

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION

PERSPECTIVES

SPRING 2024



FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE



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For the past 175 years, from Germany to Milwaukee, La Crosse and around the world, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration have served, prayed and provided witness as vowed Franciscan women centered in Eucharist. In celebration we share reflections of the journey and mission that continue.

By Suzanne Rubenbauer, FSPA

We Become FSPA: An Ongoing Journey

They boarded ship ...
dreamers, farmers, seamstresses, a carpenter,
a steadfast leader, would-be teachers.
Intent on bringing their world to another.

Perhaps they clutched rosaries to the ship's rail.
Visionaries reading the signs of their times.
Beginning to dance to music yet created:
Hold fast. Move on.
Fall into the depth of not knowing what will be.
Trust God.



On their way to the New Ettenbeuren, they landed on a foreign shore.
Cherishing for the first time the beauty of this corner of God's cathedral.
Youthful feet and spirits, willing to journey, following His leading steps.
Hoping with every mile of land that they belonged.

They reached the promised Milwaukee.
Ready to pray and teach, yet put to work cleaning, mending, cooking, ironing.
Expansion of their numbers rebuffed by another's dream and need.

Refusing to tether their souls, they altered their lives again, moving on, evolving.
Illuminating their way by Lard Light. Always mission.
175 Years of boarding the ship ...

Somewhere on this journey, from a Bavarian village church to the Adoration Chapel,

The past ... intertwined into the present and future.

"They" stepped into "We."

Sisters on a mutual path of Eucharistic presence and commitment.
In kinship with affiliates, prayer partners and partners in mission.

We Became Us ... held together by Divine Love,
Dancing in our hearts to music being created:

Hold fast. Move on. Evolve.

Fall into the depth of not knowing what will be.

Trust God.



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CULTIVATING A LEGACY OF SUSTAINABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP ON ST. JOSEPH RIDGE



.....

By Siena Muehlfeld, FSPA Land Sustainability Coordinator, and Maggie Schreiber, AmeriCorps Ecological Assistant

To the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, establishing a prairie is much more than a conservation effort. It is an opportunity to connect people to one another and to the environment. The sisters know that environmental health and human wellness are inseparable. Their commitment to integrating community, nature, education and public health is exemplified by their care of 200 acres of farm and forest land on St. Joseph Ridge east of La Crosse, Wisconsin. For decades this farm provided food for St. Rose Convent and St. Francis Hospital in La Crosse. Eventually, a portion of the land became Villa St. Joseph, a skilled-care retirement home for sisters through 2023.

Today the FSPA Land on St. Joseph Ridge is integral to the sisters' mission which includes commitment to the seven-year Laudato Si' Action Platform — intensifying actions for greater social and environmental justice. FSPA's steadfast stewardship and sharing of this special place is an example of what it means to care for creation. FSPA employs a land sustainability team that protects, enhances and restores the property and its native biodiversity on behalf of the sisters. The sisters recognize that the land they occupy is traditional to and unceded by the Ho-Chunk peoples. FSPA is committed to learning from and working with local Indigenous communities to forward FSPA's commitment to Truth and Healing and building a healthier future.

Recently the FSPA land team has been focused on prairie restoration with priority given to a new, 2.1-acre prairie planting located next to three hermitages managed by

FSPA's Franciscan Spirituality Center. This site used to be a productive orchard run by the sisters, so it's now known as the "old orchard." In 2021 FSPA decided to convert this area to a native prairie habitat to benefit pollinators, improve biodiversity, build topsoil, reduce erosion and improve rainwater filtering.

FSPA received funding and technical support for this project through the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. The prairie was planted in spring 2022, but there were a few unexpected issues. A different planting method was used than the one the seed mix was designed for, so not enough seeds were sowed on site. Also, a heavy rainstorm washed many seeds downhill and off the prairie soon after planting. Equipment issues limited the FSPA team's ability to mow the site in its first year. Each of these setbacks offered an opportunity for fast-growing weeds to outcompete the young prairie plants and take over the project area, so intervention was needed on behalf of the prairie.

The planting was evaluated by an NRCS specialist in late summer 2023. NRCS identified several young prairie plants plus significant weed pressure. Luckily, most weeds were tall enough to control with mowing, and areas of bare soil were found throughout where new prairie plants could grow. NRCS provided hope that with strategic mowing, the planting could still be well established, and said that chances would improve with more prairie seed added. The team decided to move forward with sowing more seeds that fall to give the prairie its best chance.

The team had much to do to prepare for the fall 2023 seeding. We reached out to local partners for guidance

“TO THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION, ESTABLISHING A PRAIRIE IS MUCH MORE THAN A CONSERVATION EFFORT.”



and ordered an improved seed mix designed for hand broadcast — distributed by hand. We also gathered supplies, hoping to repurpose as much as possible. We found a free supply of sawdust from a local sawmill for use as a carrier material, several recycled 55-gallon barrels for storage and five-gallon buckets to use for broadcasting the seeds.

To prepare the field for seeding, we used a drag harrow to scuff up the ground just enough to expose more soil and damage some of the shallow-rooted weeds. This method was gentle enough to protect healthy, young prairie plants and still-dormant prairie seeds from the original planting while also giving a head start for the new seeds.

We determined that one barrel of broadcast seeding mix would cover one-eighth of the field and so divided the prairie seeds into eight equal portions. To prepare the mix, we first needed to find the right water-to-sawdust ratio. The purpose of the sawdust carrier material is to spread the prairie seed mix evenly across a large area. The carrier mix couldn't be too dry or too wet because the prairie seeds needed to adhere to it but not create clumps. We found that combining 45 gallons of sawdust, 1.5 gallons of water and one portion of prairie seeds worked best for our mix.

On seeding day, the FSPA land team was joined by sisters, affiliates, prayer partners and partners in mission on staff, as well as horticulture students from Western Technical College in La Crosse. It was perfect December weather — sunny and not too cold. We embodied the sisters’ love of community building by providing hot drinks and encouraging breaks for words of welcome and socializing.

For the project, one group of “mixers” combined the seeds, sawdust and water for each section. When a mix was ready, it was delivered to a group of broadcast seeders in the field. Each “seeder” loaded a bucket with mix and lined up along one edge of the section. Once in line, the person farthest uphill started sowing, and the

rest followed gradually behind. This ensured each section was covered evenly. As the FSPA team worked alongside students and volunteers, a wealth of knowledge was shared and a great time was had by all.

Now that the seeds are sown, we must be patient. The prairie will be mowed, monitored and burned as needed in the next several years to guide it towards self-sufficiency. In the short term, the FSPA team is proud of hosting this opportunity for our community to come together and learn about restoring native prairie. There is nothing more rewarding than achieving something difficult together, especially when caring for Earth, our common home. ■



TAPPING INTO ‘CULTURAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, COLLABORATIONS’ WITH THE HO-CHUNK COMMUNITY



By Beth Piggush, FSPA Integral Ecology Director, and Henry Greengrass, Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Services Center La Crosse Director

For many, the source of maple syrup is no secret. Others may just take for granted that we can go to the grocery store to buy some maple syrup or just some syrup with maple flavoring. What most likely is a secret? How the season of the sugar bush — a forest stand of maple trees utilized for maple syrup making — has taught us to build community and to restore our connection to nature and to each other. This has been the best part about our work in La Crosse, Wisconsin, with FSPA sisters, affiliates and the Ho-Chunk youth.

Now is the time to let you in on the details of this little secret, one that is generating great energy and impact. Back in the fall of 2022, Henry Greengrass, Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Services Center Director - La Crosse, met with Beth Piggush, FSPA Integral Ecology Director. The two of them were connected through Sister Eileen McKenzie and the initial meeting was a simple hike on

St. Joseph Ridge, walking and talking about plants, food, cultures and history. Beth was excited to meet Henry, as this presented an opportunity to learn from him about how the Indigenous community connects to the land and works with the land. As it turns out, this was not an option. It was, rather, the start of something together — to learn about the land, the needs of the land and the bounty the land shares.

“You’re asking for me to share indigenous knowledge of the land. I’m sorry, but I don’t have any Indigenous knowledge when it comes to the land. Do you know why?” asked Henry. “No,” was the answer. It was an assumption that Henry had this knowledge because he is Native American. The books we read as children in school shared stories about how Native Americans taught the colonists how to feed themselves (example: Thanksgiving).

“What do you know about residential boarding schools?” asked Henry. Once again there was no real answer. “A lot of this knowledge was not passed down due to the assimilation tactics of these boarding schools. I think we

**“OUR RELATIONSHIPS,
WITH EACH OTHER AND THE
LAND, ARE BUILDING BRIDGES
AND MAKING REPAIRS THAT
ARE LONG OVERDUE.”**

need to sit down and talk.” The dialogue on this topic started a new relationship that was not expected, along with a journey to learn what was not taught in schools and to unlearn what inaccurate information about Native American communities that is still being taught today.

Over the course of the last year and a half, Henry and Beth have tapped into their existing networks of people. They found surprising connections that enhance the work more than ever expected. The mission of Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Services is to “meaningfully enhance the lives of our youth, through cultural learning opportunities, collaborations and exposure to sustainable living practices.” Opportunities for youth include programs on language, history, tradition and culture,

prevention, safety, life skills and promoting positive family values. Henry’s team collaborates with people both within the Ho-Chunk Nation and with external support groups.

A few key people include Ho-Chunk Nation Life Skills Coordinator Rita Kingswan, who provides culturally-infused workshops and one-on-one assistance; Heather Jerzak, a registered dietician and nutritionist for the Ho-Chunk Nation Community Health Department; and, from the University of Wisconsin Extension Program, Heather Quackenboss, Human Development and Relationship Educator, and Emily Crook, Positive Youth Development Educator (and FSPA affiliate). These individuals have supported Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Services by sharing knowledge that aligns with the interests and passion of the youth, meeting their needs first and then integrating the information. When the FSPA Integral Ecology Team began supporting Ho-Chunk youth programming, we provided environmental knowledge and place-based opportunities. (And a huge bonus to working professionally together is finding intersections we have with personal connections as friends, neighbors and even as parents).



Fast forward to this spring. We are all continuing the journey together to learn about the land and unlearn about the history of Native Americans that has been inaccurately taught. We have held a space that allows for discovery, for Ho-Chunk youth and FSPA sisters and affiliates to learn about the process of boiling sap down to produce maple syrup. Through our efforts, we have created and held a space for hospitality, because when we come together, we sit and talk, eat, work and joke together. This is why boil-down days are the best-kept secret! It is a community gathering that feels like a family reunion, bringing a dish to pass, sitting by the fire to catch up and greeting each new person as they join the “circle.”

The joy and familiarity of sharing our maple syrup season together has opened us to spreading more collaborative learning on the FSPA land on St. Joseph Ridge. All of this has created a hub of activity. Together the youth and adults (including Henry and Beth) are learning about the plants that provide medicine, how to grow a three sisters garden (corn, beans and squash) and the steps necessary to tan a hide. Our relationships, with each other and the

land, are building bridges and making repairs that are long overdue. When we gather from season to season, we can easily catch up, support and learn from each other. Together we are committed to re-learning traditional practices, holding a space for community and sharing our story within the FSPA community and beyond. ■



Photo courtesy of La Crosse Youth & Learning Center



DISCOVERING THE ESSENCE OF PRAIRIEWOODS: A FUSION OF WISDOM, ECOSPIRITUALITY AND COMMUNITY



Photos courtesy of
Prairiewoods Franciscan
Spirituality Center

Enter the peaceful realm of Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, an FSPA-sponsored ministry located in Hiawatha, Iowa — a sacred space inviting people of all faiths and backgrounds to connect with the Source of all Being, Earth, self and others. Nestled in 70 acres of nature, Prairiewoods intertwines spirituality, ecology and well-being.

In this story about Prairiewoods — an integral chapter of FSPA’s 175th anniversary of prayer, witness and service — we walk with Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration Lucille Winnike, Nancy Hoffman, Joanne Moeller and Joann Gehling, all integral in shaping the essence of Prairiewoods. Each sister contributes a unique perspective on Prairiewoods’ history, mission of ecospirituality and its commitment to the community.

Shaping the tapestry of history

Sister Lucille Winnike has played a great role as retreat director and spiritual guide. Her journey, rooted in a master’s degree in mathematics from Notre Dame University in Indiana, has been a dynamic exploration of education, administration and profound spiritual studies.

Sister Lucille’s earlier ministries encompassed teaching and administration in Catholic schools along with vital roles within her community. However, her path took a transformative turn as she explored the realms of spirituality through advanced studies at Notre Dame. Interning as a spiritual director, she discovered a calling

that resonates deeply within the sacred spaces of Prairiewoods.

“Many persons who come here experience the richness and healing powers of Prairiewoods itself, of Mother Earth, of God,” shares Sister Lucille. “It is my privilege to meet with some of those people.” Her words encapsulate the essence of Prairiewoods — an environment where individuals encounter profound richness, healing and a divine connection.

A beacon of ecospirituality

Sister Nancy Hoffman, one of Prairiewoods’ foundresses, has been instrumental in shaping the center’s mission of ecospirituality. Drawing from her background in education, theology and licensed massage therapy, Sister Nancy has played a key role in developing diverse programs, including therapeutic massage, healing touch, tai chi and other health-related practices. Sister Nancy highlights the contributions of the dedicated and talented adjunct staff who enable the integration of modalities such as forest bath, reflexology, yoga, ChiGong and singing bowls.

Sister Nancy shared insights into Prairiewoods’ history, emphasizing the collective efforts of the foundresses. Crucial moments, such as the divine call and the selection of the first director, marked significant milestones. In these pivotal moments, as Sister Nancy noted, “All the foundresses together shaped Prairiewoods. My more specific contributions lay in the development of the

Sept. 1994:

Sisters Nancy Hoffman, Therese Pedretti and Betty Daugherty listen to the Earth.



1994:

Sister Nancy Hoffman attends ritual to name the land that would become Prairiewoods.

May 1995:

Sisters Betty Daugherty, Nancy Hoffman, Joanne Moeller, Karen Flottmeier, Joann Gehling and Therese Pedretti attend ground breaking ceremony.



1996:

Sisters Betty Daugherty, Nancy Hoffman, Therese Pedretti, Karen Flottmeier, Maryam Gossling, Joanne Moeller and Joann Gehling attend ribbon cutting ceremony.



outdoor lands and the area of holistic health,” great contributions to the center’s success.

Sister Nancy explored the evolution of Prairiewoods’ vision, emphasizing its resilience and adaptability. Rooted in prayer, study and strong ecological principles, the vision has remained strong and viable. Prairiewoods now offers programs with a wider diversity of inspiration, all the while honoring time-tested spiritual practices.

The concept of a sacred space holds profound meaning for Sister Nancy. Prairiewoods, with its sacred land, trees and animals, serves as a space where people connect with God in nature. “For me, it is the place where I have been able to plant thousands of trees and follow many of them to full growth. I know them. We talk. They tell me of God and all that is holy.” The intentional sacred energy contributed by individuals throughout history continues to shape Prairiewoods as a welcoming place for all, where one can find healing and connect with God in nature, oneself and with others.

Fostering community relationships

In the early days of Prairiewoods, Sister Joanne Moeller, another of Prairiewoods’ foundresses, took charge of construction, facing challenges like contractor bankruptcy and unfinished spaces. Her resilience and commitment to eco-spirituality are evident as she shared stories of adapting to adversity. Sister Joanne highlights pivotal moments, emphasizing Prairiewoods’ community partnerships and the continuous support of volunteers.

“Starting something from scratch presented challenges,

from construction setbacks to the desire to focus on eco-spirituality when resources were limited,” she recalls. “The sense of our community has been a pivotal and ongoing moment, supported by dedicated volunteers and collaborations with various organizations. Recognizing the ongoing challenge of diversity, we are striving to be more inclusive, understanding that unity and representation are crucial components of our evolving vision.”

Sister Joanne reflects on sacred spaces, noting Prairiewoods’ early recognition as one from its role as a welcoming space for individuals seeking to connect with Mother Earth. Sister Joanne shares, “Any space can hold sacredness, depending on how we treat it and what we decide to place or avoid within it.” As Prairiewoods continues to evolve, Sister Joanne remains committed to fostering community relationships and inclusivity, recognizing unity and representation as crucial components of the center’s ongoing vision.

Weaving a web of spirituality

Sister Joann Gehling, another of Prairiewoods’ foundresses, who holds a doctorate in ministry, has showcased Prairiewoods’ commitment to contemporary issues. As the organizer of a prayer vigil for immigrants, she exemplified the intersection of spirituality and action. Sister Joann’s stories reflect the ongoing journey of weaving spirituality into the fabric of everyday life.

Recalling the prayer vigil, Sister Joann shares, “In the midst of national unrest, we stood in community, realizing the interconnectedness of issues like immigration, racism and ecological degradation. Prairiewoods’ commitment extends to addressing contemporary challenges and fostering healing. It’s a reminder of our baptismal vows to resist evil, injustice and oppression, intertwining spirituality with a commitment to justice and freedom.”

In the heart of Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Sisters Lucille, Joanne, Nancy and Joann, along with many other sisters, have collectively shaped a sacred space where history, eco-spirituality and community intersect. Their commitment has created a special place where people from all backgrounds can come together, find healing and connect with nature, themselves and each other. ■

MY PERSPECTIVE: SPIRIT AND NATURE: ECOSPIRITUALITY AT THE CHRISTINE CENTER



By Johanna Seubert, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration and Rosalie Hooper Thomas, affiliate, Christine Center board chair

As we celebrate 175 years of prayer, witness and service, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration give gratitude for spaces that invite and nurture relationships with all in our Earth Community. These gifts include the Christine Center, a spirituality center located in Willard, Wisconsin, missioned to providing “a thriving and inclusive haven for seekers from many paths, transcending boundaries of nationality, culture and creed.”

This My Perspective story is a collaboration of Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Johanna Seubert and Rosalie Hopper Thomas, FSPA affiliate and Christine Center board chair, that features Sister Johanna and her ministry of spiritual guidance, meditation and Diamond Approach teacher — all that “embodies the commitment to ‘We Are One.’”



With our world increasingly disconnected from its roots, the quest for a harmonious balance between

spiritual fulfillment and ecological responsibility is more urgent than ever. Ecospirituality acknowledges our interdependence with the earth and offers a commitment to live in a manner that honors this relationship. It is a spiritual perspective encouraging a way of life that respects and protects the natural world, recognizing the intrinsic link between our spiritual well-being and the health of our planet.

The Christine Center emerged through the vision “We Are One,” which our foundress, Wheaton Illinois Franciscan Virginia Mary Barta, lived long before the campus was built. Founded on principles of inclusivity, peace and reverence for life, the center offers a sanctuary for those seeking to nurture their spiritual journey within the embrace of Mother Earth. The ethos of the Christine Center is deeply rooted in an understanding that true spiritual enlightenment encompasses a harmonious relationship with the environment.

Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Johanna Seubert, who lives and ministers at the Christine Center, has supported this vision for 38 years. Originally coming to work with Sister Virginia Mary, she has devoted her life to others and embodies the essence of our commitment



Sister Johanna Seubert

to “We are One.” Sister Johanna’s life’s work, deeply intertwined with the center’s mission, reflects a profound dedication to building relationships, fostering community, offering spiritual guidance and cultivating offerings that deepen one’s connection to God through nature. For Sister Johanna, the Christine Center is a living example of how spirituality and ecology can merge to guide us toward our true nature and a more sustainable and interconnected existence.

Through the years, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration’s association with the Christine Center has been one of encouragement, support and collaboration. This relationship is built on a shared vision of stewardship for the earth and for people, recognizing the interdependence and interconnection of all living things. The center — through prayer, meditation, programs and other initiatives — brings this vision to life in the offering of spaces where individuals can explore their spiritual path while actively participating in conservation and sustainability.

Spanning 150 acres of pristine forest, the Christine Center is more than a retreat: It is a vibrant ecosystem where spirituality and ecology are interwoven into the

fabric of daily life. From meditative walks in the woods to contemplative nature healing and sustainable living practices, guests are encouraged to engage in practices that foster a sense of unity with nature. These activities are designed to soothe the soul, instill a sense of responsibility toward the environment and cultivate a lived experience of “We Are One.”

One of the center’s foundational beliefs is that every spiritual journey deepens in connection to the earth. This belief is manifested through a commitment to sustainable practices, such as using renewable energy sources like solar and geothermal, minimizing waste and promoting biodiversity on their grounds. By embodying these principles, the Christine Center offers a tangible example of how spiritual communities can lead the way in ecological conservation and sustainable living.

Sister Johanna’s 38-year journey at the Christine Center mirrors the evolution of ecospirituality from a slight interest to a vital movement. A vibrant community that values deep connections with and within nature, spiritual exploration and sustainable living has emerged. Over the years, this has included a resident community of Wheaton Franciscans, FSPA, School Sisters of Notre



Dame, resident team members, volunteers and support staff — all who have enriched countless lives and set a precedent for what spiritual centers can achieve in terms of ecological responsibility.

The Christine Center stands as a testament to the transformative power of ecospirituality. It offers a path forward in a world grappling with environmental degradation and spiritual disconnection. It reminds us that by rekindling our bond with the earth, we can find solace, inspiration and guidance for living in harmony with nature and each other. In this sacred space, the whisper of the wind, the rhythm of the rain and the silence of the snow become conduits of divine wisdom, guiding us towards a deeper understanding of our place in the web of life.

The 175th anniversary of the FSPA is a moment to honor the past and look forward to the future. It is a future that the Christine Center, along with the FSPA community, is helping to shape — one where ecospirituality is not just an ideal but a practical pathway to healing our world and ourselves. The shared commitment to this cause is a reminder of the power of faith and action to create meaningful change.

As we move forward, the legacy of the Christine Center and the FSPA's 175 years of service inspire us to deepen our connection to all of life. In this sacred endeavor, we find pathways to spiritual enlightenment and the design for a world where all life is cherished and sustained. ■



TRUTH, HEALING AND ‘BAD RIVER: A STORY OF DEFIANCE’

The documentary “Bad River: A Story of Defiance” was released in March. With it, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration lean into the commitment to recognize our complicity in historical trauma. Engagement in the implementation of unjust policies and doctrines at St. Mary’s Boarding School in Odanah, Wisconsin, resulted in the displacement, assimilation and genocide of countless Indigenous communities. The Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Ojibwe was one of them.

The documentary, written and directed by award-winning filmmaker Mary Mazzio, focuses on the fight of the Bad River Band against Enbridge Inc.’s Line 5 pipeline. This project threatens the waters and the tribe’s legacy. The film also explores historical injustices faced by Indigenous peoples — including the many generations affected by St. Mary’s.

Isthmus, a news source based in Madison, Wisconsin, published the article “A history of defiance” about the film. “Extraordinarily, only four non-Natives have a voice here,” reads the story, including that of Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Eileen McKenzie. She appears in the film and acknowledges “complicity in ‘cultural genocide’ in [FSPA’s] treatment of Bad River school children. ‘Our congregation as well as other congregations were involved in a system of white supremacy,’ she says. ‘It was racist.’”

The FSPA community is committed to the ministry of Truth and Healing by continuing to research and educate all about the history and impact of the boarding school era. Cultivating relationships with Indigenous peoples with whom we share a history and/or occupy ancestral lands is our priority. Sisters, affiliates and FSPA partners in mission who have viewed the film are sharing reflections of their experience.

Georgia Christensen, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration

“I was fortunate to be able to view the Bad River documentary at the theater in Ashland, Wisconsin, along with members of the Bad River Band, Diocese of Superior Bishop James P. Powers and Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Roselyn Heil, who serves at St. Mary’s Parish. We were very well received and appreciated for providing the film for the tribal members. The negative effects of the Enbridge Pipeline on the Bad River people are very real.”

Karen Lueck, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration

“I was profoundly moved by the film! While it



**Danny Wiggins in Regalia
at the Bad River Pow Wow.**
© Richard Schultz 2022

documented the suffering that the Bad River Tribe has endured through the years, it is a powerful reminder of the resiliency they have shown as people. They are grounded by their tribal rituals and drumming, and propelled forward by their love and concern for their seventh-generation descendants.”

Meg Paulino, affiliate, FSPA Archivist

“Bad River brilliantly unveils the enduring struggles of the Bad River Tribe and the ongoing environmental injustices they confront. The documentary amplifies marginalized voices with its masterful storytelling, cultivating a profound understanding and empathy for the tribe’s resilience in adversity. It is a poignant testament to the formidable challenges Indigenous communities face in safeguarding their land, heritage and cultural identity.

Moreover, the documentary skillfully sheds light on the deep-seated intergenerational trauma inflicted by the boarding school system, leaving an indelible mark on the Tribe’s social fabric and collective memory. Ultimately, it compellingly urges viewers to acknowledge their shared responsibility in addressing these injustices, underscoring the interconnectedness of humanity and the Earth in fostering healing, clean water and justice for all.”

Lynn Wegner, FSPA Life Enrichment Director

“Bad River is a powerful testament to the resilience of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, despite generations of systemic abuse and trauma. May white people be inspired to join them in their fight against Enbridge Energy to preserve clean water for everyone.”

To learn more about the film, visit badriverfilm.com. ■



**Photos courtesy of
50 Eggs Films**

**Man and his son at Waverly Beach.
© Richard Schultz 2022**



**Danny Wiggins dancing at
the Bad River Pow Wow.
© Richard Schultz 2022**

**Jingle dresses at the
Bad River Pow Wow.
© Richard Schultz 2022**

SPIRIT OF MINISTRY: AN ‘INVITATION TO CONSIDER THE REST OF CREATION’



By Michael Krueger, affiliate, FSPA Director of Affiliation

At the beginning of 2024, I began meeting with a small group of Franciscans (from different congregations and traditions) as a part of the Franciscan Federation’s Emergent Group. This group was invited to dream and envision how Franciscans can be an active presence in their own communities and the wider world. In order to be invited into a space of discovery, we listened to an interview with storyteller and mythologist Martin Shaw, who offered this invitation to dreaming: “Dreaming is uncorralled, dreaming is wild, dreaming is holy.” Out of this wild and holy landscape, a few words began to resonate: Beauty, relationship, justice and creation. Creation, though, emerged as an integral piece of all of the dreams that were shared.

As an affiliate myself for 13 years, I often write about profound encounters that I’ve had with creation. In reflecting on St. Francis’ call to “rebuild my church,” a new call has been emerging, one which is growing louder and louder — that the church, as a community, does not only include the brick and mortar, it does not only include the people who have gathered but also the very land on which we step, the ecosystems that are woven like delicate threads and a canticle of creation that is both expansive and diverse.

Here are some reflections that I have written in the past. As we hear our own call “to rebuild my church,” you are invited to look for personal “moments of encounter and discovery” and consider the rest of creation.



At Prairiewoods Spirituality Center in Hiawatha, Iowa, there is an old oak tree known as Grandmother Oak. To find her, you are invited to walk down one of the many trails that wind their way through Prairiewoods. Grandmother Oak is close to 300 years old and serves as a living memory for the land — a record of the changes that have taken place and of how we have both positively and negatively impacted the environment.

In order to survive, Grandmother Oak has been tended to and cared for; her roots go deep into the ground and her trunk has weathered both snowfall and wind, drought and heavy rain. Her limbs extend far beyond her shadow, providing shade and habitat for creatures — big and small — who are an integral part of her ecosystem.

Hundreds of miles away, during a break from a meeting at the Siena Retreat Center in Racine, Wisconsin, I found myself walking along a path that led to the shoreline of Lake Michigan. The sound of waves greeted me before the sight of any water. The day before, a storm had inundated the area with rain, and a nearby stream, which fed into the lake, became a torrent of rushing water that overflowed its banks. The stream entered into the lake not in stillness, not as a trickle, but as a churning, overpowering force. This provided the idea that sometimes we are called in a voice that overpowers; at other times, though, it is the distant sound of a whisper.

Last year I finished watching the BBC series *Detectorists*. The series follows the stories of Andy and Lance, members of the Danebury Metal Detecting Club. From the opening theme song, you are invited into the natural world of fauna and insects, after which you are introduced to the stories, friendships and simple

adventures that take place while exploring the English countryside.

What I found to be so wonderful and refreshing about this series, beyond the characters, is that it invites the viewer into a slower, and what can at times seem to be, more intentional way of life. On FSPA Land on St. Joseph Ridge in La Crosse, Wisconsin, opportunities to be more intentional are practiced through both the mundane and extraordinary — from the turning of soil with a shovel and the pulling of weeds in the garden, to the lifting frames of comb and honey from a beehive, to the dispersing of prairie seeds over the forest floor, to seeing the exhale of breath on a cold evening hike illuminated by candles and the silence of Advent prayers.

And at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, there is a group called EcoPact that meets monthly to discuss and put into action sustainable practices. This, too, has involved small efforts — introducing eco-friendly laundry products, revising recycling procedures and providing recipes through The Seasoned Franciscan recipe swap. EcoPact is also undertaking larger efforts, most recently with the installation of an EcoVim. It is a machine that transforms daily food waste into immediate compost — goodness that will be used to nurture the gardens at St. Joseph Ridge — in the St. Rose kitchen.

Much like Grandmother Oak, it is my desire that FSPA affiliation — and by extension, each of you — continues to remain rooted in the mission and values of the FSPA. Through our own networks, in partnership with our affiliation companion communities and prayer partners, may we continue to recognize the sacredness in all of creation. And may our own actions contribute to a sense of beauty and awe, allowing us to once again be invited into dreams that are wild, uncorralled and holy. ■

About Michael

Michael is the director of affiliation for FSPA. He became an affiliate in 2011 after graduating from Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Michael is a member of the FSPA companion community, Among the Trees. To learn more about affiliation, visit fspa.org and click on “Become an Affiliate” under the “join” tab.

**Enter your email at fspa.org/theseasonedfranciscan to receive notifications when new recipes are posted.*



Michael Krueger, Lisa Brouellette and Emily Orth, former WisCorps Service Members, and Meg Paulino, affiliate and FSPA Archivist, tend to the bee colony on FSPA land on St. Joseph Ridge in La Crosse, Wisconsin.



IN MEMORIAM: REJOICE, YOU WHO ARE ALIVE IN CHRIST

Sister Loretta Penchi, FSPA

Jan. 7, 1929 – Sept. 18, 2023



Sister Loretta Penchi, 94, died on Sept. 18, 2023, in her seventy-fifth year of religious life, at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Loretta Ann was born on Jan. 7, 1929, to Thomas and Laura (Doucet) Penchi in Genoa, Wisconsin.

She attended St. Charles School in Genoa, staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Sister Loretta grew up with her two brothers and two sisters. In sixth grade, Sister Loretta took piano lessons. Like most children, she didn't mind the lessons but hated practicing. Sister Loretta's teachers and her aunt, Sister Carolita Penchi, FSPA, influenced her choice of a vocation. On Sept. 2, 1942, Sister Loretta entered St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, and completed her high school education there. Sister Loretta was received into the novitiate on Aug. 12, 1946, and was given the name Sister Thomasine, and later returned to her baptismal name. She made profession of vows on Aug. 12, 1948, and final vows on Aug. 9, 1954.

Sister Loretta earned a Bachelor of Music Education with a major in violin from Viterbo College in La Crosse, teaching in elementary schools for 24 years in Spokane, Washington; Lima, Wausau, Eau Claire, Superior, Edgar, Marathon and Ashland, Wisconsin; and Bellevue, Iowa. After caring for her mother for several years, Sister Loretta became the manager of the copy center at Viterbo in 1981, a position she held for 19 years, later adding the task of mail clerk to her duties. She remained on staff at Viterbo until her retirement in 2019. Sister Loretta also served as a St. Rose organist, retiring in 2023.

She loved music and was saddened when her health prevented her from playing the organ or the violin, but also enjoyed researching genealogy and finding family connections from the past for herself, other sisters and colleagues. A major discovery for her was that she had an ancestor who traveled with St. Isaac Jogues on his 17th-century missionary travels in Canada. Growing up in

Genoa was a source of pride along with the many homes her father built — some still standing in Genoa and on La Crosse's southside today. Sister Loretta also had a deep respect and compassion for the work her brother, Father Edward, did in his many years of mission work in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Sister Loretta was an avid crossword puzzle player who copied puzzles from the newspaper and shared them with many sisters.

Community members, family and colleagues will remember Sister Loretta as a matter-of-fact person who was sparse with her words. She would "rule" Viterbo's copy center like a postmaster general, but beneath her stern demeanor was a heart of gold. Her colleagues enjoyed teasing her, just to get her response — something she enjoyed and reciprocated.

Sister Patricia Shepler, FSPA

Feb. 2, 1942 – Sept. 22, 2023



Sister Patricia Shepler, 81, died on Sept. 22, 2023, in her sixtieth year of religious life, at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Born on Feb. 2, 1942, to Eugene and Beatrice (Berg) Shepler in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, she was the eldest

of four children. She transferred from public school to a Catholic school in second grade. Sister Patricia recalled many good times with her family, especially Sunday afternoon drives in the country, picnics, waterskiing and ice skating.

After eighth grade, Sister Patricia began thinking about entering the convent; however, her teacher advised her to spend at least a few years in high school. She loved school and participated in everything she could: parties, sports, dances, band and orchestra, as well as her studies, yet she felt incomplete. She again explored the idea of becoming a sister. On Sept. 8, 1959, she entered St. Rose, completing her senior year there. Sister Patricia was received into the novitiate in 1961 and given the name Sister Mary Aloysius. She later went back to her baptismal name. She made her first profession of religious vows on Aug. 12, 1963.

Sister Patricia began her ministry as a primary grade teacher in Coon Rapids, Iowa, and Mosinee, Colby and Superior, Wisconsin. She earned a Bachelor in Education from Viterbo College in La Crosse, a Master of Education from the University of Minnesota Duluth and a Master of Science in Business Administration from Ohio's University of Dayton, serving as an assistant business manager, and eventually controller, at Viterbo. Benefiting from her expertise, the college grew tremendously in both enrollment and budget. She ministered as controller for Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa, from 1993 until she retired in 2008. Sister Patricia returned to La Crosse in 2012, residing at St. Rose and Villa St. Joseph, where she participated in the ministry of prayer.

Community members, family and friends remember Sister Patricia for her mischievous eyes, joyful spirit and willingness to get involved in any activity that presented itself, despite her struggle with Parkinson's disease. Almost every day of the week she would volunteer, sing in a choir or meet with friends, determined to live life to the fullest. In her later years, she dyed locks of her hair various colors. She had a large collection of beanie babies and delighted in creating Green Bay Packer displays outside her room on game days. Sister Patricia exuded positive energy, no matter her circumstances.

Sister Margaret Wenzel, FSPA

Oct. 9, 1931 – Dec. 13, 2023



Sister Margaret Wenzel, 92, died on Dec. 13, 2023, in her seventy-second year of religious life, at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Born on Oct. 9, 1931, to Louis and Anna (Frodl) Wenzel in Stratford, Wisconsin, she and her 10

brothers and sisters grew up on the family farm where she learned to love God through her family and nature. Farm work was always tempered with fun, especially music. Sister Margaret attended Marathon Pride Public School for four years and then completed her elementary grades at St. Joseph's School in Stratford.

She entered St. Rose at age 13, following her older sister, Dorothy (Sister Mary Donald, FSPA), and attended St. Rose High School in La Crosse. She was received into the FSPA novitiate on Aug. 12, 1949, and given the name Sister Donelda. She later went back to her baptismal

name. She made her first profession of vows on Aug. 12, 1951. Sister Margaret earned a Bachelor of Elementary Education from Viterbo College in La Crosse and a Master of Elementary Education with a concentration in reading from the University of Wisconsin-Superior. She ministered as a primary school teacher for 34 years at schools in Wisconsin (Durand, 1951 to 55; La Crosse, 1955 to 56 and 1969 to 75; Allouez, 1966 to 68; Odanah, 1968 to 69; Ashland, 1975 to 80 and Schofield, 1980 to 85), Washington (Spokane, 1957 to 63) and Iowa (Luxemburg, 1963 to 66).

After training in clinical pastoral ministry in 1985, Sister Margaret served as a chaplain at St. Vincent Medical Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, and at St. Mary's Hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, until retiring in 2004. She spent the next four years as a volunteer at St. Mary's and the Cathedral of St. John in Milwaukee. In 2008 she retired to St. Rose Convent to minister in prayer and hospitality.

Sister Margaret is remembered for her love of prayer ministry and fulfilling numerous adoration hours. She had a deep appreciation for the Mass and, if possible, never missed a Eucharistic liturgy. For years she assisted with table decorations at the convent. She was a great listener to others' stories of grief and transition. Sister Margaret loved to travel, participating in Global Awareness Through Experience trips to the Czech and Slovak Republics and eastern Germany. She went to Canada and Mexico and various parts of the U.S. She also accompanied her sister, Sister Dorothy Wenzel, to the Holy Land and visited Ireland for her 50th jubilee.

Sister Laura Schreck, FSPA

Feb 2, 1929 – Dec. 28, 2023



Sister Laura Schreck, 94, died on Dec. 28, 2023, in her seventy-fourth year of religious life, at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She was born on Feb. 2, 1929, to George and Philomena (Venteicher) Schreck on a farm near

Willey, Iowa. She attended St. Mary's Catholic School in Willey and St. Angela Academy in Carroll, Iowa.

After two years at St. Angela, as she prepared for confession at the parish church on Sunday, Sister Laura felt a strong voice urging her to enter St. Rose. A

week later she spoke to her mother about it, and that Wednesday at 11 p.m., during a severe thunderstorm, she boarded a train for La Crosse. Her family was quite familiar with religious life: Two of her father's sisters (Sisters Benigna and Paulinda) and her mother's sister (Sister Francetta Venteicher) were Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Sister Laura was received into the novitiate on Aug. 12, 1947, and given the name Sister Mildred. She later returned to her baptismal name. Sister Laura made her first profession of vows on Aug. 12, 1949, and final vows on Aug. 9, 1955.

Sister Laura received a Bachelor of Education with a minor in music from Viterbo College in La Crosse. She also earned a Master of Arts in Religious Studies from Seattle University in Washington, and ministered as a middle grade teacher in Iowa (Festina, Halder, Luxemburg, Muscatine and Calmar) and Wisconsin (Auburndale, Greenwood and Dodgeville) for 22 years. She then taught religious education, serving as a parish minister and director of religious education in parishes in Iowa (Rockwell City, Waterloo, Marion, Cedar Rapids, Garnavillo and Calmar-Festina), Illinois (Wheaton) and Wisconsin (Cross Plains and Norwalk). She was instrumental in establishing a catechetical program for four parishes in Ames, Iowa. In many of these parishes, she also served as director of liturgy and music, and for two years she provided home care. Sister Laura also served for one year as an advocate for children in the Court Appointed Special Advocates Program in Houston, Texas. After retiring Sister Laura served as sacristan at St. Rose and as a volunteer at Villa St. Joseph and went on to reside in both places.

Community members, family and friends will remember Sister Laura as someone who could engage in any conversation. She loved religious education and working with children and families in a parish setting. Sister Laura never missed a community function and always had something substantial to contribute. Even when her sight failed her, she stayed abreast of what was happening in the community and the world. Most importantly, her bright smile would light up every room she entered.

Sister Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA
July 4, 1937 – Jan. 3, 2024

Sister Dorothy Dunbar, 86, died on Jan. 3, 2024, in her



sixty-eight year of religious life, at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Dorine Ruth Dunbar was born on July 4, 1937, to Merl and Dorothy (Kneip) Dunbar in Staten Island, New York. Her father worked for the U.S. Coast Guard,

which meant that Sister Dorothy and her two brothers lived in five different states before she turned nine years old. She had fond memories of watching searchlights pan the skies over New York City, the breathtaking majesty of Mount Rainier that “hung” in the sky outside their home in Seattle, Washington, as well as driving through gigantic redwoods in California. When she was 13, her friend proclaimed that she was going to join a religious community, and Sister Dorothy announced to her family that she would do just that. After a brief time for family discussion, she left for the convent.

On June 13, 1955, Sister Dorothy was received into the novitiate of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and was given the name Sister Mary Dorothy. She made her first profession of vows on Aug. 15, 1956. Teaching was Sister Dorothy's primary ministry. She earned a Bachelor of English with a minor in mathematics from Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, a Master of English and Literature from the University of Chicago in Illinois and a Master of Pastoral Studies from Loyola University in Chicago. She taught upper grades in Wisconsin, Ohio, Nebraska and Illinois. Realizing that change was happening all around her after Vatican II — in many parts of her life but not in her religious community — she became restless.

In the summer of 1990, Sister Dorothy began the transfer process from the Manitowoc community. She first responded to an invitation from the Wheaton Franciscans in Illinois, but by October 1993, she had discerned a call to join the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse. She was fully incorporated as an FSPA in September 1996. Sister Dorothy continued her educational career, serving as a basic skills instructor in inner-city Chicago's Cabrini-Green neighborhood. From 1999 to 2011, Sister Dorothy ministered as FSPA's Membership Office Assistant, and went on to reside at both St. Rose and Villa St. Joseph in La Crosse.

Community members, family and friends remember

Sister Dorothy as a “sparkplug” who was known to be a fearless risk-taker, motivated by tenacity and determination. She was passionate about those in need. Her Chicago ministry and academic advising at Loyola University were very enriching for her and those she served. Her ability to integrate her own life journey was invaluable as she worked with others exploring religious life. She kept her finger on the pulse of the community and had a quick-witted explanation for almost any challenge that arose.

Sister LaVerne Ramaeker, FSPA

Oct. 25, 1931 – Jan. 12, 2024



Sister LaVerne Ramaeker, 93, died on Jan. 12, 2024, in her seventy-second year of religious life, at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wisconsin. She was born on Oct. 25, 1931, to Fred and Gertrude (Smith) Ramaeker in Lindsay, Nebraska; the ninth of 10 children. Sister LaVerne started her education in a country school where all eight grades were taught by one teacher. When she was in the fourth grade and ready to make her first communion, her parents sent her and some of her siblings to St. Michael’s Catholic Grade School in Spalding, Nebraska. They returned home on weekends to restock their food supplies for the coming week. After her family moved to Scranton, Iowa, Sister LaVerne attended fifth grade in the public school. The following year, she and her sister Florine (Mary James, FSPA) and brother Victor, were car-pooled to St. Joseph School in Carroll, Iowa. They boarded at Sacred Heart Convent for grades six through eight. Sister LaVerne then attended high school at St. Angela Academy in Carroll.

On Aug. 12, 1949, Sister LaVerne entered St. Rose and was received into the FSPA novitiate on Aug. 12, 1950, where she was given the name Sister Carmencita. She later returned to her baptismal name and made her first profession of vows on Aug. 12, 1952. In La Crosse Sister LaVerne began her tertiary studies at Viterbo College and was soon transferred to St. Francis School of Nursing where she earned a certificate as a radiologic technologist. She served at St. Mary’s Hospital in Sparta, Wisconsin, and St. Anthony Hospital in Carroll for two years. From there she became program director of the School of Radiologic Technology and chief technologist

at Sacred Heart Hospital in Idaho Falls, Idaho. She also received a Bachelor of Radiologic Technology from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska.

Returning to La Crosse, Sister LaVerne became program director at the St. Francis School of Radiologic Technology. She later earned a Master of Education and Evaluation from the State University of New York in Buffalo, New York. For the next nine years, she was a faculty member and served as department chair of Radiologic Sciences at the Chicago Medical School in Illinois. Later, after receiving Doctor of Education from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Sister LaVerne moved to the National College of Education in Evanston, Illinois, and served as department chair for the Allied Health Degree Completion Program. For the next 10 years, she continued serving in the health field as chairperson and coordinator of various allied health and radiologic programs at Indiana University in Gary. Sister LaVerne retired in 1996 to Waukegan, Illinois, where she provided volunteer support as a grant researcher, advisory committee member, fundraiser and driver for ElderCare at Christ Episcopal Church. In 2020 she retired to La Crosse and moved to St. Rose in 2023.

Sister LaVerne is remembered by her FSPA community members, family and friends as a dedicated educator and radiologist. Her many years of service in the health field touched thousands of students, patients and colleagues. Her energy and care for others continued all through her life. On special occasions, she would add unique, thoughtful touches for each individual. She took up woodworking before she retired and loved making décor for people’s homes. She loved her FSPA community and rarely missed a gathering, even when she was ministering at a distance.

Affiliate Sandra Worthing

May 8, 1943 – Oct. 10, 2023



Sandra Worthing, 80, died peacefully on Oct. 10, 2023, at her home in Washington, D.C., surrounded by her family. She was born to Deborah and Thomas Brennan in Rockville Centre, New York, and graduated from St. Agnes Cathedral School and Newton College of the Sacred Heart in Newton Centre, Massachusetts. Sandy

earned a Masters of Education from Bank Street College of Education in New York City where she taught kindergarten and led her peers down 5th Avenue during the first Earth Day parade.

After traveling to over five continents, Sandy settled in Minnesota with the love of her life, Rich. She was principally a mom and homemaker, yet enjoyed and achieved much more as a teacher, triathlete, Worthing Family Feud game show champion team member, volunteer counselor at Chrysalis – A Center for Women, massage therapist, celebrated watercolorist accepted into the Minnesota State Fair juried competition, master gardener and an affiliate with the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Known for her inquisitive and positive spirit, loyalty and tenacity, Sandy was immediately curious and accepting of others, inspiring people to appreciate nature's beauty.

Affiliate Marjorie Schultes
Nov. 26, 1934 – Oct. 13, 2023



Marjorie Schultes, 88, formerly of Carroll and Dedham, Iowa, died on Oct. 13, 2023, at Friendship Home in Audubon, Iowa. Marjorie, born on Nov. 26, 1934, was the daughter of Joseph Senior and Mary (Phieffer) Haubrich. She was raised with her 14 siblings on a farm southwest of Dedham. As a teen, she followed her faith to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to attend school at Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi.

On Sept. 22, 1952, Marjorie was united in marriage to Lawrence Schultes at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Dedham. She was a devoted homemaker and housewife, raising their seven children — Tom, Mary, Lori, Jerry, Larry, Linda and George — south of Dedham where they tended to corn, soybeans, chickens, cattle and hogs. Farm life seemed to be Marjorie's calling: She dealt with the daily challenges and found many small blessings.

Marjorie and Lawrence moved to Exira, Iowa, in 1979, where Marjorie dedicated her time to her family and church. She enjoyed her work with Exira Congregate Meals. In 1995 they settled in Carroll to enjoy retirement. She spent much of her time as a volunteer and caregiver to Lawrence. Marjorie spent the last part of her life residing in the Exira Care Center and then Audubon

Friendship Home to receive more specialized care. She was hard working, dedicated her life to her family and a strong and faithful servant to the Lord.

Affiliate Carolyn Klein
Aug. 17, 1942 – Dec. 11, 2023



Carolyn Klein, 81, of Sparta, Wisconsin, died on Dec. 11, 2023, at Serenity House in Tomah, Wisconsin. She was born on Aug. 17, 1942, in Stonefort, Illinois. She grew up in Marion, Illinois, where she graduated from Marion High School, and later graduated from Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin, with a degree in religious studies. She married William Klein on June 5, 1968, in Harrisburg, Illinois, and moved to Sparta.

Carolyn was a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Sparta, a lay minister, a life member of VFW Auxiliary Post 2112. Carolyn was also passionate about environmental and conservancy causes.

Affiliate Gordon Davis
Feb. 18, 1929 – Dec. 22, 2023



Gordon Percy Davis, 94, of Sauk City, Wisconsin, died on Dec. 22, 2023. Gordon, also known as Gordy, was born on Feb. 18, 1929, on a farm in Rush Lake, Wisconsin, one of 11 children. He was hardworking and dedicated many long hours to his work as a forklift truck mechanic.

Gordon shared children with his first wife, Doris Dee (Stone) Davis. In 1981 he married Pearl Loy, his wife until her passing. After retiring, Gordy found joy in completing construction projects for his friends. He possessed a talent for gardening and was recognized as a master gardener for his gardening skills at their Prairie de Sac home. His green thumb brought beauty and tranquility to his surroundings.



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Celebrating our 2024 Jubilarians

70 years
class of 1954



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Sister Mary Becker



Sister Marie Kyle



Sister Delores Lilla



Sister Karen Flottmeier

Affiliates

25 years - class of 1999

**Nancy Alm, Lola Burge, Sharon Laitinen,
Beverly Miller, Janice Munson, Mary Skemp**

FSPA HONORED FOR FRANCISCAN GOODNESS

The Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration are committed to making connections and deepening relationships with organizations serving the global community. Several sisters and FSPA affiliates have received recognition for their presence of prayer, witness and service to La Crosse area organizations.



Photo courtesy of Bethany St. Joseph Corporation

Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Mary Ann Gschwind and affiliates Joe and Barb Kruse, are the 2024 honorees of the Iverson Freking Ecumenical Recognition Award. For 37 years, Bethany St. Joseph Corporation of La Crosse, Wisconsin, has recognized “Seven Rivers Region faith-filled people of action ... Working towards the acceptance of and an openness to people of all faiths and accepting their faith as value, using as a base that we are all one in the Spirit of God.” To date 84 awards, named for the late Carl Iverson and the late Bishop Frederick Freking, have been given. “All three honorees are highly respected in the community,” says Bethany St. Joseph’s Gale Bruessel, “and think nothing of it to help others and lead the way to changes for the betterment of the community.”



Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse has honored **Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Catherine Kaiser** with the 2024 “In My Name” award. Rob Grover, the organization’s advancement director, says, “Recipients embody Jesus’ word to his disciples: ‘Whoever gives another even a cup of water in my name shall not lose his reward.’” Sister Catherine “is a woman who constantly reminds us through her actions that the ‘why’ of what we do at Catholic Charities is just as important as the ‘what’ we do at Catholic Charities.”



The Salvation Army of La Crosse County has given recognition to outstanding volunteers of 2023, with FSPA receiving the group volunteer award and **Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Rose Elsbernd** honored with the Impact Award. The award is based on peer recognition for volunteering and impact. Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Georgia Christensen nominated Sister Rose for her volunteer work that includes serving meals, thrift store involvement, kettle counting and bell ringing — all served over multiple decades of time.

FRANCISCAN SISTER OF PERPETUAL ADORATION SUE ERNSTER MEETS POPE FRANCIS IN ROME



Photo courtesy of
© Vatican Media

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious presidency, Dominican Sister of Grand Rapids Maureen Geary, Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Sue Ernster and Dominican Sister of Springfield Rebecca Ann Gemma, along with Sister of St. Joseph Carol Zinn, LCWR Executive Director, journeyed to Rome for LCWR’s annual visit from March 18 to 22. They met with teams that work with consecrated life, the doctrine of the faith, culture and education, the synod, bishops, communications, integral human development and evangelization. The team also met with the Vatican’s secretary of state and the U.S. ambassador to the Vatican and had a private meeting with Pope Francis as well.

“While in Rome, I have experienced many emotions, always leading to the light and a sense of hope,” shares Sister Sue about her visit. “Pope Francis reminds me of light and hope and shows me the way.” Sister Sue currently serves LCWR as president-elect. She becomes president of the organization in August.

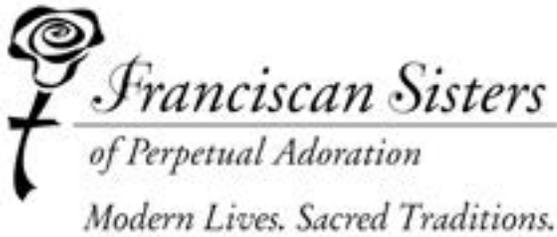
CELEBRATING 175 YEARS OF PRAYER, WITNESS AND SERVICE

It has been 175 years since six women, who traveled to America from Ettenbeuren, Bavaria, were received as a religious community by the Diocese of Milwaukee on May 28, 1949. They came with the commitment to be loving presence through prayer, witness and service and began a ministry of Christian education, focused on immigrants like themselves. Today the mission has grown to include perpetual adoration, justice and peace, integral ecology and more, stretching across the globe. In honor of this milestone, we invite you to celebrate with us: visit fspa.org to find a schedule of events, including a visual art experience, historical exhibition, organ concert and more.



In celebration of this milestone, FSPA is sharing our legacy of art, beauty and joy in a visual art experience. A selection of FSPA artists are telling personal stories about their work and inspiration behind the pieces showcased in virtual galleries. **Scan the QR code to the right** to get the visual experience of this ministry and the artists who express their love of creation — a celebration of the beauty of the world and a means to live out their Franciscan values.





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By Sarah Hennessey, FSPA



What happens to a dream over 175 years?

The Spirit is breathed into the dream and takes on flesh. She wakes up early in the morning to put on her habit and teach children in a one-room schoolhouse. She nurses the sick, sets sail for China, lives through a war in El Salvador and wakes up in the middle of the night to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.

She reads the signs of the times and changes with Vatican II. This dream dances with the Spirit, she works for justice, opens a spirituality center, tends to the Earth and continues to live the radical and prophetic call of religious life.

In 1849, 14 Tertiaries left Bavaria with only a dream and a hope. They faced challenges unimaginable. Opportunities coaxed forth from God's heart, opened before them.

The Spirit still breathes through us. Challenges and opportunities lie before us in a future unforeseeable. Yet every day our Franciscan story continues to call us to listen deeply to the needs of our world. We are to be a people living this heritage both through modern lives and sacred traditions.



Scan the above QR code to view a list of 175th celebrations.

CONNECT WITH OUR PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

Franciscan Spirituality Center | La Crosse, Wisconsin | fscenter.org

Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center | Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin | marywoodsc.org

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center | Hiawatha, Iowa | prairiewoods.org

Global Awareness Through Experience | gate-travel.org