



**Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi**



NOJOSHING NOTES

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3221 SOUTH LAKE DRIVE, ST. FRANCIS, WISCONSIN 53235-3799 www.lakeosfs.org

NOJOSHING is an Indian word. It means "Straight Tongue."

In 1849, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi built their Motherhouse on land that was called Nojoshing by the Indians, because it protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue.

SISTER MARGE NOVAK, OSF:

2011 Honoree at Franciscan Conference

Sister Marge Novak was chosen from the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi as a 2011 honoree at the Annual Franciscan Conference (AFC). Each year when the Third Order Regular Franciscans and associates meet, each congregation of sisters and brothers is invited to honor one of their members.

Our congregation chose Sister Marge, a nurse practitioner, because of her deep and passionate love for the low-income people of the Southwest who are without medical insurance. Through her efforts 14 years ago, the

Raphael Free Clinic was started in Ker-ville, Texas, and is now open 10 hours a day, four days a week. The clinic personnel see an average of 130 -140 clients a week from a seven-county area, and have a roster of about 7,000 patients. Sister Marge is a light shining brightly in Texas and has a myriad of helpers who have joined her to make health care possible for all.

Our foundresses and early sisters lived out our charism of "living in the Providence of God" in countless ways. Sister Marge, a woman of faith, stepped forward with her dreams, skills and desire, and has followed in our foundresses' footsteps to help those in need.



(ABOVE) Sr. Marge visits with a young patient at the clinic.



(LEFT) Sr. Florence Deacon, director of the congregation, congratulates Sr. Marge at the Honoree Banquet.

10-Year Merger Celebration

On October 2 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and October 4 in Baltimore, Maryland, the congregation celebrated the 10th anniversary of the merger of the Franciscan Sisters of Baltimore with the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

Visit www.lakeosfs.org for details of these celebrations. In addition, the next issue of *Nojoshing Notes* will report on this event.

Sisters' Retirement Needs . . .

Over the years, so many donors have given very generously to our appeal to help with the retirement costs of our retired sisters. There is no way we can ever say "Thank You" adequately. In our tradition of being good teachers, we want to take this opportunity to reflect on how this need developed so that you may be more knowledgeable and then perhaps help others to understand better how we got to where we are.

In the 1980s, women religious began to look very seriously at the cost of retirement for their older members. The cost of living was increasing, especially health care costs. A decline in religious vocations was occurring, so the expectation that there would be sufficient working sisters to support the retired sisters was no longer realistic. In addition, the life expectancy of women religious is longer than the average population of women, so the need would be long term.

Accounting reports pointed out the shortfall between retirement savings and retirement needs. Even though the numbers of women religious who had been out working was great, their actual income was far below average earnings in general. Calculations were done to determine our "unfunded past service liability." What this meant was doing projections to determine how much money we needed to care for every sister until she died and subtracting how much money we had to meet retirement needs. The difference showed us that we were in need of several million dollars.

What were the circumstances affecting sisters? A letter from 1934 (see adjacent page) written by a local House Superior to parents sheds some light on the difficulty of saving for future retirement. We have records that verify a similar salary amount, but it was not always paid in full in some years. Sisters sent in 40 to 60 percent of their earnings to the Motherhouse, depending on circumstances at the local parish school. And while there was some in-kind compensation, such as a rent free convent and donations of

food from parishioners, these could not be saved for later retirement needs.

Our congregation has a great belief in God's Providence. We also know that God expects us to put forth effort in meeting our challenges and not rely on wishful thinking. In the nearly 30 years since the retirement needs of women religious came to light locally and nationally, we, as a congregation, have taken many steps to close the gap between our retirement savings and retirement needs.

We recognize that we are not unlike so many Americans who face the same financial realities in retirement. The shaky economy of late has put many people's financial outlook in jeopardy. This gives special meaning to each donation that we receive, and often it is the "widow's mite" that is shared with us.

Many of our retired sisters live with the diminishment of poor health, yet they smile readily when they recall their days out on 'mission' and their teaching experiences. The people they came to know and the students they helped to learn are still significant for them. And now, each of our donors and benefactors are also significant in their lives, and they pray for them each day. God is Good, all Good, as St. Francis would say.



How did we get to where we are?

Letter from a local House Superior to parents of the parish school students - September 1934

Dear Patron:-

At the close of the first month of the new school year, when the children are expected to make their first remittance for tuition received, I deem it advisable to lay before you, for your kind consideration, the following facts:

Our Rev. Mother Superior sends out her Teaching Sisters with the understanding reached between herself and the Right Reverend Bishop,

1. That the school year is to consist of 40 weeks, Sept. 3rd to June 15th
2. That each Teacher is to receive for these 40 weeks a total Salary of \$300.00
3. That each Teacher is to use half of that salary for her daily living expenses, and forward the other half to the Rev. Mother Superior, to be applied partly to the individual Teacher's other expenses (clothing, Doctor bills, etc) and the remainder to be used for overhead expenses of the administration of the community.
4. That each Teacher must collect the appointed tuition fee from the pupils of her class room and not burden the pastor with supplying an eventual shortage in the teacher's appointed salary of \$300.00 per year.

A Teacher's salary of \$300.00 for 40 weeks equals \$7.50 for one week, \$1.50 for each school day, 30 cents per hour (5 class hours per day); which amount is about what you pay for unskilled labor.

Of her weekly earnings of \$7.50, \$3.75 are to cover each Sister's living expenses for 7 days which is 53 cents a day.

These obligations, devolving on me, by reason of House Superior, towards the Sisters that teach your children on the one hand, and the motherhouse on the other, make it necessary that each child should pay 1 cent for every class hour, or 5 cents for every school day, which makes 25 cents for every school week, or \$1.00 for every 4 weeks.

Surely you will admit that the care, instruction and educational advancement which each child receives, is worth at least 1 cent per hour.

This amount at the rate of 1 cent per hour, or 5 cents per day, or 25 cents per week per child, you may remit each week, or for 4 weeks in advance, as may best suit your convenience.

Respectfully Yours,

We thank Sr. Janice Bader, CPPS, Executive Director, National Religious Retirement Office, for permission to reprint this letter from the Ursuline Sisters. Sr. Janice was told that the \$300 salary was still in place in 1951 at this school, and Sr. Janice herself remembers bringing her monthly tuition envelope with \$2 enclosed to school in the late 50s and early 60s.

Grape Arbor Nears 100th Birthday

The third annual Wine and Vine event held on the Motherhouse grounds on August 27 was a special time for nearly 300 people, and some of the retired sisters took advantage of the 'party.' The purpose of this event is to raise funds for the restoration of the grape arbor and new plantings.

In 1912, the grape arbor was built as part of a beautification endeavor on the Motherhouse grounds. It sits on the west side of the grounds between the Motherhouse to the east and the valley on the west. In all seasons, it has provided a quiet, meditative walkway for the sisters.

Time has taken its toll on the structure and repairs are needed if it is to be preserved. At the same time, the vines need pruning and some new stock planted. The funds raised each year from the Wine and Vine Event help with these needs.



Autumnal Equinox

by Sister Lucille Walsh

I am 97. The easy chair has taken over my "walkability." Silence is the only sound I hear apart from the friendly inquiry of a visitor who asks, "What do you do all day long?" My response is:

Today, after my morning greeting to God, I watched nature's herculean drama played out on its open tree-staged arena. The tree leaves caught the unseen forces of a strong winter air-current in an encounter with the sluggish hot current of summer air. A battle ensued.

I could not see the air currents, but the tree leaves danced, tossed, and pivoted in the powerful presence which bore the color-scripted scars of yellow, red, and brown in testimony of the battle's intensity. Meteorologists called this violent activity a storm. It absorbed my attention for three full hours. I had become part of this drama in which I experienced great delight.

So, while being immersed and caught up in a great burst of joy, I witnessed summer's defeat and autumn's triumph. With is came the realization that movement brings change, and change carries us into the future.

This is what I did today. Now, today is almost tomorrow.

For more Wine and Vine Event information, check out the news story on the OSF website: www.lakeosfs.org/who_we_are/events_and_news.asp#, or watch the photo video clip at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWLT_ENnBFg&feature=colike

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Please send your comments and suggestions to:

Nojoshing Notes Editor, Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, 3221 S. Lake Dr., St. Francis, WI 53235-7193

e-mail: jparrott@lakeosfs.org