



# In this issue

*“The untold story of these unsung heroes is now recounted, documenting a vital and significant perspective of American history.”*

– www.womenandspirit.org

Together with Catholic Sisters of the Upper Mississippi Valley, FSPA will contribute artifacts to complement the traveling exhibition *Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America* at the Mississippi River Museum from February to April 2011. The exhibition, according to www.womenandspirit.org, depicts “the innovative, action-oriented women whose passion for justice helped shape our nation’s social and cultural landscape,” and celebrates sisters’ achievements since first arriving in America nearly 300 years ago.

In this issue of *Perspectives*, we introduce images and facts about the exhibition (pg. 3). We also share what individuals from FSPA-sponsored institutions have to say about the FSPA influence that moves themselves and those they serve (pg. 4). We look at the perspective of education with two FSPA—one who began teaching in the early 1960s and another who is now teaching parochial elementary school in Illinois (pg. 5). We experience the FSPA spirit in Bolivia (pg. 6) and Cameroon (pg. 8) through sisters who, inspired by the FSPA who’ve ministered on foreign land in the past, have recently returned from their own teaching and health care missions abroad.

*Women & Spirit* has traveled from Cincinnati to Dallas to Washington, D.C., and will open in Cleveland in May before stopping in New York in the fall and in Dubuque in early 2011. In Dubuque, the exhibition will include a local module featuring congregations from the Upper Mississippi Valley.

As a proud supporter of *Women & Spirit*, FSPA encourages you to visit the exhibition to experience the stories of the Catholic sisters in America who inspire the world.

*Editor’s Note: There was a time when full-color printing was expensive. With technology growth, printing vendors have the ability to print full color for the same price as a partially colored piece. That is the case with this magazine. While we have added more color at no additional charge, we continue to use environmentally friendly soy inks and print on paper containing recycled fiber.*



***Perspectives* represents the spirit and values shared by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.**

*We are a community of vowed Franciscan women centered in Eucharist, committed to be loving presence through prayer, witness and service.*

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*Cover collage shows FSPA through the years, serving in teaching, health care and foreign mission ministries.*

*Photo above: A display from the Women & Spirit exhibit.*

Photo courtesy of Women & Spirit

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# United States

## Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America offers a look at the history of women religious

Perspectives shares these facts and images courtesy of [www.womenandspirit.org](http://www.womenandspirit.org). The traveling exhibition Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America is touring the United States now through 2012.

### Exhibition facts

- The exhibition is organized by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, an association of leaders of congregations of Catholic women religious in the United States.
- The 3,000-square-foot exhibit is modular and can expand to 6,000 square feet.
- It features 70 artifacts from more than 400 sister communities including a letter from Thomas Jefferson assuring religious freedom following the Louisiana Purchase as well as a custom fluting machine for habits.
- Supporting educational materials for grades 1 through 12 are available at [www.womenandspirit.org](http://www.womenandspirit.org).

### Historical facts

- In 2005, approximately one in six hospital patients in the U.S. were treated in a Catholic facility.
- Catholic sisters established the nation's largest private school system, educating millions of young Americans.
- More than 110 U.S. colleges and universities were founded by Catholic sisters.
- Since 1980, at least nine American sisters have been martyred while working for social justice and human rights overseas.
- Since 1995, numerous congregations have participated as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations, focusing on global issues such as climate change, human trafficking and poverty.



Photo courtesy of Women & Spirit

### Historical facts – FSPA

- FSPA began the nation's longest running uninterrupted prayer on Aug. 1, 1878, keeping at least two adorers praying since the beginning.
- The congregation opened western Wisconsin's first hospital in 1883, St. Francis Hospital, now Franciscan Skemp Healthcare, part of Mayo Health System.
- Together with Reverend Joseph Kuemper, FSPA helped found St. Anthony Hospital, Carroll, Iowa, in 1905.
- Mother Rose Kreibich and Mother Seraphine Krause co-founded Viterbo College, now Viterbo University, in 1890.
- Through partnerships with organizations such as the 8th Day Center for Justice, Franciscan Action Network, Pax Christi, NETWORK, Voces de la Frontera and AMOS, FSPA continues the work for social justice and human rights.
- The Franciscan heritage continues to guide FSPA to nurture cosmic awareness and to promote sustainability of Mother Earth. FSPA partners with regional and national organizations and campaigns focused on care of Earth.



FSPA will be a part of Women & Spirit at the Mississippi River Museum, Dubuque, Iowa, February through April 2011, when the Leadership Council of Women Religious, Clarke College and the museum sponsor the exhibition. A local module will complement the national exhibit and will include FSPA artifacts.

Groups of 20 or more individuals interested in touring the exhibit should contact the museum's tour coordinator, Nate Breitsprecker, at 800-226-3369, ext. 214, or [nbreitsprecker@rivermuseum.com](mailto:nbreitsprecker@rivermuseum.com). For school field trips, contact Melissa Wersinger in the museum's education department at 800-226-3369, ext. 213, or [mwersinger@rivermuseum.com](mailto:mwersinger@rivermuseum.com).

# La Crosse, Wisconsin and Carroll, Iowa

## Leaders reflect on the women who inspire them, their institutions

As the FSPA settled into their new motherhouse—St. Rose Convent—in 1871, they set out to establish themselves in teaching and health care ministries. Through the years they've founded and staffed exceptional schools and health care facilities that have served thousands of people throughout the United States and around the world. In every connection FSPA has made with a teacher, a health care provider, a student or a patient, they've infused the Franciscan spirit.

Today, three professionals who are leaders in FSPA-sponsored institutions—Barbara Jochman, Franciscan Skemp Healthcare School of Anesthesia program director; Gary Reidmann, president of St. Anthony Regional Hospital & Nursing Home; and Darrell Pofahl, recently retired Viterbo University associate professor of sociology, social work and criminal justice—have much to say about the Franciscan women religious who not only imparted the spirit to themselves, but who also inspired them to share the spirit with all they serve.

### Perspectives: In what capacity have you worked professionally with FSPA?

*Barbara Jochman:* After graduating from Viterbo with a nursing degree, I worked in a St. Francis Hospital—now Franciscan Skemp Healthcare—surgical unit. I later graduated from the FSH School of Anesthesia and was hired by the department. I celebrated my 25th anniversary as the program director last year.

*Gary Reidmann:* I have worked primarily with the FSPA leadership at St. Anthony over the past 18 years to provide quality rural health services to people throughout our region.

*Darrell Pofahl:* I came to Viterbo in 1969 to teach sociology and gradually focused on race and ethnicity until my retirement in 2009. Over 40 years ago, I also began organizing Viterbo student trips that spotlight ethnic neighborhoods, social service agencies and juvenile court.

### Perspectives: Do you carry a favorite memory of interacting with a sister?

*Darrell Pofahl:* I have no single story to share about Sister Grace Clare Bezouz. However, the image planted in my memory is based on her constancy, wisdom and human warmth. I served on many committees with her and

often dropped by her office to discuss concerns. The empathy and support she demonstrated served as a model in providing support to others during my career at Viterbo.

*Gary Reidmann:* When I was leaving St. Anthony after my final interview for the CEO position, one of the FSPA board members came running out to the parking lot. She told me that the decision had already been made; they wanted me to come to St. Anthony. To me, it was a clear example of FSPA's ability to make decisions, focus on action and uphold commitment.

*Barbara Jochman:* Sister Yvonne Jenn, who personally invited me to enroll in the anesthesia program in 1978, actually administered anesthesia to me when I had my tonsils removed at age 11! She really exemplified the compassion of St. Francis and his philosophy of dignity for the human soul. Sister Yvonne not only included this concept boldly in her program literature, she practiced it. I would not have attempted the role of program director without her encouragement and guidance.

### Perspectives: How have you been affected professionally and personally by your work with FSPA?

*Darrell Pofahl:* The FSPA modeled

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These pictures reflect the presence of FSPA within their sponsored institutions then and now. From left: Barbara Jochman (standing, right) with Sister Yvonne Jenn (seated). Second photo: A women's ward at St Francis Hospital. Third photo: Gary Reidmann presents a historical collage to Sisters Charlene Smith and Ladonna Kassmeyer. Fourth photo: FSPA nurse anesthetists at St. Anthony Hospital in 1955.

## FSPA educators: celebrating the history and creating the future

Since FSPA's founding, more than half of the sisters have instructed innumerable students in classrooms the world over through the ministry of teaching. Two such FSPA educators—Sisters Virdean Meyer and Katie Mitchell—have collectively taught children, adolescents and adults in schools and churches in Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin and Illinois for over 60 years.

"I will never forget my first day of first grade," recalls Sister Virdean, who even then sensed that she may have a future as not only an educator, but as a Franciscan woman as well. "Those early experiences told me that 'teacher' was synonymous with 'sister,' and both meant FSPA to me." Sister Virdean celebrated her first profession in 1960 and, one year later, welcomed elementary school students into her own classroom.

Since then, Sister Virdean has exchanged countless lessons with her students: biology with high school students; GED and college prep courses as well as outreach programs and sheltered workshops for special needs adults in the Wisconsin Technical College System; and, primary, secondary and adult religious education classes, including RCIA and book discussion groups. She continues her involvement with special needs adults, RCIA and a prayer and discussion group today.

The spirit of St. Francis has accompanied Sister Virdean into all of the classrooms she's ministered in. She feels that preserving the Franciscan presence was the educational challenge she most revered. "I have always believed that what was mine to do must go way beyond the subject matter that I

taught. Or, more correctly," she clarifies, "sharing the Franciscan spirit had to come before the subject matter."

This ideal is reinforced by a story her mother used to tell of her own education—one that traditionally concluded at the end of eighth grade in the small, rural community she grew up in. "The only way she could have any education beyond that was to travel to the high school in a neighboring town." Although Sister Virdean's grandfather saw no need for a woman's education beyond eighth grade, an FSPA in the school offered to teach students interested for an additional year. "It was FSPA to the rescue! Mom was forever grateful for that extra year of education, and her story impressed on me that real dedication always considers the needs of those served."

Sister Katie Mitchell has been teaching since 1997, presently as a parochial elementary school teacher in Evanston, Ill. She says that the FSPA who pioneered the ministry of education, like the teacher in Sister Virdean's story, have inspired and motivated her own path. "I believe Catholic education at all levels is a fundamental mission of the church, deeply rooted in the charism



Photo by Silvana Panza, FSPA



Photo at left courtesy of Virdean Meyer, FSPA; right, contributed photo  
*In the top photo, Sister Katie Mitchell shares a book with her Evanston, Ill., students. Sister Virdean Meyer (bottom left) continues to teach today in sheltered workshops for disabled adults and was captured (right) instructing her Aquinas High School biology class in 1969.*

and the tradition of FSPA."

She found her call to the community and to the classroom in a roundabout way—through an assignment to produce a video program on St. Nicholas for children. Now, Sister Katie utilizes her love of teaching and media as an educator, as chair of the religion team and as a leader in sacramental preparation for her two-parish school. Above all, she cherishes the "significant joy" of sharing the Franciscan spirit with her students, their families and her colleagues, accompanying them as "a loving presence on the journey of faith."

Sister Katie says she hopes to

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# Santa Cruz, Bolivia

## My Perspective: Franciscan spirit flows through Franciscan Common Venture into Bolivia

The Franciscan Common Venture steering committee invited Sister Jean Moore, FSPA director of mission integration, to provide ongoing formation in the Franciscan tradition for the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in the region of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Sister Jean's fluency in the Spanish language combined with her recent studies in Franciscan theology and spirituality made her an obvious choice to lead the week's retreat, held in January, on different aspects of Franciscan life. *Perspectives* asked Sister Jean to reflect on her experience.

### **Perspectives: What concepts did you share with the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis?**

*Sister Jean:* During the course of five and a half days, I was able to share with them some ideas about what the Franciscan tradition tells us about such themes as personal conversion (*metanoia*), God's generous and creative love, humility, poverty, prayer and contemplation, and *fraternitas* (relationships and community). During this time there was an opportunity for me to provide some input about these topics and, later, for all to come together to discuss some of the implications for their community life and

ministry as well as their respective spiritual development.

### **Perspectives: How will the Franciscan spirit continue to influence the Bolivians and those around them?**

*Sister Jean:* I truly believe that the ministries in which they are engaged—primarily education, health care and pastoral care—are spirit-filled. The Austrian sisters of the TSSF congregation arrived in Bolivia in 1929 as missionaries to the indigenous communities of eastern Bolivia. They have had a major impact on these communities, and have been affected by the people there in a strong, mutual effort to attend to the spiritual and personal development needs of each other. The Austrian sisters in Bolivia are now a minority as the Bolivian sisters continue to grow with new vocations to the community.

I think the spirit is very alive and well in this part of Bolivia because of the presence of these sisters and the spirituality of the Bolivian people. As the needs of the society change, I believe that the sisters will respond accordingly with the ongoing development of lay leaders within the villages and the church, as well as with the formal education they offer in the primary and

secondary schools. One program in particular that is most impressive is a four-year program for teens that includes an annual retreat for the purpose of faith development within a church-related community. Begun by Pope John Paul II (known then as Cardinal Wojtyla) in Poland in the late 1970s, this *Oasis* program has really caught on in Bolivia, and the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis are on the front line in this valuable work with the youth of eastern Bolivia.

### **Perspectives: How will this experience go on with you and impact your life as a woman religious in the United States?**

*Sister Jean:* My brief, one-week experience in Bolivia brought back into my conscious awareness the breadth and depth of the universal church. I have always had an affinity for the people of Latin America, given my birth in Chile, and I was pleasantly surprised to feel quite at home in Bolivia. The TSSF's hospitality was very welcoming, open and quite attentive; they treated me as their sister. It was truly a Franciscan experience of "sisterhood." There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about my sisters in Bolivia. I feel very connected to them as part of the greater

Franciscan family, and I hope that their presence in my life will continue to draw me outside my immediate reality of the U.S. to think more broadly with respect to the church and our life as vowed religious women.

### **Perspectives: How will the FSPA and the Franciscan tradition itself grow from this shared experience?**

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*Sister Jean Moore shares her knowledge of Franciscan theology and spirituality with the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in the region of Santa Cruz, Bolivia.*

Photo courtesy of Jean Moore, FSPA

## Spirit of Ministry: Franciscan spirit inspires a life's work for justice, peace

by John Tully, affiliate

Most men readily admit to the significant role women play in their lives. I am one of those men. The extent to which I have been shaped by women in general, and Catholic sisters in particular, is vast. My exposure to sisters—Franciscans of various congregations—began at a young age. They were my catechists; elementary, secondary and college teachers; mentors and friends. They motivated me to enter the fields of special education and pastoral ministry and to consider life as a Franciscan friar. They inspired me to work for justice, peace and care of creation since my high school years. In retirement, my volunteer work is largely related to these very concerns. As a person who lives with serious chronic health challenges, I draw great strength from the example of sisters who live and die with joy and peace in the face of similar adversity. While examples of such amazing women in my life are legion, there are three FSPA who have been and continue to be powerful exemplars of authentic, vibrant Franciscan living.

### Mary Noel Luby, FSPA

I first met Sister Mary Noel Luby in 1978 when we began working together. Her outgoing personality, infectious laugh, zest for living and obvious care for the elderly with whom she ministered quickly drew me to her. Several years later she shared that she was losing her vision due to many decades with juvenile diabetes. Never one to let a “slight” inconvenience such as that slow her, she prepared by obtaining a guide dog, moving into a work environment

that allowed her to use large print technology to continue serving others and showing the same courage and zest for life as ever.

It was Sister Mary Noel who invited me to become an FSPA affiliate—“You have a Franciscan heart and would be an asset to our community!” I celebrated my affiliation in 1989.

Sister Mary Noel kept going as long as she could, but diabetes led to her death in December 1998. To this day I marvel at the strength, joy and peace with which she faced life's challenges.

### Thea Bowman, FSPA

After getting better acquainted with FSPA as I considered affiliation, I became increasingly aware of Sister Thea Bowman. I had become a member of a parish in Milwaukee, Wis., where Sister Thea was revered as a role model for black Catholics. Learning that she was an FSPA at the time I was discerning affiliation was another incentive to pursue getting to know her. I was blessed to meet and speak with her when she gave one of her spellbinding presentations from a wheelchair in Chicago in 1988; thereafter we corresponded several times before her death in March 1990. In one of my letters I indicated that the power of her witness had been a factor in my decision to become an affiliate. I think of her often, as the predominantly black parish in Oakland, Calif., which I recently joined, sponsors an affordable housing complex named Sister Thea Bowman Manor.

### Josephine Mary Weiler, FSPA

When Sister Mary Noel died, I asked



Affiliate John Tully, right, confers with co-workers at Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, Oakland, Calif. Photo courtesy of John Tully

Sister Josephine Mary Weiler to become my new contact sister. I met Sister Josephine when we were both members of the FSPA Milwaukee companion community. Her zest for life and solid Franciscan values drew me to her immediately. We have become good friends, and she has supported me through some very dark days with her wisdom and insight. While there are many FSPA elders who exemplify the spirit of the community very well, Sister Josephine is for me one of the finest.

I am grateful for the love and care I have received from so many FSPA. The influence of Catholic sisters—especially FSPA—in my life and in the lives of so many is alive and well. From the bottom of my heart, thank you, sisters! ■



John Tully lives in Oakland, Calif., where he volunteers at Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service and for other organizations. He enjoyed a human services career which included 27 years of parish ministry.

# Cameroon

## Sister Romana Klaubauf: planting seeds of health care in foreign mission

**F**SPA's foreign missions date back to the 1930s when sisters began ministering in far-away places like China, El Salvador, Guam, Guatemala, the Marshall Islands and Vietnam. In recent years, FSPA's partnership in the Franciscan Common Venture has presented opportunities for several sisters to participate in international ministries. The most recent FSPA to return from a foreign mission, this time in Cameroon, West Africa, is Sister Romana Klaubauf. Here, Perspectives tells the story of her discernment of the Franciscan spirit's presence and influence halfway across the globe.

Sister Romana Klaubauf has practiced in the world of health care from many different perspectives. She has worked in the United States as a nurse and educator in hospitals, parishes and public health facilities and volunteered on hospital boards and in homeless shelters. In February, she returned to St. Rose Convent in La Crosse from her third trip—a six-month stay in Cameroon, West Africa, where she taught ethics to students and assisted the nursing faculty in setting up a skills lab at the Catholic School of Health Sciences in Shisong.

"I see my work as a healing ministry, rather than one of health care," says Sister Romana. Although her American and African missions are geographically and culturally worlds apart, the FSPA, the Franciscan Common Venture and her faith as a Franciscan woman span the divide. "Francis did what he was called to do. As Franciscans today, we are called to do what is ours to do."

Sister Romana has shared the inspira-

tion of the Franciscan spirit with her students. The lab school has grown since its inception five years ago; the program's enrollment now nearly matches the nursing school's numbers. "More students mean more providers in the clinics that are so important for infectious disease screening."

She felt the presence of the Franciscan spirit in the newly inaugurated Cardiac Center of Shisong Hospital—the first in West and Central Africa. Ironically, it is where she witnessed open heart surgery for the first time. "There is much holding of breath and call to prayer for this modern cardiac center in such a poor region. Will the generators hold out? Will



*Sister Romana Klaubauf celebrates in Cameroon with two of her former students who now serve the community as nurses.*

Photo courtesy of Romana Klaubauf, FSPA

new roads make the facility accessible? The sisters and villagers are committed to bringing this quality of care to the poor," she emphasizes. "This is one of the biggest Franciscan ideals you can ever witness."

Sister Romana heard the spirit in the stories her students shared through their growing awareness of FSPA's life-giving support. "One of my students spoke of two relatives with kidney disease: one in America who had access to dialysis and the other in Cameroon who did not.

Subsequently," retells Sister Romana, "the patient in Africa died."

She experienced the movement of the spirit outside of the classroom and the hospital. "I stayed off campus with lay people during my two previous trips; this time I lived with the sisters in St. Joseph's Convent." She found that the responsibility for access to care falls consistently to one side of the religious and secular cultures. "Sisters and priests continue to have a heavy presence in health care services. It's accepted that Franciscans will do this."

She sensed the spirit of St. Clare in the convent's St. Clare building. "Living with sisters was very comforting. Praying with them helped me to stay Franciscan-focused and to parlay that energy to the students." There again, she offers, is a distinction. "At times I got the notion that Clare is, in that tradition, idealized. Here, we've developed more spirituality around her." Introducing a perpetual presence of St. Clare may prove influential. "You're not going to change a culture, but you might inspire these women to some sense of empowerment."

She revealed in how the spirit has helped to facilitate the progress of technology and communication. One of the many First World barriers built by the lack of a credit card system in Cameroon was breached when Sister Romana purchased a *St. Anthony Messenger* subscription for the Tertiary Sisters, providing a much appreciated resource of modern, traditional spiritual articles on Franciscanism.

Sister Romana carried the spirit back to FSPA, trusting it will guide the community to Cameroon again. "Our Western minds may question the mission, but we've got to give it time. It translates to helping these people move beyond their means to achieve sustainability," she implores. "If that seed isn't planted, it just won't be." ■



# La Crosse, Wisconsin

## Natural burial option offers sisters a 'simple' return to the earth

**"T**his earth has nourished me all these years," says Sister Helen Gohres, a 91-year-old FSPA who resides at the community's skilled nursing facility on St. Joseph's Ridge near La Crosse. "It's now my time to return that nourishment to the earth with my body."

For Sister Helen, this sentiment is the ultimate expression of the Franciscan tradition of care for creation that reflects her wish to be honored in death with a natural funeral and burial. She first expressed her desire in 2007 during a conversation with Sister Sharon Berger, FSPA mission councilor, who had just returned from attending a workshop on establishing natural preserves with space for green burials. "I shared this information with Sister Helen, who has been an advocate of environmental concerns and justice and peace issues much of her life," recalls Sister Sharon. "Sister Helen told me that a natural burial is exactly what she wanted."

A process for researching the possibility of natural burial for FSPA began in the following months. In September 2009, the La Crosse County Board granted approval for FSPA to establish a cemetery on its Villa property on St. Joseph's Ridge. Fourteen circles with six graves in each have been plotted on the 1.36 acre site. Preparation of the site with the planting of native prairie grasses and flowers will begin this spring.

Several FSPA have now elected green

burial. In making this choice, sisters must first convey their wishes to their family so that they understand the difference the arrangement will make in her funeral and burial. Sister Karolyne Rohlik, who volunteers as a driver and resides at Villa St. Joseph, has shared the joy of her own decision with those she loves. She says that Earth has always called to her—first as a child and then, since professing her first vows in 1954, as a Franciscan woman committed to care for God's creation as St. Francis did.

"Sister Helen and I have talked about this," she says in reference to their decisions to go back to the earth upon their death. "The most natural, most beautiful experiences we have are to be born and to die. What is there to fear?" she questions.

The Villa staff is prepared to help Sisters Helen and Karolyne and others to realize their desires for natural burial, and a protocol has been established. As the use of traditional embalming chemicals is prohibited, the body will ordinarily be buried within 36 hours of death.

Villa seamstress Sister Mary Ann Gaul has prepared rosaries and burial garments, all with natural fabrics, and FSPA carpenter Jerry Moriarty has constructed a simple wooden burial container that is also completely biodegradable.

Just as Villa staff members are committed to respectfully returning the bodies of their sisters to the natural cycle of life, so too are funeral directors Joe Schams and Josh Sonnenberg. Joe and Josh are partners of Coulee Region Cremation Group, a niche

business that offers not only traditional and cremation services, but natural funeral and burial services as well.

They say that while the rising costs for



*Sister Mary Ann Gaul, volunteer seamstress at Villa St. Joseph, works with biodegradable fabric to construct a burial garment.*

and the ecological damage from traditional burial and cremation have led to renewed interest in green alternatives, the business of natural funerals is somewhat unique. Joe has been conducting research for the past six years on the availability of green funeral services provided on a regular basis and says that, to his knowledge, Coulee Region Cremation Group stands alone. "According to the National Green Burial Council, no one else is doing this. Josh and I are honored to work with the sisters, and do so with utmost respect. Who better to revolutionize green funerals and burials than the FSPA?"

Coulee Region Cremation Group will assist Villa staff with the newly developed natural funeral and burial protocol. A visitation, funeral Mass and committal service will be held at Villa St. Joseph. A memorial service will be held at St. Rose Convent at a later date.

Perhaps it is these changes to come at the end of life for FSPA's beloved sisters, those choosing natural funerals and burial, that are the most difficult to conceive. "When it happens," says Villa St. Joseph Administrator Sister Jean Michael Treba, "it will be very different

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*Sister Helen Gohres has chosen a natural funeral and burial for herself.*

Photo courtesy of Villa

## Leaders reflect

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many things that influenced me. Foremost is the example of dedication to a value greater than oneself, including service to others. I also appreciate the sense of joy and the celebration of life that guide the FSPA community. Given some of my previous stereotypes about religious life, this was perhaps one of my most pleasant surprises.

*Barbara Jobzman:* It's the compassion, the dedication to the human spirit, that becomes not something that I would hope for but an expectation that's ingrained in my work and in my family. The FSPA do it well. With Sister Yvonne it was not the plan, it was the expectation.

### **Perspectives: How do you and your co-workers share the Franciscan spirit with each other and with those you serve?**

*Darrell Pofabl:* Viterbo staff and students share the Franciscan spirit through a sense of community focused on service and on interaction with mutual respect. I often hear comments about the level of respect, friendliness and individual attention students find to a greater extent at Viterbo than at some other schools.

*Gary Riedmann:* One great example of the presence of our Franciscan spirit

is our *No One Dies Alone* program. We have a large group of employee volunteers who, if no family members are present, sit with our patients through their end-of-life journey. It gives each of us an opportunity, with respect and compassion, to appreciate the spirit of our patients both entering and leaving our presence.

### **Perspectives: An important part of FSPA's mission is to share the Franciscan spirit with all of the institutions they minister with and sponsor. What is the most significant impact sisters have made on your institution?**

*Darrell Pofabl:* The FSPA have been wonderful role models to generations of young women—and later, young men—as women of strength, vision and commitment to service. Through the beauty of Mary of the Angels Chapel, the heritage of the arts and the celebration of diverse cultures, the FSPA have celebrated the uplifting effect of beauty in the world. Yet, in the Franciscan tradition, they've done it in a way that reflects humility, grace and generosity.

*Barbara Jobzman:* FSPA's vision and values on dignity and respect is certainly evident in their daily practices, in patient care and in the needs of the community. When the practice of anesthesia changed and administration changed, the impact of FSPA on the

program was tremendous. Sister Yvonne was widely respected as one of the program's pioneers; without her to develop and shepherd it through good times and bad, FSH wouldn't have a school of anesthesia.

### **Perspectives: How does your organization carry out FSPA's mission today?**

*Barbara Jobzman:* We recognize and embrace our FSPA heritage and proudly provide quality health care to our community with respect and compassion, service and teamwork, innovation and stewardship.

*Gary Riedmann:* St. Anthony Hospital and our staff have been recognized and honored as one of the nation's top hospitals, ranking among the top tier of all hospitals nationwide and achieving high marks in quality, affordability, efficiency and patient satisfaction. Compared with 4,500 general acute-care hospitals, St. Anthony was ranked 75th nationally overall for best in value. These achievements are the direct result of our focus on our mission to service in a special Franciscan way.

*Darrell Pofabl:* It's reflected in Viterbo's commitment to service and social justice, respect for cultural diversity, appreciation for the beauty of the arts, dedication to academic excellence, promotion of good stewardship of the environment and treatment of



First photo from left: Darrell Pofabl collaborated with Sister Rochelle Potaracke on early childhood education research. Second photo: FSPA teaching in a Viterbo College classroom. Third photo: St. Francis School of Nursing photo taken in 1943, Sister Joyce Bantle on left.

## 2010 Jubilarians

### Sisters

#### Diamond (80) 1930

Lucille Kleinheinz

#### Diamond (75) 1935

Barbara Freed

Jeanice Lohman

Rosella Namer

Mary Rohlik

Mary Myron Stork

#### Diamond (70) 1940

Norene Bollech

Maryla Chapek

Helen Gohres

Laura Gutting

Margaret Heil

Mary Hornick

Rose Catherine Kuehner

Beatrice Merkes

Carlene Unser

#### Diamond (60) 1950

Mary Bates

Rosalia Bauer

Mary Ann Carrier

Luanne Durst

Alice Kaiser

Mae Kaiser

Kathleen Kenkel

Ann Pollpeter

Mary Gabriel Soong

Marcella Steffes

Shirley Wagner

Donna Weber

Joan Weigel

#### Golden (50) 1960

Gloria Aguon

Diane Boehm

Betty Bradley

Rosemary Desmond

Joann Gehling

Mary Ann Gschwind

Virdean Meyer

Mary Morrissey

Ione Nieland

Irene Nieland

Grace Ann Schiffer

Jo Ann Serwas

#### Affiliate

#### Silver (25)

Marie Barfknecht

all people with respect and dignity. The many years of FSPA's dedicated service deserve no small effort to keep their heritage alive at Viterbo and long into the future. ■

### Natural burial

continued from page 9

from the customs we have always preserved." She and Sister Mary Ann have been working with Villa Liturgy Coordinator Sister Louise Marie Guralski and Director of Pastoral Care Sharon Rohde, Congregation of Divine Providence, to create a new rite of spiritual passage. "Some of the sisters have decided it's not right for them," says Sister Louise Marie, who feels that at the end of every discussion the important conclusion is access to the option. "I like that we have a choice."

Sister Karolyne does too. "The earth is sacred, our bodies are sacred," she says. "Every time I pass by the spot intended for the burial site I think, 'this is where I'm going to be!' You can't get any more sacred than that." ■

### My Perspectives

continued from page 6

*Sister Jean:* This experience is part of the Franciscan Common Venture that FSPA has been involved with for the past 10 years, so I think there is great potential for us to continue our relationship in some manner with the TSSF in Bolivia. After my return, I was able to give a presentation of my experience to the sisters at St. Rose Convent and in the process speak a bit about the Franciscan tradition. This tradition merits more attention among us who profess this way of life, and I believe this experience is one way in which it can be shared with a broader audience. The world is hungry for an alternative way of interacting with each other personally and professionally, and the Franciscan tradition presents many opportunities to enhance these relationships.

It will be important for us as a community to continue to find ways to reach out to others to share the gifts we have been given, to receive from others the gifts they have and to work together to bring about justice. We can do this

collaboratively in our Franciscan family; we just need to explore, and take advantage of, the opportunities that present themselves.

As Franciscans we accompany each other on the journey. We are "pilgrims and strangers" wherever we go; yet among each other, we are also "pilgrims and sisters/brothers." In each other, we find God, and we share that love and goodness. ■

### Education

continued from page 5

communicate to her students the momentous value of Franciscan spirituality and her deep love of the Eucharist as they go home each day and into the future. "Planting the seeds of faith, justice and peace, love for God's creation and respect for diversity in young people has ramifications far beyond the years they are in school." She joyfully proclaims: "I believe that as FSPA, we have a history to remember and share, as well as much to accomplish—a future to create—in the church today!" ■

# In Memoriam

## Rejoice, you who are alive in Christ

### **Sister Alicia Bauer**

**Jan. 13, 1921-Sept. 30, 2009**

Sister Alicia was born in Lima, Wis. She was baptized with the name Marcella Agnes.

Sister Alicia taught for 30 years in elementary schools in Washington and Wisconsin. Following her teaching ministry, she served as a homemaker in convent homes, taught religious education classes and visited the elderly. In 1984 she moved to St. Joseph Parish, Menomonie, Wis., where she was religious education coordinator for seven years and parish visitor for five years.

She retired to St. Rose Convent in 1997 and to Villa St. Joseph in 2002.



### **Sister Mary Walter Heires**

**May 22, 1915-Oct. 26, 2009**

Sister Mary Walter was born in Carroll, Iowa. At her baptism she received the name Dorothy Marie.

Entering the teaching profession, Sister Mary Walter ministered for 45 years in elementary and secondary schools in Iowa, Mississippi, Washington and Wisconsin, including 16 years each at Kuemper High School, Carroll, Iowa, and Holy Child Jesus, Canton, Miss. From 1983-1990 Sister Mary Walter cared for her mother and managed the family farm. She moved back to Mississippi and was a tutor and



librarian in Camden until her retirement at Villa St. Joseph in 1994.

### **Sister Delberta Schmitz**

**April 16, 1918-Oct. 30, 2009**

Sister Delberta was born in Sparta, Wis., and was named Margaret Rose at her baptism.

Sister Delberta taught for 13 years on the elementary level and for 26 years on the secondary level in parochial schools in Iowa, Mississippi, Nevada and Wisconsin. She served for nine years in Canton, Miss., and eight years each in Muscatine, Iowa, and at Aquinas High School, La Crosse. In 1982 Sister Delberta was elected provincial of the FSPA Southern Province. From 1985-1993 she served as business and plant manager at St. Rose Convent. Sister Delberta then moved to Arbor Vitae, Wis., where she was responsible for the maintenance of the buildings on the FSPA Eastern Region property (Marywood). She spent two years of retirement in Wheat Ridge, Colo., as a tutor.

Sister Delberta retired at St. Rose in 2000 and to Villa St. Joseph in 2006.

### **Sister Elaine (Mary Albert) McMullin**

**Aug. 9, 1918-Nov. 5, 2009**

Sister Elaine was born in Minneapolis, Minn.

She taught on the elementary level for 33 years in Iowa, Washington and Wisconsin. Sister Elaine then served as religious education teacher for 10 years in Menominee, Mich., River Falls and Woodruff, Wis., and Coon Rapids,



Minn. Her next mission was in Yankton, S.D., where she ministered as a hospital chaplain. Sister Elaine served as secretary for Camphor United Methodist Church in St. Paul, was coordinator of the driver escort program for the Retired Seniors and Volunteers Program, and then visited the elderly through the Senior Companion Program in Minneapolis for five years.

She retired in 1996 in Minneapolis and moved to St. Rose Convent in 1998. Villa St. Joseph became her home in 2007.

### **Sister Jamesetta Dowd**

**Oct. 3, 1919-Nov. 12, 2009**

Sister Jamesetta was born in Superior, Wis., and was baptized with the name Catherine Mary.

Sister Jamesetta taught in elementary schools in Iowa and Wisconsin for 52 years including 21 years at Cathedral School in Superior, Wis. Following her teaching career, she ministered to the sick and elderly before retiring in Superior in 1995.

In 1998 Sister Jamesetta moved to St. Rose Convent. She retired at Villa St. Joseph in 2005.

### **Sister Marda Tsai**

**June 11, 1916-Dec. 16, 2009**

Sister Marda was born in Peking, China, in the year of the dragon. At baptism she received the name Anna.

Entering the fields of education and art, Sister Marda taught in Wuchang, Hupeh, China, for a year before becoming



principal at the newly established school in Hwang Shih Kang, Hupeh, China. She returned to the United States and taught art at St. Angela's Academy, Carroll, Iowa, for four years. From 1954-1986 Sister Marda taught junior high classes and then art at Bishop Baumgartner High School on Guam. Following that, she taught art, gave art lessons and taught oriental painting in addition to creating her own private art work. For the next 12 years Sister Marda devoted herself to private art lessons and visiting the elderly.

She retired to St. Rose Convent in 1999 and to Villa St. Joseph in 2008.

**Sister Josara Bielefeld**  
**Sept. 5, 1916-Dec. 19, 2009**

Born in Muscatine, Iowa, Sister Josara was given the name Pauline at her baptism.

Sister Josara taught for two years before entering the field of health care.

She ministered as a medical laboratory technician for 43 years in hospitals in La Crosse (St. Francis), Idaho, Guam, Hillsboro, Wis., (St. Joseph's) and Carroll, Iowa (St. Anthony's). Sister Josara volunteered at St. Anthony's another five years before moving to Villa St. Joseph in 1995 where she served as a volunteer.

She retired at the Villa in 2006.

**Sister Frances Claire Mezera**  
**March 16, 1915-Feb. 6, 2010**

Sister Frances Claire was born in Eastman, Wis., and was baptized with the name Loretta.

Sister Frances Claire taught for 20 years in elementary schools in Iowa, Idaho, Washington and Wisconsin. She then devoted 44 years of service to



Viterbo College as librarian. Sister Frances Claire served as director of the academic library, was museum curator and from 1994-1998 organized the Viterbo Archives. She continued to volunteer at Viterbo even after she retired to St. Rose Convent in 2002.

In 2006 Sister Frances Claire made the Villa her home.

**Sister Ruthmary Waterstreet**  
**July 30, 1921-Feb. 20, 2010**

Sister Ruthmary was born in Milwaukee, Wis. She received the name Wanda Grace at her baptism.

Sister Ruthmary taught math and science classes in schools in Wisconsin and Iowa—including St. Rose High School, Aquinas High School, St. Michael's Home and Viterbo College in La Crosse, and St. Angela's Academy in Carroll, Iowa. She was on staff at Mount Scenario College, Ladysmith, Wis., before moving to Michigan where she worked at *Upper Peninsula Catholic* newspaper for 10 years. Sister Ruthmary also taught at Viterbo College during summer sessions and later tutored at Messmer High School and Marquette University in Milwaukee.

She retired in 2000 in the Milwaukee area and moved to the Villa in 2005.

**Sister Josalia Thering**  
**March 19, 1921-Feb. 26, 2010**

Sister Josalia was born on a farm near Spring Green, Wis. At baptism she received the name Marie Elizabeth.



Sister Josalia taught for 12 years in parochial elementary schools in Iowa and Wisconsin and served as organist in those parishes as well. She then served as a homemaker in convent homes for more than 20 years including 11 years at Aquinas Convent. From 1979-1992 Sister Josalia was part of the housekeeping staff at Viterbo College. She served as a homemaker three more years before retiring to St. Rose Convent in 1995 and to Villa St. Joseph in 2007.



**Affiliates**

**Isabelle Feld**  
**Dec. 1, 1919- Jan. 9, 2010**

Isabelle grew up in the Willey and Lidderdale, Iowa, communities. She married Charles Feld in 1940, and together they raised four sons and six daughters. She was preceded in death by her husband and one son. Along with her nine surviving children and their spouses, Isabelle celebrated life with her 30 grandchildren and 45 great grandchildren. She was a homemaker and loving wife and mother who strived daily to live a faithful and good life. In her free time, Isabelle enjoyed playing cards and baking.

She was a member of St. Lawrence Parish, Parish Ladies Guild, St. Anthony Hospital Auxiliary, St. Clair Prayer Group and was a New Hope Village Store volunteer.



FSPA Web site  
 Read the complete obituaries at  
[www.fspa.org/news](http://www.fspa.org/news)

# Addenda

## New leaders elected

The 126-member general assembly of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration completed three days of meetings, March 18-20, during which they elected leaders for 2010-2014.

Sister Linda Mershon was elected president. Sister Linda has been ministering as FSPA mission councilor since 2006. She will take office July 1, 2010, with the newly elected leadership team.

Sister Eileen Lang was chosen as vice president. She is currently on sabbatical at Sangre de Cristo Center in Santa Fe, N.M. Prior to that, she was a resident of Superior, Wis., and served for nearly four decades teaching and serving the Catholic Diocese of Superior.

Three members were elected as mission councilors who, with the president and vice president, constitute the FSPA leadership team.

The newly elected mission councilors are Sister Paulynn Instenes, currently serving as FSPA vice president in La Crosse, Wis., Sister Suzanne Rubenbauer, a resident of Eden Prairie, Minn., currently serving as FSPA co-minister of affiliation, and Sister Rose Elsbernd of Frontenac, Minn. Sister Rose is currently director of Villa Maria Retreat Center.



Newly elected FSPA leadership team: from left, Sisters Paulynn Instenes, Rose Elsbernd, Linda Mershon, Eileen Lang and Suzanne Rubenbauer

## FSPA honored by La Crosse area child advocacy center

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration were recognized at the Springtime of Hope Gala, held April 15, 2010, in La Crosse, Wis., for their involvement with and advocacy for Family & Children's Center's Stepping Stones Child Advocacy Center. Sister Marlene Weisenbeck accepted the Springtime of Hope/Stepping Stones award on behalf of FSPA.

Stepping Stones serves children who are reported to be victims of maltreatment by providing a safe and comfortable place where the children are interviewed about possible abuse and neglect.

## National Catholic Reporter features FSPA

The Religious Life section in a recent edition of the *National Catholic Reporter* covered a story about the Franciscan Common Venture. The article introduced readers to the Common Venture and last summer's peace conference that marked the 10th anniversary of the project. Find a link to the story at [www.fspa.org/news](http://www.fspa.org/news).

## FSPA committee focuses on immigration issues

FSPA's Justice, Peace & Integration of Creation Committee kicked off its 2010 project theme with an immigration focus. The project mission is to "stand with our migrant brothers and sisters displaced from their homelands and seeking survival elsewhere."



The project launched with an op-ed printed in the *La Crosse Tribune* and through support of the Wisconsin Catholic Sister's immigration campaign. Find links to the op-ed and campaign at [www.fspa.org/news](http://www.fspa.org/news).

## FSPA affiliates commit to cleaning green

The 2010 Franciscan Living Challenge, launched by FSPA affiliates in January, encourages participants to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of toxins found in household cleaners. The FSPA affiliation office sent all sister and affiliate households earth-friendly recipes for common household cleaners. Access the recipes at [www.fspa.org/news/fspanewsmedia.html](http://www.fspa.org/news/fspanewsmedia.html).

## Spirituality center recognized for alternative energy use

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Hiawatha, Iowa, was selected as an award winner in the *Corridor Business Journal's* inaugural Environmental Leadership Awards, which recognized local businesses for their dedication to environmental or conservational concerns. Prairiewoods received the Alternative Energy Use award in the small organization category (50 employees or less). Sister Helen Elsbernd accepted the award at the Environmental & Energy Leadership Symposium on April 16 in Coralville, Iowa.



## Health care ministry rooted with hospital's opening in 1883

FSPA's health care ministry was deeply-rooted in 1883 when pioneer sisters, under the direction of Mother Ludovica Keller, were chosen to open western Wisconsin's first hospital, St. Francis Hospital, now Franciscan Skemp Healthcare, part of Mayo Health System, in La Crosse, Wis. Through the years, numerous sisters have carried on that pioneer spirit in FSPA-sponsored health care organizations and in

facilities throughout the United States and abroad.

To commemorate this spirit, Franciscan Skemp has added a permanent history display in its La Crosse Campus hospital.

*Built from need . . . by devotion, talent & hard work* (pictured above) is a photographic journey from the beginnings of La Crosse as a river transportation hub and the original 1883 hospital building, through periods of vibrant building and change that culminates with computer technology and a continuing sense of mission. In all the eras portrayed, the vitality of the women and men who contributed to the success of St. Francis Hospital is celebrated.

Franciscan Skemp also asked Sisters Joyce Bantle and Declare Beres, who together served the organization for more than 75 years, to share their gratifying memories, reflect on caring for the poor and underserved and offer their wishes for the future. Watch the conversation at [www.fspa.org/sponsoredministries](http://www.fspa.org/sponsoredministries) (select Hospitals and University and then select Franciscan Skemp Healthcare).

Built from need . . . by devotion, talent & hardwork *was designed by Terry Tobin Design and information for this article was provided by Franciscan Skemp Healthcare Public Affairs.* ■

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## Orbis Books releases *Thea's Song: The Life of Thea Bowman*

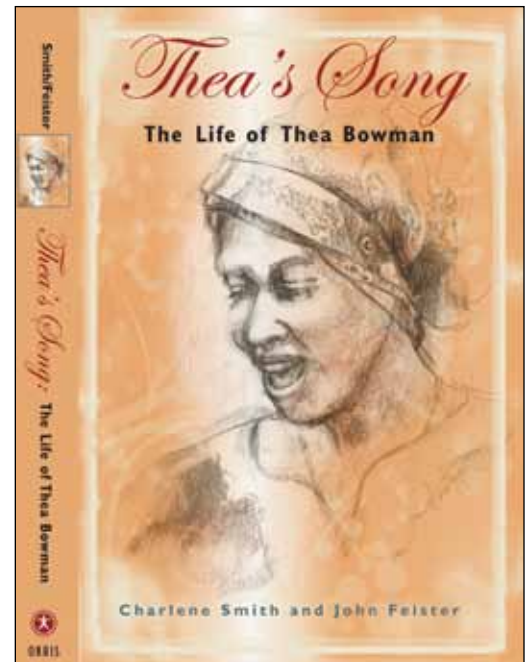
The recently released book about Sister Thea Bowman is touted as “the definitive, authorized biography of a modern-day heroine with never-before-seen writings, interviews and photographs.”

Sister Charlene, treasurer of the Thea Bowman Black Catholic Education Foundation, entered into the writing process with research while serving as coordinator of the Thea Bowman Legacy. The book is co-authored by John Feister, a leading religion journalist and founding editor of [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org). Together they compiled Sister Charlene’s findings

and John’s discussions with members of the black community to tell the comprehensive story of Thea’s universal, spiritual legacy.

Cecilia Moore, Ph.D., reviewed the book for the March 2010 edition of *St. Anthony Messenger*. She wrote: “The authors build wonderful historical platforms on which she [Thea] returns in her own words. In *Thea’s Song*, Smith and Feister wisely choose to use extensive portions of her letters, articles, essays, prayers and public addresses. A definite spiritual energy comes across in this volume, and the source of that energy is Thea’s direct voice.”

The book release comes in the same year that the 20th anniversary of Thea’s death is celebrated. Visit [www.fspa.org/onlinestore](http://www.fspa.org/onlinestore) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) to purchase *Thea’s Song*. ■



The public is invited to attend a reception honoring the book on May 13, 2010, from 4 to 6 p.m., at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wis.