

# Dear Brothers & Sisters



April 2016

Newsletter of the

## Northwest Franciscan Community of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Palatine, Illinois

Secular Franciscan Order

### Council Members

Minister:

Stephanie Heavey, OFS  
minister@nwfranciscans.org

Vice-Minister:

Geri Allaire, OFS  
viceminister@nwfranciscans.org

Formation Director:

Sue Gribbon, OFS  
formation@nwfranciscans.org

Secretary:

Marc Golab, OFS  
secretary@nwfranciscans.org

Treasurer:

Tom Sharapata, OFS  
treasurer@nwfranciscans.org

Spiritual Assistant:

Patrick Mendés, OFS  
sa@nwfranciscans.org

### Newsletter Editor

newsletter@nwfranciscans.org

Submission deadline is the last Tuesday of each month.

For privacy, all personal addresses, phone numbers, email, prayer intentions, and (for non-council members) last names are removed from this web version.

## From the Minister

What a beautiful Stations of the Cross, as seen through the eyes of Mary, that we prayed at our March gathering. Thank you to our Spiritual Assistant, Brother Patrick, for selecting the poignant version of the Stations. Our gratitude extends to Sister Lisa, for a beautiful reading of Mary's thoughts; Sisters Sue and Jackie, and Brother Tim, for leading us through the mournful verses of "At the Cross Her Station Keeping"; and Brother Marc, for serving as the crucifer during the Stations.

Also at last month's gathering, the Religious Goods "Sale" added \$63 to our Common Fund. Thank you to all brothers and sisters who brought articles for the sale, and to those who donated for happily-chosen items.

Starting on page 2, "Stay With Me Always" is one of several typed meditations from a spiral-bound book that belonged to my eighth-grade teacher, Sr. Mary Christella, CSSF. I do not know the source of the meditations – whether they were hers, or written by someone else. I do know how much she treasured them when she allowed me to read them, and that it cost her much to part with the book when she gave it to me as a gift. What a gift! Almost 60 years later, these meditations still penetrate the soul.

■ **Open House This Month.** This month is our annual Open House, so during social time, please mingle with our guests and share your Franciscan vocation with them (and be sure to wear your nametags). For me, venturing alone into an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people, the warmth of all the fraternity members on that rainy evening of welcoming 10 years ago sealed my desire to become a secular Franciscan.

As part of our welcoming, **everyone, please bring a snack or dessert to share during social time.** Please remember to limit the kinds of snacks you bring to ones simple enough to eat *without* plates, or with napkins at the most. ☒

## At This Month's Gathering ...

■ **Ongoing Formation.** Professed brothers and sisters, please read **Chapter 05** in *What it Takes*. Please reflect on and write down your answers for all the questions.

Please be aware that **all Professed** are to attend ongoing formation and our monthly gatherings. If, for whatever reason, you're unable to attend, you *must* call our Minister, Sister Stephanie.

■ **Communion Service & Social Time.** Everyone, please join us at 7:30 p.m. for a Communion Service, followed by a brief business meeting and social time (remember to bring your own mugs). ☒

## Common Fund Report

**February** beginning balance: \$1,401.74; deposits: \$565; expenses: \$320.72; ending balance: \$1,638.02. ☒

## Our Apostolates

■ **Bingo.** Meets one night per month at 6:30 p.m. in St. Joseph's activity room. Everyone, please see the sign-up sheet at our gathering and pick one month for which to volunteer. For more information, call Sisters Kay or Mary Kay.

## Next Monthly Gathering:

Monday, April 11, 2016

St. Joseph's Home  
80 W. Northwest Hwy., Palatine

**6:30 p.m.:** Professed, please arrive at this time for Ongoing Formation. Candidates and Inquirers are encouraged to observe.

**7:30 p.m.: Start of our Gathering** with a Communion Service, followed by a business meeting and social time. All welcome!

\* \* \*

**You must call Stephanie if you cannot attend.**

\* \* \*


Our gatherings are at 7:30 p.m. on the **second Monday** of each month.

■ **Franciscan Outreach.** We collect items for delivery to the guests at Franciscan Outreach's Marquard Center. Call Sister Stephanie for more information.

■ **Prayer & Praise Ministry.** For our brothers and sisters unable to attend our gatherings due to poor health or transportation issues. For more information, or if you're ill or know of someone who's ill, please call our Infirmarian, Sister Jackie.

■ **Prayer Shawl Ministry.** We interweave prayers along with God's love, care, and warmth into the stitches as we knit or crochet shawls for others. For more information, contact Sisters Sue or Cyndy.

■ **Support (Money, Materials).** Quarterly donations from our Common Fund of any excess funds available *after* fraternity costs go to the following: Franciscan Missionary Union, Franciscan Outreach, Poor Clares (Palos Park, IL), Amazon Relief.

■ **Youth Prayer Partners.** Coordinated by Brother Tom, this apostolate matches up fraternity members with children preparing for First Communion or Confirmation. We're currently praying for a group of students on their journey to Confirmation. In order to give them their notes before their confirmations (Friday, April 29), please bring them to this month's gathering, or mail them to our Vice-Minister, Sister Geri. 

## Directory Updates & Corrections

Please make the following **changes** to your copies of our Member Directory:

- [PRIVATE] 

## Stay With Me Always

by Author uncertain (see "From the Minister" on page 1)

"Stay with us, for it is getting towards evening, and the day is now spent."

Those words were first spoken to You three days after your death on the cross. They came from the lips of two of Your followers, lips that still trembled with fear. Their eyes had seen the horrors of Good Friday.

Their ears had heard the curses of the mad mob, the threats flung at You and Yours. As You died, so did their hopes. As You went, so went their courage. Fear clutched at their hearts and at their throats and they ran to hide in the room of the Last Supper — bewildered, dejected, faint-hearted men.

There they cringed in terror each time the soldiers marched by, or the roars of the mob thundered out. So shattered were their hopes that not even the news of Easter morning could fan them to life. They did not accept the words of the women who had been to the tomb; they could not believe You were alive again, because You they had not seen.

So it was that You found them, running away, towards evening of that first Easter Day. Can't You just see them scurrying along toward the little town of Emmaus. Their clothes are covered with the dust of the road. Their faces and bodies are bathed with the sweat of the day's heat and of their throbbing fears. Now and then

*continued on page 3 ...*

## Anniversaries This Month

16: **Patrick**, Professed in 1961.

*God's blessings for your years of  
Franciscan living!*

## Calendar

### April

11: Monthly Gathering

### May

09: Monthly Gathering

23: Council Meeting, 7 p.m., Stephanie's home

## Remember in Your Daily Prayers

- [PRIVATE]
- All infirm, shut-in, and deceased fraternity members.
- All those in initial formation and their formation instructors.
- Our entire Franciscan Family, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Secular & Regular) Orders: For strength in commitments, increase in vocations, and the work we do, especially for Franciscan Outreach, Franciscan Missionary Union, the Poor Clares in Palos Park, and Amazon Relief.
- The guests of Franciscan Outreach's shelter and soup kitchen: That they know God's loving care and overcome the difficulties that keep them homeless.
- Little Sisters of the Poor and the residents of St. Joseph's Home.
- Our families and loved ones.

### Please pray that our fraternity and all Franciscans:

- Live the Holy Rule we've professed,
- Bring the Gospel to Life, and Life to the Gospel in the spirit of Francis,
- Live simply so that others may simply live, and
- Are active and participate in the Franciscan apostolates.

*“STAY”, continued from page 2 ...*

they cast a glance back over their shoulders. Someone might be following them. Pictures of the events of the last few days were running through their minds, and soon they were chatting about them, trying to explain them, as they scurried along. It was then that You chose to come to them. I can just see You, You must have scared them out of their sandals. You suddenly came up from behind them, and were walking along with them. And they didn't even recognize You. You couldn't help but overhear them. And it must have been with the trace of a smile on Your face that You turned and asked them, “What words are these that you are exchanging as you walk and are sad?” And they answered, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in word before God and all the people. We had been hoping He would save our kingdom. And three days ago we saw Him crucified. Some women reported today that the tomb in which He was buried was empty, and that angels had appeared to them and told them He was alive. But none of us saw Him.”

Pity and sorrow must have crept into your eyes as You murmured to them, “O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken.” Then You spoke. And how they must have listened! You explained to them in all the Scriptures the things referring to Yourself.

On and on You talked. And soon You were at Emmaus. You acted as though You were going on, and I can see the two grab You by the arm or cloak, and beg You, “Stay with us, for it is getting towards evening, and the day is now far spent.” I can see the smile spring to their faces. I can hear their gasp of delight as You stay and go in with them. And a little while later, what a thrill runs through them when they see that it is You; they recognize You in the breaking of the bread. And the second after, You are gone. And they can only look at one another – still dazed – and mumble, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking on the road and explaining to us the Scriptures?”

And rising up that very hour, they hurried back to Jerusalem – brave, confident men – to tell what had happened on their journey.

My Lord and my God, I recognize You here present before me. The disciples of Emmaus didn't recognize You at first. I thank You that my faith is strong enough to see through the appearance of bread and to see You. I know You are here. I adore You. And I say to You, as those disciples, “Stay with us, Lord, for it is getting towards evening, and the day is now far spent.” Stay with me, Lord, and speak to me, as You spoke to them. Explain to me in all the Scriptures the things referring to Yourself. Please, Lord, for I, too, at times am foolish, and slow of heart to believe. Speak and give me the grace to hear and understand. Speak that I, too, may say

when I must leave “Was not my heart burning within me, while He was speaking to me, and explaining to me about Himself? Speak, Lord, I'm all ears.

I heard You, Lord. I understand. O Lord, where would I be, if I could not pray, if I would not pray! What could I do, if I did not have You to turn to and to talk to! How many times my lips trembled in fear! How many times I have had to see and face a Good Friday in my own life or in the lives of others – whether it be headache, or heartache, or bodyache. Problems, worries, failures, disappointments have at times crucified my hopes, shaken my courage, left me dazed, bewildered. And tomorrow holds more for me. It must, if I am a real, close friend of Yours. For it is just such things, it is the cross You promise those You love. It is the life You led that You would now have me lead.

In the tomorrows there is the wear and tear, and sometimes, perhaps even the drudgery of another day's routine. There will be new problems to work out, new disappointments, new worries. There are the hearts I must touch and inflame with love of You – perhaps the clean, innocent, but irresponsible heart of one of the children; perhaps the bitter, hardened heart of a sinner. There are the souls under my care that I must lead to You. And, O Lord, there is that gigantic task I must face each day – the painful, but necessary job of kicking the self out of me to make more room for You in me. If I can make headway with that task, I'll be taking care of all the others, too.

Lord, for all these I needed and need prayer – mental prayer. I need it as much as I need air. Never could I have borne these crosses, nor will I be able to carry them, unless I carry them with You, unless I am one with You. Yes, Lord, You give me the crosses, but You give me the gift, the opportunity of prayer on which to shoulder them. How often I have found that the more crosses, or the larger ones I have to bear, the easier I find it to pray, the better to pray.

Take the hint, Lord, I'm asking for it. Send me more crosses. For strange as it may seem they will help my prayer, and prayer will help me carry them. For nowhere do I become more one with You, more united to You than in mental prayer – in meditation, in my thanksgivings. There I walk with You and talk with You – heart to heart – as did the disciples at Emmaus. There I let you explain to me about Yourself and myself, and the things that You and I must do. There I let You set my heart burning with love and courage to rise up and to return to my Jerusalem to face, not single-handed, but with You the trials waiting for me, to tell others what You told me. Yes, Lord, it is mental prayer which does that for me. And it is mental prayer which makes all my life a prayer.

*(I will think now for a few minutes of the crosses I have been privileged to receive from You in the past. I will look ahead to the*

*continued on page 4 ...*

"STAY", continued from page 3 ...

*duties that await me. I will see what prayer – especially mental prayer – did or could have done, and will do for me. And I will open my heart and pour forth acts of gratitude and love for You, who make prayer possible and desirable for me, acts of humility, sorrow for my slowness to pray, acts of hope and resolution for the future.)*

What do people do who won't or don't pray? How black and empty their lives must be, how unhappy, how hopeless. And I could have been one of them.

How often I have prayed, or tried to pray in my life. How often since you called me for Your own! And oh, Lord, forgive me for how often my thoughts have strayed from You. I have found myself daydreaming or sleeping, or distracted with a thousand and one brilliant ideas or happy memories. Why is it that some of the most perfect plans and brilliant ideas are dropped in my head by Satan just when I should be praying? Yes, Lord, I would find it hard to face You after those insults to You, did I not know how kind and forgiving You are. I know that the wish to pray is a prayer in itself, and sometimes You don't ask more than that of me. You know me. You know the clay of which I am made. You know how weak and wrapped up in self I am. You know how worn and tired I am from my work for You. But I have tried, Lord. I have wanted to pray. And as little children, asleep or awake, are equally dear to their parents, so I am to You. Most of the Saints and the greatest of them often found it hard to pray, and wandered even as I do. And there is no halo on my head. I am no saint. I am just Your little child. And it's Your little child that I always want to be.

In the eyes of my mother and dad, I probably never have grown up, and never will. In Your eyes, I will always be just Your little child, even though at times a naughty one – Your child all the same. And that is how I should go to You in my prayer – as Your child. I can think back to the many and long, heart-to-heart talks I had with mom or dad. I did not find it hard to talk to them. There was plenty to say. It was to them, I ran in joy or in need and I poured out my thoughts, my troubles, and even my requests in a simple, unassuming and unaffected way. They listened and smiled, as silly and unimportant as what I said might have been.

So I should turn to You now and always, Lord, in need or in joy, and pour out my heart as unashamedly as a little child. What a willing, patient listener You are, ever ready to listen. Others might be bored with my silly prattlings but not You. Others might laugh at my words of love, at my screams of joy or cries of pain, at my desires and requests. But You – never! You can read my mind much better than my mother could, and she could. And as my parents spoke to me, so You will and do speak to me in prayer. I must not do all the talking. One word of yours is worth a million of mine. You're a better conversationalist than I am. I'll let You steer the conversation, and lead my thoughts, You will. I must listen, too, Lord. I am Your little child.

A child lets its parents take care of everything. No cares or worries trouble its heart. I come to You now, Lord, as a little child and place all my cares and worries, hopes and plans in Your hands. And I will spend a few moments now speaking to You as the child I am.

I never pray alone. Prayer isn't the dialogue of a madman with himself or with his shadow. It takes two to make a prayer, You and I – two real living persons. Perhaps, that is the trouble. Perhaps You're not real enough to me. Perhaps, too often unconsciously, I look upon You as a mere gust of wind, a ghost, a spirit – not a real person. You know that there was danger of that. That is why You did for us, what I must now do for myself. You became the Flesh and Blood that walked this earth of ours, and spoke, and ate, slept, and wept, that walked and talked with the disciples of Emmaus. You did that, that I might understand how real You are – as real as my parents, as real as the person next to me. And in my prayers I must bring that home to myself even more. I must incarnate You and my ideas of You.

I must use my imagination to make the Gospels live for me. There is the Book of Life and Prayer. In it I can study You. I can see and hear all You did and said. I can see You do the things I have not the humility and courage to do. If I but pick up the Scriptures and try to ponder them, then You will come and show Yourself and talk to me, as You did the for disciples of Emmaus, once they began to think and talk about You and the Scriptures. I must make You live again for me – in my prayers. If I only could have lived when You did, if I could have seen and heard You!

Now I will do just that in my prayers. I will see You as You were and are. I can draw my own picture of You in my imagination. How You must have stood out in a crowd. I will hear Your voice – and what a voice. I will touch You hand, Your cloak, serve Your meal. I will see Your winning smile, the kindness and pity in Your eyes. I will see You do things that win the hearts of all. I will make You live again in my prayers to win my heart, too. What a Man! What a God! And You will win my heart.

Through my prayer, I will know You better, and love You more. Mine will be the great romance of falling more and more in love with You. For my life, too, must be a life of love – not of sentimental feelings, but of deep-rooted unselfish love. If my life is a life of real prayer, it will be a life of real love – I will be able to bear all and to do all with You and for You.

Stay with me, Lord, Stay with us here in the tabernacle of the altar. Stay with me. Let me never be separated from You. Stay with me always. I must go soon, but stay with me. I will take You with me. Hand in hand we will make my journey through life together. I don't mind, even if You don't talk to me. But come, walk with me.

Stay with me always. **T**