



Sharing from FSPA to You

FSPA Election Assembly

Photos on this page by Katie Mitchell, FSPA



The newly elected FSPA leadership team receives a blessing during the closing Mass of the Election Assembly.

The 22nd Election Assembly of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration gathered in La Crosse, Wisconsin, March 18-20, 2010, to elect leaders for 2010-2014.

A new process for the 2010 Election Assembly called all eligible members to remain open to nomination for leadership throughout the time of discernment and until the Assembly's official election.

The FSPA delegates gathered as a Spirit-filled, discerning community and shared times of prayer, community, remembering, dreaming The Assembly challenged each sister of the Congregation to "inner transformation, authentic relationships, and awakening consciousness both personally and communally living into these with compassionate action for the sake of mission." (FSPA Vision Quest) Franciscan spirit and life was palpably felt in the Assembly.

At the conclusion of the 22nd Election Assembly, Sister Linda Mershon was elected president and Sister Eileen Lang was chosen as vice-president. Three were elected as mission councilors: Sisters Paulynn Instenes, Suzanne Rubenbauer and Rose Elsbernd. The newly elected leadership team will take office July 1, 2010.



Sister Eileen is welcomed as the new FSPA vice president



Sister Linda Mershon, newly elected FSPA president (center), greets Sisters Georgia Christensen, Beth Saner and Laurice Heybl (left to right).

As the Election Assembly came to a close, the newly elected leadership team and delegates recommitted to hearts aflame for mission and to being loving presence for others.

By the Editorial Staff

Come and See!



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Ever wonder what sisters do all day? Make a Discernment Retreat with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

Come and See Weekends 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 conversation with sisters.

Upcoming dates:
October 22-24, 2010
February 11-13, 2011
(or contact us for a private visit)

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

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

Mission ... We Share What Enflames Us



A main focus of our FSPA General Assembly has been "Hearts Aflame for Mission." Here six sisters share what enflames their hearts for mission.

For us as Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, our mission is a focus for ministry and service that is rooted in who we are. *Unity in Diversity*, our Rule of Life, challenges us to remember that "we are sent as Jesus was sent to manifest God's love in the world; to bring new life, meaning and hope to a suffering and searching humanity; to heal with compassion and forgiveness; to proclaim the Gospel in word and action." (*Unity in Diversity*, 37). As Franciscan women centered in the Eucharist we are committed to be loving presence as we engage in ministries of witness and service to this mission.

— *Sister Anita Beskar*

For me as an FSPA, mission means accepting the gift of God's bountiful love. Through listening, discerning, and praying, my life will become totally dependent upon God. If this love and trust in God encompasses my whole life, I will then be able to live the Gospel message, and my ministry will reach out to those in need.

— *Sister Leclare Beres*

When I think of mission and what it means to me, I think of the Gospel passage where Jesus stands up and reads from the prophet Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me and sent me to bring the Good News to the poor ... to proclaim the Lord's year of favor.*"

(Is. 61) I believe that as an FSPA, a woman religious, I too am sent as Jesus was sent to manifest God's love and to proclaim the Gospel in word and in action. My mission, in union with Christ and in communion with my sisters in Community, is to pour out my life for others.

— *Sister Mary Kathryn Fogarty*

As a new FSPA I feel that I am "on mission," or that I do the work I do in the name of the entire community. Currently, I'm teaching at an all-boys high school on the south side of Chicago. I hope that my presence is loving and prayerful and that I am helping the teenage boys that I teach expand their worldview and grow into the young men that God needs them to be to build his reign here and now. It's an honor to be held and supported by an incredibly prayerful and generous community as I serve.

As I've journeyed with God through that life, I've paid attention to what desires God has planted in my heart. And, as I've learned more about the causes of injustice and social problems, I have been driven to work with those that are most vulnerable in our society. It is my desire to love and serve the poor in order to help them discover their own power to make a positive change in the world.

— *Sister Julia Walsh*

Mission is the work to which we are called. It is mystery; it is Gospel living; it is inwardly driven and outwardly expressed; it is a call to BE living hope in a broken world. As FSPA, it is ultimately lived out day by day — centered in Eucharist, expressed through our Franciscan way of life and supported through prayer and ministry. It is something that I feel more than what can be expressed in words.

— *Sister Joan Weisenbeck*

On www.fspa.org I read our mission: "*We are a community of vowed Franciscan women centered in the*

Eucharist, committed to be loving presence through prayer, service and witness." At the beginning of his public life, Jesus announced his mission for the first time, to reveal God's liberating and healing Spirit through the healing and freeing of any who were bound. The mission he embraces is not a new one. What is new is the way the Spirit is now embodied in Jesus. "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me. He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to deliver those who are crushed.*" (*Luke: 4*)

I understand my mission as similar and I welcome the Spirit embodied in me. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "*Nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm.*" Following Jesus and Francis, I joyfully teach and heal.

— *Sister Charlene Smith*

An interview by the Editorial Staff



Concluding Mass of the Election Assembly



Sisters Paulynn Instenes, Karen Kappell and Margaret Wagner enjoy time together after the Election Assembly.



The newly elected leadership team receives a warm welcome at the Election Assembly.

From Our Readers

Dear Sisters,

I feel that I may be called to be a sister but I get very confused by all the polarization I see in the Church. There are very progressive sisters and much more conservative sisters. Some sisters wear habits and live in communities while you can't even tell others are sisters at all. It's hard for a young person to understand all this and to know where the truth is.

Carmen



Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

Dear Carmen,

Thank you for sharing your question about choosing to follow the possible call to be a sister. Such a decision is a major one for those called to live the life of a faithful follower of Jesus as sisters.

As you come to such a decision, the focus of your search needs to be on the vision and values of the particular group of sisters and the spirit with which they live their lives. All religious communities seek to follow the way of the Gospel life as Jesus taught in the context of the Catholic Church. The differences are in terms of how they live the call with their particular vision and values as guides.

You can find out about the different ways to live the call by getting information from a number of Sisters' communities. Such information may be found on the individual community websites, through a person in a diocesan office for vocations, by talking with sisters and others who can answer your questions or help you find the answers, and, if possible, by visiting the sisters where they live. Some communities wear habits and others don't. Many have various kinds of living arrangements. However, all are committed to loving God, serving the people of God, especially the poor, and doing this in the context of prayer, their vows to God, and joyful service. Differences do not necessarily mean polarization or labels such as conservative and progressive.

I encourage you to go ahead and check out a variety of sisters' communities. Weigh the information you receive, pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and if one or the other group does seem to "fit" what you believe to be God's call for you, go ahead and get more information, spend time with them, and let the experience continue to lead you to a decision on your journey of life. May God bless you in this search.

Sister Marlene Weber

FSPA Snapshots



Sister Theresa Keller is a family nurse practitioner currently working in urgent care, where she sees and treats just about everything: two-month-old babies with respiratory problems, teenagers with broken ankles, adults with blood pressure problems and elders with many concerns. She is the only "doctor" most evenings and weekends. Her ministry is full of a mosaic of people who are underserved, have no insurance, or are under insured and poor.



Sister Marcella Anibas began her years of ministry as an elementary school teacher. She has also been a school principal, a director of religious education, a pastoral associate, done congregational service, and served as a spiritual director and a program director. Presently Marcella does spiritual direction, directs retreats, facilitates supervision groups, ministers to those in hospice care, and does informal ministry in the senior community building where she lives.



Sister Lucy Slinger's is the FSPA Ecological Advocate. She manages the FSPA organic garden, helps with sustainability plans for congregational lands and seeks to exemplify care for creation and Franciscan values. Lucy teaches Environmental Spirituality, Servant Leadership and Ethical Leadership at Viterbo University. She also gives earth literacy presentations and leads retreats on living in communion and right relationships with all of God's creation.

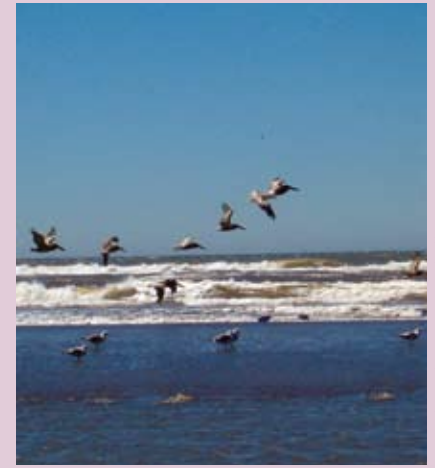


Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA

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
www.franciscanspiritualitycenter.org

The Parables of Jesus: An Invitation to Enter Jesus' Dream for Us.....May 30 - June 5

Sacred Windows to the Divine: Icon Writing Retreat/Workshop..... July 11-17

Cyber Franciscan Pilgrimage Retreat ...July 25 - 30

Marywood FSC
 3560 Hwy 51 N
 Arbor Vitae WI 54568-9538
 715-385-3750
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.

Franciscan Retreat: Franciscans at Heart, Associates and Vowed..... August 6-10

Directed Retreats.....June 20-26
 October 17-22

Prairiewoods FSC
 120 E Boyson Rd
 Hiawatha IA 52233-1277
 319-395-6700
www.prairiewoods.org

Silent Directed Retreat.....June 20-26

Choosing to Love the World: Thomas Merton and Contemplative Living... Sept. 17-19

Sacred Waiting Advent Retreat....December 3-4

Footprints



Bernardine of Siena: Messenger of Peace

By Katie Mitchell, FSPA



Giovanni Martino Spanzotti, "San Bernardino da Siena," ca. 1486-91, fresco, convent church of San Bernardino, Ivrea, Italy

One afternoon 20-year-old Bernardine looked out his window and was shocked to see an elderly pilgrim collapse. Bernardine ran to assist the man, but as he stooped down to help him the sick man gasped, "Leave me! I'm dying." Bernardine grew pale as he looked into his eyes. It

was clear the man was dying of the dreaded bubonic plague, and it was also clear that the plague had now spread to Bernardine's own town of Siena. Despite the risk to his own health, he carried the dying man to Santa Maria della Scala Hospital, where Bernardine often went as a member of the hospital's Confraternity of Mary.

As the plague spread, hundreds of people of every age and class became sick and many died. Terror-stricken people fled Siena, but Bernardine gathered together a group of ten companions. "God calls us to care for the sick and the dying," he cried out. "Will you join me in following the Gospel?" They did. For months these young men were everywhere, day and night, helping the sick, comforting the mourning, and caring for the dead. Despite his youth, Bernardine took entire charge of the hospital, but his heroic and untiring labor shattered his health, and when the terrible plague was over he lay feverish and close to death.

With time the danger of death passed, and Bernardine told his beloved aunt who had lovingly raised him since he was orphaned at six, "You have been more than a mother to me, but I must leave now because I

believe God is calling me to become a Franciscan." Soon afterward Bernardine gave his inheritance to charity. He professed vows as a Franciscan on September 8, 1403 and was ordained a priest one year later.

The years passed, and Bernardine's heart ached more and more as he witnessed the violence and division in Italy's strife-torn cities, rampant with corruption and vice. "Who will go to preach God's word to these poor, suffering people?" Bernardine asked. Soon he began travelling from city to city where his preaching often attracted crowds of 30,000. Bernardine gradually gained immense influence over the turbulent, luxurious Italian cities. "Change your ways! Follow Jesus and be at peace with one another!" pleaded Bernardine. "Put the Holy Name of Jesus on your banners. Write it everywhere," he exclaimed as he held up a tablet with the initials I.H.S. painted on it for the crowds to see.

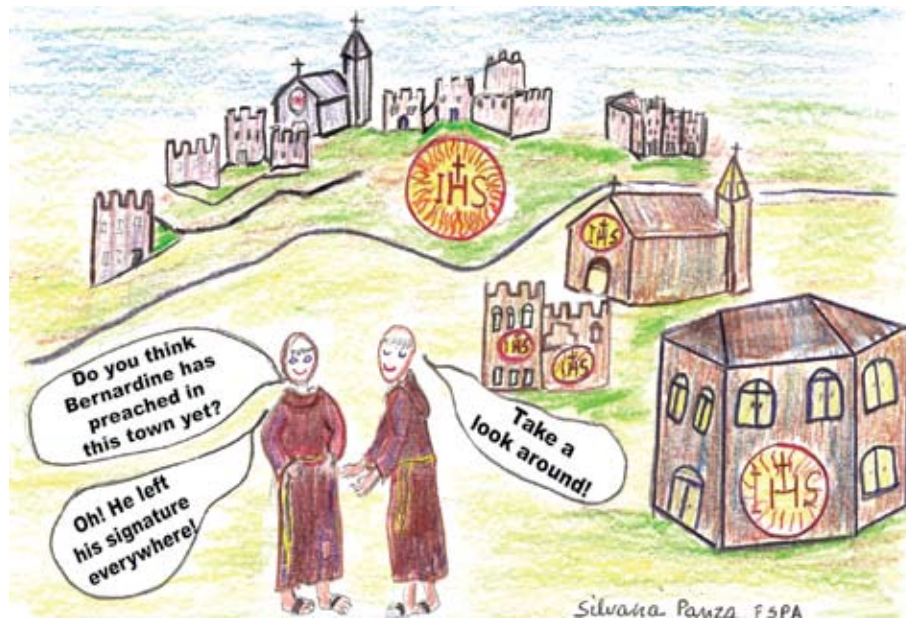
Bernardine's symbol—IHS, the first three letters of the name of Jesus in Greek, was inscribed in Gothic letters on a blazing sun.

He used this symbol to displace the superstitious symbols of the day, as well as the insignias of warring factions. The devotion spread, and the symbol began to appear in churches, homes and public places.

Crowds flocked to church to hear this apostle of Italy. Like Francis, Bernardine's watchword was always "Peace." "Give each other the hand of peace. Come together in Jesus' holy name," he preached. Bernardine traveled the length and breadth of Italy on foot, reconciling warring factions and often facing misunderstanding and persecution.

Finally, years later, old and worn out, but believing there was still work to do, Bernardine decided to travel to southern Italy to preach peace. Being too weak to walk, he had to ride a donkey, and worn out by a life of sacrifice and preaching he became ill, reaching the town of Aquila but in a dying state. There the people flocked to meet him as he lay on the bare ground dying. This Franciscan messenger of peace died on Ascension Eve, May 20, 1444.

Say It With a Smile "Tracing Bernardine's Path"



Silvana Panza FSPA

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