



Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi

NOJOSHING NOTES

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*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.*

There Is Nothing Like Knowing You Are Loved

Since COVID-19 began here in the United States, news programs have shown the innovated ways people have created to let their loved ones who are confined know that they are loved and not forgotten. In support, cars decorated with signs and balloons parade past the windows and porches of those who are watching. Others stand outside their loved ones' window carrying decorated signs with messages of love.

FaceTime visits replace in-person visits. These are just some of the "new normal" ways of staying in touch with one another. Just as all of you have made adjustments because of COVID 19, the Sisters at St. Francis Convent have had their lives change drastically the last few months.

As of the middle of March, the sisters have been unable to have visitors and have been confined to their new home. To let them know that they have not been forgotten, on May 3 more than two dozen sisters, associates and staff with balloons and messages of love and hope paraded

around St. Francis Convent. The sisters watched and waved from their windows, the patios and the second floor porch, some with balloons and signs of their own.

Smile were abundant on everyone's face as greetings of love and support were given to one another. Other sisters shared their creative talents using window chalk to draw beautiful pictures and words of encouragement on the dining room windows in Elizabeth Hall.

During this pandemic, "We are all in this together"---holding each other in prayer and in loving hearts.



While our Cornerstone Card & Gift Shop is closed, or if you live at a distance, please explore our cards & products at poverellocreations.org. There is no need to create an account to shop.

We Are Grateful

Since early spring when COVID-19 overtook our lives, everyone has had hardships to endure. At the same time, we see the Blessings that God has provided for us. We asked our sisters to reflect on the blessings they have received during this 'shelter-in-place' experience – blessings of time, insight, gratitude, challenge and more are shared here.

They say when one door closes God opens another. He sure did so with us being confined to our home for four months. It makes you wonder what God has in store for us, but it also has had a positive effect because we all stayed healthy. We know God is in charge and will continue to keep us in mind and he loves us all. So we all say, "Thank you, God" for staying with us and keeping us healthy.

I am grateful for all of the blessings received these last four months. COVID-19 has increased my daily prayer.

Recognizing that "not being in large groups and staying home, etc.":

- allows solitude to introduce "herself"
- allows me to risk learning how stillness feels
- allows me to hear, with the ears of my heart, God rejoicingly saying "You are beginning to see I am making all things new. You are in the process of perceiving it."

During these days of "cloister," I feel God closer, and talk with the Lord more often and more sincerely on behalf of others

Every day I am aware of the cascade of blessings that fall upon me because of the generous spirit of our benefactors. As I sit in my beautiful room in our new convent looking out peacefully at Lake Michigan while listening to the newscast of local and global unrest, I pray for those who need to be uplifted and given hope. I often reflect on the Scripture "What return can I give to the Lord" - I hope from the example of so many others, I could do some small part in healing our fractured world.

I have learned how to trust, to wait with many unknowns, to believe that good would show up along the way and it has. I am most grateful for my faith. Thanks to Abba Father and Mother Earth.

The biggest disappointment for me during the corona virus was not being able to attend Mass. The sadness brought tears to my eyes. It was after we were blessed with the opportunity to have Mass a couple times a week that I realized how much my appreciation for daily Mass had intensified. It took being deprived of this gift for me to come to this realization. I am grateful!

Oh God, I need you at this time during this COVID-19; help me to trust in divine providence. The word providence means to see ahead- my community members called to see if I was all right. Let us remember the peace and joy Francis had after his conversion, and he passed that peace and joy to his early followers. We still have that in our community members these days.

This is how I believe I have grown during this isolation period. As I began to think about this question, I realized, above all, the strength which God has provided for me through grace during these long, sometimes tedious days; grace that has taken on many shapes and forms. Even though isolated, we are still able to use our phones for contacting both family and friends, and have someone do weekly grocery shopping. I developed a new hobby with adult-coloring images, and in reading about angels became more attuned to angels themselves, but especially to the fact that God continues to guide, inspire and protect us in ways we have far too frequently taken for granted. I am now very certain that there have been times in my life when things, which didn't turn out as I had planned, were the workings of a

Divine Being doing far more good for me than my personal plans would have ever achieved!

for Our Blessings

My bi-racial grandniece was born in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic and protest marches for racial justice and equality. Her name is Ember, so I see her birth as a spark of hope for a brighter future in the creation of a new world.

The local grocery had pork ribs at a good bargain price, so I ordered them online along with the rest of the items I wanted to purchase. As I was unpacking the delivery, I pulled out a two and-one-half-FOOT strip of pork ribs, all neatly encased in plastic. After this descendant of Iowa farmers who raised many hogs stopped laughing, I took out my crock pot, twisted the ribs on end into a spiral shape (too many for a simple circle), added liquids and seasonings, and let them cook overnight. The next morning the meat fell off the bones, so I made 10 meal-sized packages of delicious pulled pork for the freezer for future use.

I thank God for all of the blessings received and will continue to keep all requested intentions in daily prayer.

Early each day, I see a parade of city buses driving down my street preparing for their morning pick-ups. Over the driver's window the sign flashes, "Essential Rides Only." Now you can take that message many different ways, but it poses several

questions for me. What do I really physically need in my life? What are the essentials in my spiritual life? And finally, do I want to metaphorically ride that bus?

For me that bus sign speaks of renewal—a time to re-examine what matters most by participating in a kind of spiritual sightseeing venture, an overview of where I have been and, with the grace of God, where I am to go. In short, the pandemic has given me some new direction and time to repack my bags for that essential ride towards transformation.

Most of my days have been filled with prayer. I've been in touch with my family and friends on a regular basis via phone. My flower and vegetable gardens are looking very healthy and lovely—a little piece of paradise. As I live through this horrible epidemic, God has been present. Having COPD, I have had to be very careful.

A blessing can be found in an event I do not choose. Such a pandemic event was the cancellation of an eye doctor appointment. Diminished vision prompted me to seek out large print books and audio computer presentations. It also helped me to experience solidarity with people who have permanent vision loss and increased my gratitude for the gift of vision when it can be restored with treatment.

Blessing of expanded prayer time and of two weekend activities: a prayerful visit to all the cemeteries where our sisters are buried, and exploring beautiful and meaningful art murals in Milwaukee.

"We are all in this together" has been the encouraging theme of honoring the "safer-at-home" order. The coronavirus pandemic has increased my awareness of the interdependence, vulnerability, and connections we share with others across the globe. In prayer during this pandemic, I hold the heartache of those who are suffering from the death of loved ones, loss of employment, worries about paying the rent, feeding their families, and home schooling children. Images of violence and racial discrimination that cannot be ignored or erased from my memory are balanced with hope-filled nonviolent marches for racial justice and equality. In lieu of being able to gather in person, generous and creative musicians and artists have uplifted our spirits through YouTube videos or Zoom/Skype meetings. And it has been miraculous to see how Mother Nature has revived with new life during her short break from humanity!

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.

Grown with Loving Care



Did you know St. Francis of Assisi was interested in gardening? In the *Mirror of Perfection*, we read a story where he instructed the friars not only to plant vegetables, but also all kinds of herbs and flowers. Why? So when others saw their beauty, they would be moved to praise God.

These words have taken root in Sr. Helene Mertes who lovingly cares for the gardens at St. Francis Convent.

(Top) Sr. Helene with her volunteers getting ready to work in the garden.

(Left) Liatris is one of her favorite flowers.

(Below) Pansies are one of the many plants Sr. Helene starts from seeds.



As a child, Sr. Helene spent many hours helping her father in the garden and collecting wildflowers in the woods. Wherever her ministry took her, Sr. Helene could be found caring for plants. In 1988, she was asked to work in the newly built greenhouse at St. Coletta of Wisconsin in Jefferson. It was during this time that she got horticulture degree at the University of Wisconsin.

In her retirement, she cares for the gardens at the Motherhouse. In the fall, she gathers cuttings from geraniums and coleus to root in her plant nursery in the basement of the carpenter shop. January finds her starting to grow seedlings of pansies, begonias, garden herbs and plants. Approximately 150 flats, each holding 48 seedlings, are given the proper light, heat and water under her watchful eye.

Near the end of March, these little plants are taken to the hoop house, where they continue to grow until the weather is warm enough to plant in the gardens. If you are ever in St. Francis, Wisconsin, over Memorial Day weekend, there is nothing like the Spring Plant Sale.

With the help of volunteers, summer and fall are spent weeding and harvesting. The produce provides many healthy meals for the sisters at the convent. As you walk the grounds, it is not surprising to also see some of her favorite flowers...butterfly milkweed, liatrus, and bee balm.

Can't you picture the smile on St. Francis' face as he observes Sr. Helene at work in the garden of God's beautiful creation?

Update on the Tree of Life Dedication

We are so grateful to all of you who responded so generously to our Tree of Life Dedication appeal. Because of COVID-19, our plan to have the dedication on May 10 needed to be postponed. It will be held sometime in the future when it is safe to have others join us for the dedication service. We continue to hold all of you in our prayers, that your loved ones and you will remain healthy and safe during the pandemic.

Nojoshing Notes is published by the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

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