesus, who was teaching inside a house. So many people crowded around the outside of the house that the friends were unable to get the mat inside. So they went up to the roof and moved aside the tiles and lowered their friend on the mat to Jesus below. The words to this Gospel say that the friends on the roof had “broken through” the tiles to lower their friend into the house for healing. Their breakthrough led directly to the healing.

Where do we need a breakthrough? What is the barrier that keeps us from asking for healing? In our own lives, we need to break through our denials, defensiveness and our unwillingness to look at ourselves. Discovering what the barrier is in my life is critical. If we don't know what the barrier is, these weeks of Lent are a great time to reflect upon it. When we identify the barrier, we have made the breakthrough. That's when Jesus can heal us of it.

Why is this a good Lenten penance? Because it gets my attention where I live every day. It allows God's grace into my soul and into the place where my real life exists. That's where Jesus stands with me every day, waiting for me to be lowered from the roof so he can touch me and heal me.



Working in a Refugee Ministry

Kathy Doyle

My parish of St. Isidore started a Refugee Ministry. We recently welcomed three men from Eretria, who came to us through the UN Refugee Resettlement program. They arrived late in the evening on a very cold night. We had coats, hats and gloves for them, but did not anticipate that they would only have flip flops for shoes! A trip to Walmart was required to get them shoes and socks as snow was expected the next day. By morning, they were greeted by 5.5 inches of snow – the first time they experienced the white stuff.

Daniel (30) speaks English and is a skilled tile layer. He was in the military where he was taken as a POW. He was held for three years, then sent to a refugee camp in 2014. Mahari (36) also in the military, was with Daniel in the prison and refugee camp; he is married with one son, whom he hasn't seen in nine years. Haduish's (37) village was attacked, he was shot in the back of his legs and paralyzed for two years. He has been in a refugee camp since 2016. He is also married, with one son.

While in his refugee camp, Haduish worked with UNICEF. Once he arrived in the U.S., he connected with many people he knows. Within three weeks, the refugee agency helped them find housing in an area with many Eretrians. By early January they all had jobs and will start evening ESL classes soon.

I spent several days chauffeuring them to government mandated doctor appointments, since they are required to have complete physicals once they arrive in the U.S. Fortunately, the local medical system provides translators who stay with them while they are with the doctors so there are no misunderstandings.

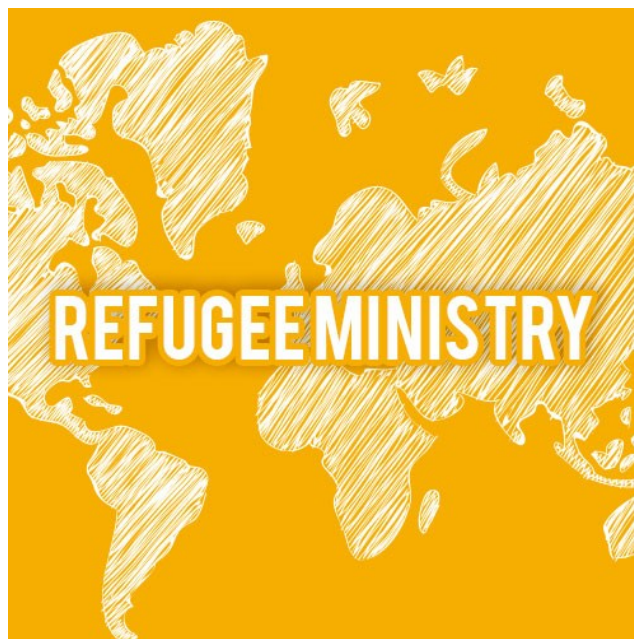
Several volunteers and I have attended Cultural Orientation sessions with them to help all of us relate better to each other. We learned that because Mahari's family is in a refugee camp, he can seek family reunification right away. Haduish's family is safe in Asmara, the capital of Eretria; he can apply to bring them to the U.S. once he becomes a citizen, after at least five years.

Since they are all Christian, Coptic and Protestant, we gave them a Christmas tree (that is also a custom in Eretria) which they decorated with balloons!

We got them a TV that uses an antenna (not cable – an additional expense) to help them with English, as well as bicycles. They have gotten checking accounts to cash their paychecks but will need instruction on handling a check book – something they have not done before. Unfortunately, the Refugee Resettlement Program will be cutting back on staff in February because of the policies of the Administration that has impacted the number of refugees that are being admitted into the U.S.



L - R Haduish, Mahari, and Daniel on the night of their arrival in the U.S.



Daniel and Mahari with their Christmas Tree, decorated with balloons

With the spirit of Christmas in the air, the South Jersey Associates gathered for their monthly meeting with an addition to their usual agenda. Time was set aside to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Associate Program. Our prayer, entitled “Pearl of Great Price,” led by Anne Bock, focused on several women from various historical and biblical settings whose lives have been testimonies to advancing the importance of women’s roles in history. This was a most appropriate way to begin the meeting and celebration.

Another highlight was a “FaceTime” call to a new member, Chris Moll. Even though she wasn’t able to attend, everyone welcomed her to our group via technology.

Making the occasion more special was the presence of Kathy Doyle, Co-Director of the Associate Program, who graciously gifted each member with holy cards. Providing a humorous twist was Sr. Pat Sheeran, who came dressed as a Christmas elf and entertained the group all morning. Of course, she did not forget to treat everyone with a candy cane as any good elf would do!

The hostesses, Edna Suckow and Carol Ciesielski, prepared a wonderful, festive lunch to top off the memorable event that sparkled with Franciscan warmth and friendship.

A New Way to Connect

Claudio Alves de Oliveira

The Associates and friends of Pires do Rio gathered together to try out a new way of building community: they gathered at Associate Iolanda Costa’s house throughout the month of January and were taught embroidery by Associate Maria Creusa. Besides learning a new skill, they also took time to pray, to talk about their lives, to strengthen the bonds of community, and to eat really good food!

It was generally agreed that friendship and community give us the strength to face the world as we exchange ideas, learn new things, and encourage one another. Friendship was created by God and the love of a friend reflects the love of Jesus, who also calls us friends. St. Francis also had many friends and that is the message our community wishes to share: how good it is to have a true friend!

“Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. If one is alone and falls, there is no one to help him.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10) “



GOD'S PEARL

Kathy Doyle

Consider the pearl, so pure and so bright,
 a glorious object of luster and light.
 What makes it so lovely?
 Smooth of touch to the hand?
 The irritant did it, that small piece of sand.
 Consider your life, has the sand done it's best,
 with its ups and its downs and all of the rest?
 You're unique and of value!
 Embracing the Deep Dives; living with strife,
 a pearl is the wisdom acquired through life.
 Let the sand do its work, persevere to the goal,
 then consider the PEARL; it's God working in YOU!

*Written in honor of the Associate Program's
 30th Anniversary*

A note from

The Associate Advisory Committee Chair

Several Associate communities have helped in sending Jubilee cards to the sisters who are celebrating that special "Yes" date. While I have received a verbal "thank you" from many of the sisters, we recently received a card from the five 2018 Golden Jubilarians in Brazil. A simple card remembering them obviously means a great deal.

Several sisters living in the Motherhouse care centers have told me about receiving cards and how much they appreciate being remembered. They ask that I tell all Associates that they pray for us.

If you do not currently have a "pen pal" at the Motherhouse, please let me know and we can "pair you up". Everyone currently participating will tell you what a treasure it is to keep in touch with one of our sisters!

Blessings of peace and good health!

Mary Laubenthal

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness in the world.

All things break.

All things can be mended.

Not with time, as they say, but with intention.

So go.

Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.

*The broken world waits in darkness
 for the light
 that is you.*

~ L.R. Knost

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will embrace. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground and righteousness will look down from the sky.

Psalms 85:10-11

Once all darkness, now as Christians, you are light. It is the light that brings a rich harvest of every kind of goodness, righteousness and truth

Ephesians 5:8-9

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

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