



# Sharing from FSPA to You

## The Tolling Bells *An Interview with Kristin Peters*

*Kristin, you recently entered FSPA. What were the main life experiences that led you to choose religious life?*

God's spirit has spoken and drawn me through various life experiences into religious life. Primarily, I think I have been drawn because I was surrounded by praying people throughout my life. Prayer was their witness to intimacy and dependence upon God and it awoke my own soul's desire. The routine of the prayer of the rosary and Sunday Mass in my family nurtured the awareness that God is a dependable presence. God's immanence, on the other hand, was revealed one day visiting my grandma in Ireland as a child. The bells of the church next door began to toll and my grandmother stopped working in the kitchen and began to pray the words of the Angelus. I remember noticing her and watched as she went and sat in the rocking chair and continued her prayer, "...Hail Mary, mother of God..." I went and bent at her knee "...and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." I remember being surprised and I remember movement in my heart as I witnessed my grandma's response to the tolling bells. Now I think — the immanence of the incarnation — how God surprises us! How God breaks into our daily reality to reveal his love and promise. Christ is ever ready to be born in our hearts and in the world. Through the witness of prayer, of praying people, God called and my heart responded. This same pattern continued in college where we had a seminary. At that time, deep in my heart, I thought it is possible to make such a gift. I too can stop and give everything as these men. My heart's desire again awoke to God's loving presence; I sensed a call and began to think more seriously of making this choice of religious life.

*Before entering FSPA you worked as a catechist for SPRED (Special Religious Education). Tell us about this program and how it has shaped your personal journey.*

SPRED communities are formed by parishioners within local parishes. Through these small faith communities individuals with developmental disabilities are more fully integrated into the worshiping life of the larger parish community.

Specifically, I served as a leader catechist in the celebration room located in the basement of our parish center. There a circle of chairs surrounded the holy book and the symbol which related to the theme of catechesis for that week. My role was to facilitate discussion of each person's human experience evoked by the symbol. I then gave voice to the interiorization, which draws upon and synthesizes the discussion, naming our shared human experience of life, beauty, comfort or friendship as pertains to the theme. In this same context our liturgical experience as a community is evoked which also gives voice to our common human experience and reveals the mystery of God embracing it. Gathered around the holy book I read a short passage drawing us further into God's loving embrace. Taking each person's hands in my own, Christ's words are spoken through me to each person. "I am the light" or "Rest in me," a message pertaining to the mystery we are probing, sharing and celebrating that evening. Our sharing culminates in song. Hand in hand



Photos by Jane Comeau



Kristin is welcomed to the FSPA Community.

## Come and See!



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

### Becoming a Franciscan Sister— The Adventure of a Lifetime

To give you a chance to learn about our way of life, we host several vocation events every year but you are always welcome to visit! Call or e-mail Sr. Dorothy to set up a time, if your schedule doesn't mesh with the one below. You are our guest and there is no cost to you. We look forward to sharing a morning, evening, weekend or week with you!

**Come and See Weekends** introduce you to our life in community. This weekend vocation retreat includes sharing about vocational discernment, Franciscan prayer, ministry, and whatever questions you may have. We welcome you to join us in prayer and at table, in quiet and in social time. Please join us for as many weekends as you wish!

The retreat weekends are held at St. Rose Convent, the motherhouse, in La Crosse, WI.

**Upcoming dates include:**

**June 7-8, 2008**

**October 18-19, 2008**

Call or email us: 1-888-683-FSPA  
membership@fspa.org

(continued on page 2)

# Creating Bridges of Inclusion *An interview with Sister Karen Grochowski*

*This past year you professed your temporary vows. Can you share with us a particular Franciscan aspect that you've developed and carried with you throughout the year?*

One Franciscan aspect that I have used and continue to develop, particularly in my ministry of working with individuals who are developmentally disabled, is that of bridge-making. Much of my ministry concerns advocating for clients in order to ensure their needs are met. This in large part involves advocating for them with others in the general public, whether that be helping them communicate with a healthcare provider or making sure they are included when interacting with people in the community. Through this, hopefully, I am creating bridges of greater inclusion.

*What moved you to minister to the developmentally disabled?*

I feel that what drew me to consider ministering to the developmentally disabled was



Photo by Interact

Sister Karen in her ministry.

in part my experience of being friends with a girl in junior high school who had a brother who was developmentally disabled and witnessing how her

Photo by Nancy Chapman



Sister Karen serving the sisters.

family made sure to include him and also how some of our other classmates teased her about it, or would make fun of the developmentally disabled students in school in general. I felt that there was something wrong with that. Another part of the attraction for me was knowing others who had worked with developmentally disabled individuals and who really enjoyed their work. I feel it was a combination of these experiences that led me to consider this ministry. When the opportunity presented itself during my Associate phase I took the opportunity to minister in this area of need and again I sought a similar ministry at this time.

*Where do you find God in your ministry?*

I find God in my ministry in the joy of the clients that I work with. For so many of them it is the simple pleasures in life that bring a smile to their face or cause them to laugh, and they remind me to try not to take even the smallest of God's blessings for granted. I also find God through my co-workers when they advocate for the needs of our clients and strive to make sure each

of their needs is met.

*Is there a particular story from your ministry that you would like to share with us?*

One of the truly touching experiences for me has been the opportunity to share with Bob part of his passage from this life to the next. In the few months that I knew Bob, his health was up and down and he was on and off of hospice care. It was during one of these low points with his health that a co-worker mentioned that he thought Bob should be hospitalized because of the amount of care he was requiring at that point, and I remember thinking to myself how beautiful it was that Bob was able to spend his dying days at home among familiar faces, and that it was important that he be allowed to do so even if it meant that he required some extra care. This experience affirmed for me that what I am doing is in fact a ministry and not just a job.

*How do you imagine your future life as an FSPA?*

As I look to the future, I look forward to deepening my relationship with God, my understanding of what this life is about and who I am and how I am called to live my faith.

*Interview by*

*Katie Mitchell, FSPA*

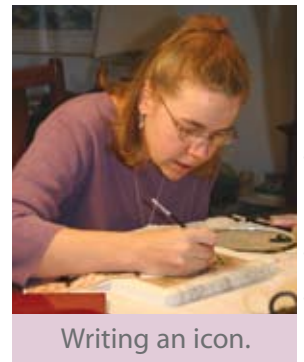


Photo by Nancy Chapman

Writing an icon.

## The Tolling Bells *An Interview with Kristin Peters* (continued from page 1)

our arms and bodies move, giving expression to the sentiments of our hearts.

Then with a piece of classical music we dwell quietly, within our own hearts, upon what is being spoken there. Finally, this small group prepares a table and shares agape, Eucharist, thanksgiving. Tastefully prepared foods are enjoyed at a table set with linens, candlelight and flowers. O Christ, how present you are at this banquet! I rejoice with you in my sister, my brother, my friend.

Through my experience in SPRED I have come to a deeper understanding that it is through relationship we become more human. We become more of who we are called to be. Participating in SPRED has helped me to become more aware of who I am and who God calls me to be. I have become more aware that it is my joy to wit-

ness to the love of God in my own life and heart and to walk with others as they journey in that same mystery of love.

*What connection do you find between your ministry in SPRED and life as a Franciscan?*

Before I became involved with the SPRED program in my parish, I worked with individuals with developmental disabilities at my job. I recognized the gifts of God's love that these people bring into the world. I responded to the call to help my parish reach out and welcome our friends into our community in a way that would be meaningful for them.

It is by welcoming the "least of these" that we are each renewed and that we are made whole. Francis knew the value of the poor. He knew their poverty reflected his own. Poverty makes room for Christ. It is only by becoming aware of "Lady Poverty," of loving

and courting her that love and charity may reign in our hearts. This is my understanding of Franciscanism. It seems the values of welcoming the poor, particularly those with whom we struggle to relate, is essential to being Franciscan and it is essential to ministry in SPRED. SPRED is about being in relationship and about revealing, sharing, and living the love of God in the world.

*Is there an aspect of FSPA that is particularly attractive to you?*

It is the invitation to listen to God speaking in my own heart and responding to this call. In the practice of perpetual adoration I recognize the same message. Listen to love speaking and respond to this invitation. In love I will become more whole and I will be able to share the gifts of this transformation with the world around me.

*Interview by Katie Mitchell, FSPA*

# From Our Readers

Dear Sisters,

Any time I encounter a religious community where it doesn't seem like they put a lot of emphasis on prayer, it bothers me. Maybe sometimes it's because I don't ask enough about how the prayer life of sisters in the community takes shape. Prayer is so important to me. I've been reading some of *St. Teresa of Avila* and *St. John of the Cross*. Is that how Franciscan Sisters pray? Thank you for taking the time to answer my question.



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Kathleen

Dear Kathleen,

Thank you for your question. There was a time when I felt guilty that I wasn't more organized about pursuing perfection in prayer. Some years back it dawned on me that St. Francis was very eclectic in his prayer, not recommending one way over another. But it's very clear that faithfulness to prayer, and the openness to God that it makes in our hearts, is key to Franciscan prayer.

If you read about the life of St. Francis, you see that he often went away for days at a time to pray, and encouraged his brothers to, also. Eucharistic prayer was important to Francis, as well as praying with all of creation.

Last summer I happened to make a retreat with Paulist Fr. Thomas Ryan that was most helpful in putting styles of prayer into perspective. He explained the Via Positiva and Via Negativa of St. John of the Cross very well, relating them to stages of psychological growth, as well as to personality types. He's written several books and you might like to take a look at some of them. I recommend *Four Steps to Spiritual Freedom*.

So, in short, it's the FAITHFULNESS to prayer that counts and FAITHFULNESS is big for FSPAs, who will start our 131st year of continuous Perpetual Adoration August 1 at 11 a.m.

Love & prayers,  
Sister Patricia Tekippe, FSPA

## FSPA Snapshots



**Romana Klaubauf, FSPA**

Sister Romana Klaubauf is a professor of nursing at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, MN. She practices and teaches public health and family nursing in the classroom and clinical setting. She works with students during their learning experiences in homes, clinics and shelters serving vulnerable populations.



**Rosemary Desmond, FSPA**

Sister Rosemary Desmond serves as Director of Liturgy and Music at the Church of Saint Patrick in Inver Grove Heights, MN. She is responsible for preparing the liturgies for all major seasons, working with a very active worship commission in the parish. A great variety of musical experiences include directing or working with an adult choir, handbell choir, children's choir, cantors, funeral choir, praise band and instrumentalists.



**Jacinta Jackson, FSPA**

Sister Jacinta Jackson works in Minneapolis, MN. in the mental health sector as a Member Advocate where she assists people in finding therapists and counselors. She also assists in crisis intervention with the clients. Whether it is finding a mental provider or doing crisis interventions, Jacinta uses her social work skills and her clinical social work knowledge to help people.

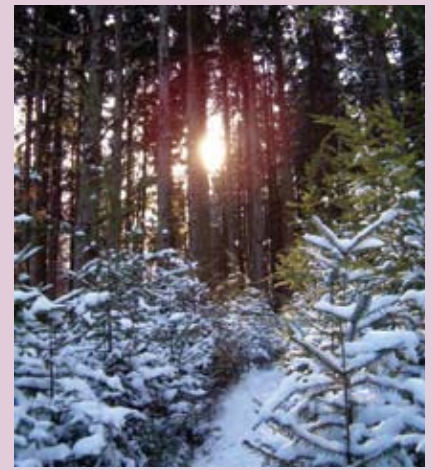


Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

## Spiritual Opportunities

FSPA welcomes you to participate in spiritual growth opportunities in the multiple spirituality centers where we minister. Spiritual companionship and guidance is available at each center.

**Franciscan Spirituality Center**  
920 Market St  
La Crosse WI 54601-4782  
608-791-5295 or [fscenter@fspa.org](mailto:fscenter@fspa.org)  
[www.franciscanspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.franciscanspiritualitycenter.org)

Sacred Windows to the Divine:  
Icon Writing Retreat/Workshop  
Icon: The Baptism of Jesus..... May 4 – May 10

Community: A Sacred Place  
to Meet God ..... June 1 – June 7

**Marywood FSC**  
3560 Hwy 51 N  
Arbor Vitae WI 54568-9538  
715-385-3750  
[info@marywoodsc.com](mailto:info@marywoodsc.com)

Contemplative space in one of the cabins at Marywood, as well as spiritual companionship, can be arranged.

Icon Retreat..... April 6-12  
Franciscan Retreat..... June 6-12  
Watercolor Painting..... June 15-20  
Pastel Painting..... July 13-18  
Directed Retreat..... August 2-9  
Directed Retreat..... August 10-17  
Exploring the Northwoods..... Sept. 28-Oct. 4

**Prairiewoods FSC**  
120 E Boyson Rd  
Hiawatha IA 52233-1277  
319-395-6700  
[www.prairiewoods.org](http://www.prairiewoods.org)

Spiritual Spa Renewal Day..... March 31

Spirituality in the 21st Century featuring  
Dr. John F. Haught..... Friday, May 16  
Saturday, May 17

# Footprints



## From Rome to Foligno on the Way to Assisi

by Silvana Panza, FSPA

It was a hot summer day and I was at Termini Station in Rome getting on a regional train that stopped at the cities of Orte, Terni, Foligno and then finally at Assisi. There were so many people on that train! Many were young, perhaps pilgrims like me, on their way to Assisi. The young women seated next to me wore the Franciscan Tau cross around their necks. I was looking at them with interest thinking that maybe they were part of the Third Order Franciscans when one of the young women asked if I was a Franciscan sister. When I said yes, she asked me where I lived, what I did and where I was going. Since the group was very interested in my story I asked them where they were headed.

They were going to Foligno, they told me, for a gathering of the “Cenacle of Angela.” Of course! I remembered right away that Blessed Angela of Foligno was a Tertian Franciscan who lived in the late 1200s and died in 1309. She was noted for her conversion and for her spiritual journey marked by strong mystical experiences.

“I know that Angela had a group of followers during her life,” I said, “but I never imagined that they were still active today.”

“Oh, the Cenacle of Angela was reorganized in 1989 by the Franciscans of the Church of St. Francis in Foligno,” answered one of the young women. “That’s where the body of Blessed Angela is kept.”

“What is it that attracts all of you to Angela?” I asked with great interest.

“Her conversion!” answered one of the three girls smiling broadly. “Angela was a beautiful, rich girl who liked to dance, dress beautifully, wear nice jewelry and enjoy life. She got married when she was very young and had children. Do you know that her biography says she lived a mediocre Christian life, even marked by sin?”

Another of the girls chimed in: “I like Angela not only because she had a great conversion to a life of penance and poverty, but above all because of her mystical life. From the moment

she began her new life, she journeyed without resting, even though the beginning of her journey was often painful and bitter. And after this she had times full of deep darkness alternated with great light and God’s presence. I read that Angela had a great experience of the sweetness of God during one of her pilgrimages to the tomb of St. Francis. There she had a mystical vision of the presence of God that came into her life. In the book *The Memorial* it’s written that in the vision she felt God say, ‘I will hold you close to me much more than what you are able to see with your eyes . . . I will never abandon you if you love me.’”

“I can see that Angela’s experience has touched your heart,” I said, “and I believe her story has inspired your life choices.”

“Oh, yes!” answered the third girl, “That’s why we are part of the Cenacle. In the letters Angela wrote and which we read during our meetings, she showed how much she understands the human heart and how much she encourages people to follow the cross, live in true poverty, and humility of heart, and to



Tela di Angela da Foligno, Unknown painter

move beyond themselves to find peace with others. You see, today it’s difficult to understand just how important these things are for our growth. It’s so hard to find space for silence and for listening to God.”

“I find this ‘space for contemplation’ not only when I pray but also when I offer my time to visit the elderly in their homes,” continued one of the girls. Another girl added: “And when I serve meals to the poor.” “And when I listen

to the problems of other young people with respect, trying to help them decide the best thing to do,” concluded the last girl.

I said goodbye to the girls at Foligno and while my train continued on, I felt the presence of Angela as though she herself were in the train with all of us, joining us in pilgrimage again as a penitent on her way to Assisi. Who knows, I thought looking at all the people who got off the train with me at Assisi, if God is also repeating the words to us once said to Angela: “I will never abandon you if you love me.”

### Say It With a Smile “Which Shoes Do You Choose?”



Silvana Panza, FSPA

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