



# Sharing from FSPA to You

## Amy's Journey *An Interview with Amy Taylor*

In 2008 Amy Taylor entered the FSPA congregation. Now, as Amy moves on to the novitiate, she shares with us about her journey in FSPA.

*Amy, what is it that attracted you to enter FSPA?*

I was first attracted to FSPA by what I read on the website. The congregation's goals of empowering women in church and in society, learning to live as Franciscans in the 21st century, and the commitment to welcome new members grabbed my attention. These are each areas I was looking for in a congregation. While I liked what I saw on the website, it was my visits to St. Rose and the amazing sisters I met and spoke with that affirmed me in my discernment and application process. I found what was stated on the website was true to my experience with them. Goals and initiatives change with the needs of the Church. The relationships I was blessed with helped me take the next step.

*Please share with us a few significant experiences that you have had as campus minister at Viterbo University.*

The most significant experience as the campus minister at Viterbo was leading the program "Franciscan Friends." Sisters are paired with students to get to know over the course of the school year. Wonderful friendships developed between the sisters and the students. It was great to see students learn that sisters enjoy many of the same things

they do. Their relationships helped to break some of the stereotypes they carry from what they know of sisters from Hollywood. There are even a few women who are interested in exploring more about religious life.

Another experience I really enjoyed at Viterbo was the Busy Student Retreat. The students openly shared their beliefs and their desire to grow in their relationship with God and others in their lives. I was amazed at the depth of their sharing and their willingness to take time from their busy lives to meet each day.

*How is Franciscan spirituality shaping your spirituality?*

Over the course of this year I have continued to grow in my own sense of what it means to have a Franciscan spirituality. I believe it is Francis' emphasis on his relationships with God, his brothers, friends, family and all of creation that separate his spirituality from many others. My relationships are the most important things in my life. I find God in my relationships. Francis also had a wonderful devotion to the Eucharist and FSPA continues this tradition in Perpetual Adoration.

*What would you like to share with other women who are considering religious life?*

I would like to share with other women just how fulfilling and joyful the choice of religious life is. Choosing to live a discerning lifestyle with FSPA helps me be the best of who I can be. Living in community broadens my horizons and encourages me to live a balanced life. I encourage women to explore religious life and have a lot of conversations. Research different congregations and go and visit. Each congregation has a different history and spirit. Find where you feel at home and could see yourself not only in the moment but in the years to come.

*How do you envision your future as an FSPA?*

(continued on page 2)

## Come and See!



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

### Is Religious Life for You?

Make a Discernment Retreat with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

Come and See Weekends will offer you the opportunity to be with our sisters as you consider the call to live the Franciscan life. These weekends offer time for prayer, discussions, liturgy, relaxation, and one-on-one conversations with sisters.

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

### Upcoming dates include:

**October 24 - 25, 2009**

**February 13 - 14, 2010**

If you would like to come to one of our scheduled retreat weekends, but can't, just contact us and we will arrange another time to visit that works for you.

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

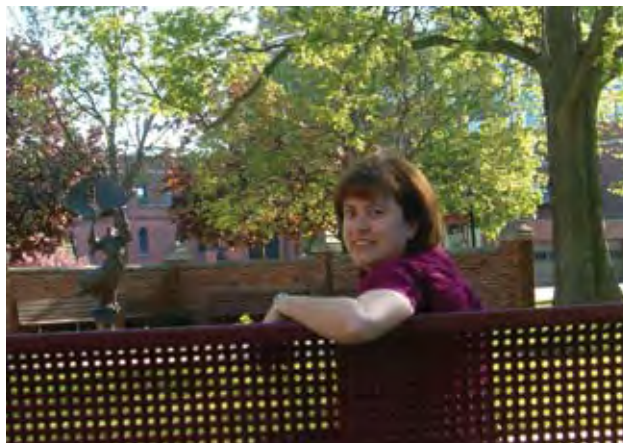
You can also find FSPA on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter!

**www.facebook.com/  
FranciscanSisters**

**www.youtube.com/franciscansisters**

**www.twitter.com/jellenc**

Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA



Amy enjoys the beauty of nature at Viterbo University.

# Hearts Aflame for Mission *2009 FSPA General Assembly*

In June the FSPA gathered together for the 2009 General Assembly. In light of this, we asked two former FSPA presidents Sisters Lucille Winnike and Marla Lang, as well as the present president, Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, to answer a few questions regarding the FSPA future.

*Sister Lucille, you were president of FSPA from 1978 to 1982. Now, in preparation for our next four years, what do you see as a hope for FSPA? And what do you see as a challenge?*

My hope for women religious in general and, therefore, for FSPA in particular is that we will continue to respond with our characteristic generosity, clarity of purpose and integrity to our grand commissioning, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15) For us FSPA, as for other women's communities, that has meant not only "proclaiming" but also "being" the good news for those people most in need. While the specifics of our ministries have diversified in response to the renewal called for by Vatican II from our original "to teach the children of immigrant parents," our Gospel mission has not. We are called to proclaim (even using words, when necessary, as Francis said) and to be good news to all.

This hope is, I believe, also our challenge.

*Sister Marla, while you were president of FSPA from 1994 to 2002 our 2001 General Assembly focus was "sparks of hope." How do you feel these "sparks of hope" were realized? Do you see other "sparks of hope" for the future?*

Do you remember the following expression descriptive of Francis and Clare? "They were not so much persons of prayer as they became prayer." A parallel awareness strikes me from the Sparks of Hope Assembly in 2001. We are not so much persons of hope, as we are called to be hope. A passerby of our spirituality center recently surprised me with the comment, "Sisters, do you realize what beacons of hope you are for us? Many in our society are struggling but you are so into what we all crave. Just driving past your center stirs me. Your presence is light in our darkness!"



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Sisters Marcia and Karen enjoy some time together at the General Assembly.

As to sparks of hope for the future, I pray that what we are about today will prepare and mentor the next generation in their aspirations—that is being the light of God's presence where and how it is needed. I trust there will be this response!

*Sister Marlene, after nearly eight years of service as president of FSPA, what do you see as the single most important focus for the future of FSPA?*

Our Franciscan Rule of Life compels us to live from the heart and finds expression in the beatitudes: healing the wounded, making peace, giving thanksgiving and praise.

Our heart, in the Biblical tradition, is my very self: the "I" known to God alone. It is not something I need to learn. What is written on the heart belongs to the depths of my soul. It is part of me and expresses my identity as well as my deepest desires. My identity is "desire": Our hearts are restless until they rest in God. The single most important focus for the future of FSPA is that our hearts never tire of desiring God, and that our lives coincide with the one great loving heart of God as we offer our heart's fullness to the world.

To be channels of divine abundance, to be

sacraments, to become dynamic epiphanies of God's love is no small vocation. It is our way of entering into that dynamic and life-giving communion that is the source of all abundance. We have been made for this. It is our vocation not just to be *imago Dei*, but to be *Imago Christi*. Our single most important focus should be on what is needed to set the world ablaze with God's life and love?

Saints Francis and Clare embraced the mystical Christ within themselves and in the world, allowing it to form their holiness before the face of God. They became, first of all, reformers of the inner heart. Our hearts' longings will prompt us to place our bodies under the discipline of the spirit so that the wholeness of our humanity can be interiorly open and free to see and hear God. Then we will be unafraid to serve the dangerous memory of Jesus in a world burdened with danger.

*An interview by the Editorial Staff*



Conversation circles at the General Assembly.



Photos by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

It's time to vote!

## Amy's Journey *An Interview with Amy Taylor* (continued from page 1)

This question has sparked an amazing amount of dreaming for me. First of all, I see myself forming deeper relationships within FSPA. What a gift it has been this year to get to know so many sisters. The openness, genuine warmth and welcoming spirit I have experienced has been amazing.

Right now I see a variety of possibilities for future ministry. I am interested in being

a pastoral associate, a liturgist or working at a retreat center. Perhaps it will be a combination of all three, since my experience of ministering in parishes has given me the opportunity to wear each of these hats. I trust that God will help me discern where it is I am to minister next. I also see myself fully engaged in whatever direction the Spirit takes FSPA. I loved being a part of the General Assembly this year and

journeying together over the course of the week to explore possible areas we are being called to minister to within our Church and world. Where it will all lead us I don't yet know, but it is so exciting to be in conversation with one another about our passions for ministry!

*An interview by the Editorial Staff*

# From Our Readers

Dear Sisters,

*I am in my 40s and for a few years I have been feeling a call to a deeper relationship with God. I am wondering if a person my age can still be accepted into a religious community. Is it harder when you are older? Thank you for helping me with my question.*

Molly P.

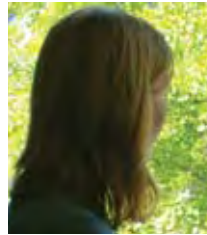


Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Dear Molly,

How wonderful that you are feeling a call to a deeper relationship with God! This is a special time in your life. Yes, you can join a religious community at your age. Our congregation accepts women until age 50, and there are other congregations who accept women over 50. An important point to understand is that religious life, in addition to being a response to an individual call from God, is about mission and community. The new member must have the energy and call to enter into an active life of relationship and service to God's people.

Another important consideration is that the incorporation process into a religious community takes up to nine years or more. This includes three years of candidacy and novitiate before first vows and then six years or more before final vows. The Church wisely requires a long period of discernment before a final commitment to religious life. Sometimes older candidates have a difficult time staying with the process.

Other difficulties for older candidates may concern leaving relationships, commitments and property that one has spent 20 years or more cultivating. They also have to enter into a style of life much different from what their adult life has been up until the present. It can be a wrenching experience, but at the same time it can be wonderfully freeing.

Having acknowledged these cautions, older candidates bring with them to religious life many gifts and energies which can enrich life for everyone. They usually know themselves well and understand how God has been working in their lives in the past. So they are often able to discern more quickly whether this new life is really for them.

They bring skills and experience which may translate easily into fruitful ministry. Relationship skills will probably have become well integrated. They may have a deeply developed prayer life. Older candidates also bring experience of the needs and longings of people and a desire to meet those needs. So, Molly, continue to follow your desire, and God will lead you into your response.

Peace and all good,  
Karen Lueck, FSPA

## FSPA Snapshots



**Linda Mershon, FSPA** is a member of the FSPA Leadership Team. Linda accepted her call to religious life during her mid-life years and now lives in La Crosse where she ministers to the sisters, to the corporate community, and tends to the vision of the community encouraging rootedness in tradition and growth and risk in new ways. Although it has its challenges, Linda enjoys her ministry and strives to be a servant leader to her sisters.



**Helen Deppe, FSPA** is community coordinator at St. Rose Convent where she ministers to the retired sisters and helps with decisions concerning the sisters and St. Rose Convent. Helen holds a degree in social work and previously ministered as a home provider for families for the Department of Human Services. She considers it a privilege and joy to be with the sisters on their journey through life in retirement.



**Catherine Kaiser, FSPA** is pastoral administrator of St. Alexander Parish in Port Edwards, WI, which is linked to a larger parish in Nekoosa, WI. She and Fr. John Swing work together in team ministry. Previous to this, Catherine was a teacher and principal, which she considers a wonderful preparation for this ministry. Catherine is grateful to her FSPA community and for the call to bring about the reign of God in a pastoral setting.

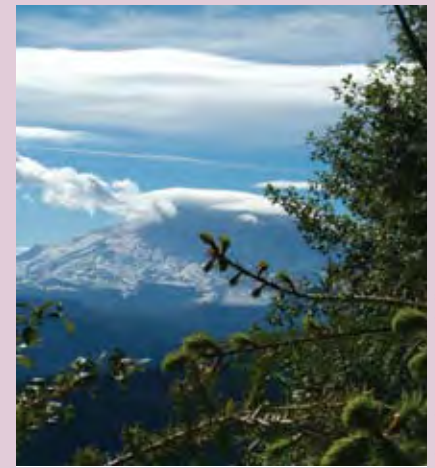


Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

## 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)

Women Disciples Series  
Three Wednesday evenings..... Oct. 14 - 28

Discovering Your Sacred Story:  
The Journey into Goodness.....Nov. 6 - 7

Reclaim Your Intuition ..... Nov.14

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

Marywood Spirituality Center offers various types of retreats and programs, as well as spiritual companionship. Please contact the center for more information about upcoming programs or about making a retreat in one of their lakeside cabins.

PSALM 116 .....Aug. 17

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

Watch It, Be With It, Trust It  
Meditation Retreat .....Aug. 28 - Aug. 30

Transitions Retreat .....Aug. 28 - Aug. 29

Spiritual Exercises in Everyday  
Life Retreat ..... Sept. 12 - April 17, 2010

Seeking the Faces of Jesus  
in Many Places Retreat .....Sept. 18 - Sept. 20

The Writing Place: Writing  
About our Sacred Spaces Sept. 18 - Sept. 20

# Footprints



## From Giovanni to Bonaventure

By Katie Mitchell, FSPA



St Bonaventure Enters the Franciscan Order  
Francisco de Herrera the Elder 1628  
Museo del Prado, Madrid

Around 1235 young Giovanni di Fidanza left his home in Bagnoregio, Italy, to begin studies at the University of Paris. This young man would eventually become known as “Bonaventure” and become one of the most significant leaders of the rapidly growing Franciscan Order.

Bonaventure came to Paris at a time when new theological perspectives, while still holding to the wisdom of the past, were being discovered. In Paris, Bonaventure encountered the way of life of the Franciscan Order. The Friars Minor were well established in France by this time, with some being scholars at the university where he studied. Bonaventure was greatly attracted by their poverty, simplicity and joy in living the Gospel. He began his studies under one of the leading theologians of the time, Alexander of Hales, who himself decided to become a Franciscan. The relationship between master and student was very important. Bonaventure considered Alexander of Hales a

father and Alexander, who deeply admired and respected Bonaventure, once said of him: “It seems that in him Adam did not sin.” Alexander convinced Bonaventure “to love the life of St. Francis.” The example of Alexander of Hales and the Franciscans so influenced Bonaventure that in 1243 he decided to join them. In a letter explaining his decision Bonaventure wrote:

“For I confess before God that what made me love Saint Francis’s way of life so much was that it is exactly like the origin and the perfection of the Church itself, which began first with simple fishermen and afterward developed to include the most illustrious and learned doctors. You find the same thing in the Order of Saint Francis; in this way God reveals that it did not come about through human calculations but through Christ.” (*Letter in Response to an Unknown Master*)

Bonaventure eventually became Minister General of the Franciscans at a very dif-

ficult moment in the history of the Franciscan Order. A faithful follower of St. Francis, he assimilated his teachings and transmitted them with his life and writings. Notwithstanding the heavy burden of the office, he continued to preach, to teach, to give conferences and to direct civil leaders and popes.

Bonaventure wrote many influential works. One of his most important writings, *The Journey of the Mind into God*, was first conceived from an experience he had on the Feast of St. Francis in 1259 when he visited La Verna, the place where Francis himself had received a mystical vision of Christ and received the stigmata or wounds of Christ.

St. Bonaventure died in 1274 and was canonized in 1482 by the Franciscan Friar, Pope Sixtus IV. In 1588, another Franciscan, Pope Sixtus V, declared him a doctor of the Church and bestowed on Bonaventure the title, “Seraphic Doctor” because of his emphasis on the great love of God.

### Say It With a Smile “Bonaventure’s Trio”



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Sharing Editor: Katie Mitchell, FSPA  
srkatiemitchell@sbcglobal.net • 847-492-8335

Assistant Editor: Silvana Panza, FSPA

Proofreader: Maria Friedman, FSPA

Layout: Meg Buchner

Address questions for “From Our Readers”  
to Karen Flottmeier, FSPA • kflottmeier@fspa.org

Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration  
Membership Team

Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA

Karen Flottmeier, FSPA

Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Patricia Tekippe, FSPA

Sharing is printed on recycled paper

Address Correspondence to

Membership Team

St. Rose Convent

912 Market St.

La Crosse, WI 54601-4782

1-888-683-FSPA

New Membership Inquiries

www.fspa.org

