



November 2017

Since 1849

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Dear Friend,

Usually I write about one of our sisters, but today I want to share with you a serious need that affects all of our sisters. Our Motherhouse is a revered building, but today it cannot provide adequate and safe housing for the sisters who live there. The oldest part dates back to 1861, and between then and 1914, two additions and a chapel were built.



When I entered the community, the average age of the young women in formation and the sisters who lived there was approximately 25. Today the average age of the sisters living at the Motherhouse is 94. Their needs are far different than those of the sisters 60 years ago. Sister Rosanne lives there now and knows from experience the reality of our situation. I would like to have her tell you about the Motherhouse from her perspective.

My name is Sr. Rosanne Sanders.

Thank you for taking the time to read about me, my sisters, and our vision for a safe, healthy and accessible convent. We are hopeful that you will help us to realize our vision.

I joined the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in 1937, and I recently celebrated my 99th birthday. I am retired from active ministry and now my ministry is prayer - prayer for those in need, for my sisters and for our benefactors, as well as for our congregation's ministries.

We have had a long history of service since 1849, when six women came to what would become our 21-acre motherhouse campus in St. Francis, Wisconsin. They came from their homes in Bavaria to minister to the German people in Milwaukee. Their ministries included the care of orphaned children, meeting the



At left is a photo of the St. Francis sculpture on the facade of the current Motherhouse.

The rendering inserted here shows the placement of that sculpture, along with a cupola from St. Mary's Academy, on the new St. Francis Convent.



needs of the seminarians, and education at a variety of levels.

I remember with great fondness my ministry in Jefferson with the children at St. Coletta of Wisconsin, my work in various parishes, my ministry within the residences of several Archbishops and at St. Francis Seminary, as well as my service to young adults at Cardinal Stritch University and in the formation of young women entering our congregation. I enjoy hearing our sisters' stories from their years in various other ministries, including: St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care, St. Elizabeth School, the Franciscan Center, Juniper and Canticle Courts, St. Mary's Academy, service in parishes, and pastoral and retreat work.

When I retired from active ministry, I moved to Clare Hall, a

former dormitory for seminarians, which is not conducive to being remodeled to meet the needs of the elderly. I recently moved to the motherhouse, since I was in need of additional medical care.

Being with our sisters, participating in daily Mass and prayer, sharing meals, and having the attentive care of a professional staff all mean a great deal to me. However, the Motherhouse faces many of the same challenges as Clare Hall: long hallways; congregate bathrooms; limited elevators; long distances to the dining room, chapel and activities; and small rooms that cannot accommodate wheelchairs, walkers and lifts, so they get stored in the hallways.

Because we reside on the third and fourth floors, I have been told that we need to move onto exterior porches in case of a fire. I use a wheelchair to get around, as do many of our sisters, so I am concerned about how we would do this in an emergency. I also know there is no sprinkler system.

The vision for the new convent is very exciting. Our rooms will be part of clusters of small households in a two-story building, which will be accessible and equipped with a sprinkler system. Each sister will have her own room, with a bathroom, and enough space

to accommodate her mobility equipment.

Even from a seated position, we will be able to see out of any window throughout the entire building. Since we are directly across from Lake Michigan, there will be beautiful views for us to enjoy. There will be sufficient elevators for resident and staff needs. In addition to having a prayer room, the dining room, living room and activity area will be nearby.

We will also have easy access to the beauty of the grounds, including the 105-year-old grape arbor, restored wetlands, urban forest, orchards, and vegetable gardens.

Another blessing is that we will be able to offer the Franciscan hospitality that is integral to our charism by sharing our new home with other religious and laity as space becomes available.

CONTINUED ON BACK

The rendering below shows the entrance for the new convent, and a portion of the proposed building and landscape. After completion of the project, St. Francis Chapel, with its landmark steeple (shown at left) will remain.



ABOVE:
The current
Motherhouse
facade.



Thank you, Sister Rosanne. You describe the situation at the Motherhouse very clearly. What has seemed adequate for over 100 years now looks very dismal and is, frankly, extremely inadequate.

When we tour the current Motherhouse with donors or the companies who will be involved in the construction, one of the most frequent reactions we hear is, "I wouldn't want my mother to live here." As our sisters age in place, so is the building aging and it has reached the time when it cannot be remodeled any further to provide a better and safe living environment. In fact, the age of the building is such that it is not feasible to remodel it for any purpose.

So I, along with Sister Rosanne, ask for your help. Will you, as a friend of ours, please be as generous as you can for this special need? We have set a goal of \$11 million for our Capital Campaign, and we are a quarter of the way there. Your donation will be an investment, because the new convent home will be more efficient in every way and reduce our ongoing costs. While we will still have a need for help with health care costs and basic living needs, the upkeep of a new convent will be less than now, and will provide the safety and accommodation that our older, more frail sisters need.

Thank you so much for all the ways you have helped us in the past, and thank you for your



(AT LEFT) Sisters Martina D'Amour (background) and Beatrice Smith, along with Sister Annette Fessler (BELOW) are three of the sisters who will benefit from the new facility.



gift to us at this time. In turn, we hold you in our prayers daily, and ask God to bless you with what you most need. Let us pray for each other knowing that God is not outdone in generosity.

Gratefully,

Marcia Lunz, OSF

Sister Marcia Lunz, OSF

PS:

If you have questions about our new convent, please check the box on the response form and a sister will contact you. Please indicate your phone number and email address.

Thank You:

Barton Cotton has generously donated the print materials for this letter.



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