Renewing Relationships with the Tertiary Sisters

In 1998, as an outgrowth of our 150th celebration of foundation, the two congregations who share our beginnings (the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse, Wis. and the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist in Meriden, Conn.) along with the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis (TSSFs) in Cameroon, West Africa, began the Franciscan Common Venture.

This endeavor provided the opportunity to enter into a sister-to-sister relationship among the four congregations. In face-to-face encounters, here and in Cameroon, the values of living Franciscan spirituality in our respective countries and ministries was deepened. We learned about and acquired an appreciation of each others’ cultures, and we celebrated with the Tertiary sisters as they furthered their education and developed new ministries in response to the needs of the people.

In 2018, the leadership of the four congregations celebrated 20 years of the Franciscan Common Venture and brought it to a close. In 2019, with the civil strife in Cameroon becoming more alarming, we and the sisters in La Crosse were inspired to reconnect with the sisters in Cameroon in order to stand in solidarity with them, support them, and assist in ways that are feasible for all. Today two of our congregations in the States have a core group working with the Provincial leadership in Cameroon to explore and implement ideas.

The sisters in our congregations are, first and foremost, praying for the Tertiary sisters and citizens in the Anglophone region where the safe living conditions are being affected by the fighting. The greatest impact of this is that those in Cameroon know they are not forgotten. Where possible, we are sending monetary aid to the sisters to help the internally displaced persons. With this aid they are able to share basics, like food, with those who have lost their homes and livelihoods.
The Sisters’ First Christmas Season

The sights and sounds of Christmas were abundant as the sisters celebrated their first Christmas in their new home. Beautiful Christmas trees, wreaths and decorations could be seen throughout the convent. Deep red poinsettias and candles adorned the window sills in the hallways. What wonderful ways to celebrate the coming of Jesus into our lives!

An ornate crèche and a star-lit tree graced the San Damiano Center where the Sisters gather for Mass.

What do you call all the hours put into baking for the Christmas Boutique? One would call it a labor of love! The first weekend of November and the first week of December 2019, found Sisters and their friends gathered for a baking marathon. The output of their work was 600 lbs. of fruitcake, 175 lbs. of stollen, and 25,000 Christmas cookies. On the day of the Christmas Boutique the cookies were sold out by 11:00 a.m. The experienced visitors come early to shop!

Sisters singing Christmas carols echoed throughout the convent.
On December 7, Troubadour was bustling with eager shoppers at the sisters' Christmas Boutique. Tables were filled with homemade bakery and handcrafted items created by the sisters. As the doors opened, there was a mad dash to buy the fruitcakes, stollen and cookies that have the reputation for being most delicious.

Happy shoppers went home with bags full of not only bakery, but many other items – Christmas ornaments, towels, jewelry, embroidered clothing, scarves, dish cloths, paintings and more.

Sr. Leander Liu celebrated her 103rd birthday on December 27. She enjoyed a wonderful Chinese luncheon prepared by Carlina, a nursing assistant.

In 1948, 21 Chinese women who had entered the congregation, were expelled from China with the American sisters and came to the United States. Earlier in December, Sister Charlene Chang died, leaving Sister Leander the sole remaining sister from that original group.

Happy Birthday! Sr. Leander

Prayers for Donor Intentions

Sisters Lourdette Van Driel and Lenore Steilen (l-r) participated in the first Fund Development Gratitude Tea held January 13 in the Assisi Room.

Sisters Marcia and Mary are inviting sisters to gather in small groups to reflect on the ministry of prayer and to hear how their prayers for our donors intentions are received and valued.

The time together closed with tea and holiday cookies.
Welcome Sr. Mary Kemen

A message from Sr. Marcia Lunz: Sr. Mary Kemen has joined me in working for the Fund Development Office with writing and contacting/responding to you, our friends and donors. Let me introduce you to her.

Sr. Mary (pictured at the right) grew up on a small farm with her parents and three sisters in southeastern Wisconsin. It is her farm roots which have given her a great love for nature and she especially enjoys taking walks in the woods and birdwatching.

After graduating from high school, Sr. Mary left the farm for the big city of Milwaukee to attend Cardinal Stritch University. Throughout high school she had felt drawn to religious life and entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi after her sophomore year. She pursued her dream of teaching young children and devoted 36 years to working in the primary grades. Her greatest love was teaching these young students to read, and one of her fondest memories was seeing one of her second graders, who believed she couldn’t read, become a confident, fluent reader.

In addition to teaching, Sr. Mary has served the congregation in many ways. Her own life was enriched in her ministry as novice director, in which she assisted women discerning their call to Franciscan life. Presently she coordinates the Hermitage ministry, where she finds joy welcoming retreatants from all walks of life who desire time for solitude and reflection.

In looking to retiring from teaching and engaging in another form of ministry, writing emerged as a possibility. Never in her wildest dreams did she envision writing for fund development publications and communicating with donors and benefactors of the sisters. Sr. Mary’s artistic talent and broad understanding of the Franciscan way of life, along with her writing skills, are welcome gifts as we work to serve you better.

Solidarity with TSSFs

Our sisters were missionaries in China from 1929 until we were expelled from the country in 1948. The hope had been to return, but that never happened. Now to have the call to work in mutuality and collaboration alongside native Cameroonian sisters and laity is a blessing.

Last November, we hosted a meeting of the FSPAs and connected by Go To Meeting with the sisters in Cameroon to further our new endeavor. Seeing each other face-to-face has a way of solidifying relationships in untold ways. It also facilitates more meaningful conversation with the added dimension of seeing speakers’ facial expressions and gestures which are part of ordinary speech. In March, the FSPAs will host this meeting in La Crosse, and we will once again connect with the sisters in Cameroon.

Please join us in praying for an end to the civil strife in Cameroon. The sisters want nothing more than to reopen their schools after three years of being closed and safely minister to the sick without the threat of shooting and loss of life and property.

Bequests

With Gratitude to

Norma Baldus
Joe Lynch
Gertrude Nalespinski
Silvia Calesini
Theodore Banasik
Nancy Milne
Elizabeth Buley
Wilhelm Walther
Therese Schommer
Maria Pawlowski
Chester Derek
Bernice Sabo
Charlotte Stemke
Frances Kobe

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Please remember the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi in your will.
A bequest is a wonderful way to support our retired sisters and is a testimony of your care and concern for them.

$353,404 Since May 2019