

# WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

A social justice newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order St. Francis



## Special Interest Articles:

- Sister Shannon: Theme of October issue
- "Franciscans Downtown" in Stevens Point
- Joseph's Home in Cleveland
- "Do You Know My Name?"

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*Donna Wilhelm, Dorothy Pagosa, Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Michele Richardson, Rose Grabowski, Rose Marie Bommer, Shannon Fox — Social Justice Committee*

## A Franciscan View of Peacemaking *by Sr. Shannon Fox*

**A**s Franciscans we approach social justice from a peacemaking and reconciling stance.

This can take many forms, such as direct service at places like Joseph's Home (which will be highlighted in this newsletter) or getting involved in actions through organizations such as the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Peace and Justice. (A brief article from Sister Dorothy

Pagosa, who works at 8<sup>th</sup> Day, is also included in this newsletter).

It also involves informing ourselves about important peace and justice issues of our day such as Human Trafficking or climate change.

**O**ur sisters and associates have also taken to heart the example and words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, both in his new

encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, and in his address to the U.S. Congress and other speeches during his recent visit to the United States.

**W**e are seeking to follow the example of both Saint Francis and our Holy Father in discerning how we may best become peacemakers and promote social justice in our world. ■

## "Franciscans Downtown" in Stevens Point

*By Sr. Rose Grabowski*

**F**ranciscans Downtown is operated and maintained by the First Order of Franciscans. Father Placid Stroik, OFM had a dream to make use of available market space, having it to be open to all possible persons.

So far, the space has been used by various people just popping in for a chat, having a chance to sit and do homework, read, watch a movie and discuss, enjoy the

homemade cookies and coffee, rest and enjoy the atmosphere.

The walls display photos by a Franciscan Friar which help relax and invite reflection. Books are available for reading and to refresh.

**O**ur Sisters have been part of the dream: I, Sister Rose Grabowski, am a member of the Board; Sisters Sandy Setterlund and Barb Knauf have

volunteered time, energy, and themselves.

**Franciscans Downtown** will serve as a warming center when the temperatures drop below the 20s. There is a need for volunteers who will be there during the evenings to safeguard the people.

Unlike a shelter, the center will have recliners instead of beds. It will be open to anyone who needs a place to stay for the night, including people

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*Franciscans Downtown. . . (continued from page 1)*



who struggle with alcohol or drug use, who frequently are rejected from staying at shelters. Alcohol, however, will not be allowed in the center.

**T**iffany Krueger, of Evergreen Community Initiatives, wants to save people from the tempera-

tures. "We're trying to save lives," Krueger said. "We are not going to judge."

The purpose of the warming center is to give people a place to sleep. People who come to stay for the night will check their belongings at the door and will not have

access to them until their checkout, which will help protect everyone's safety.

**I**n July there was a count of 62 homeless persons in the area. This number includes people who were living in shelters, cars, parks, and tents. ■

**Joseph's Home** *For Homeless Men* by Sr. Sandy LoPorto



**J**oseph's Home is a transitional facility for recuperating homeless men.

It is a nurturing, caring environment for those men without resources who have acute medical needs, helping them heal and achieve independence.

At Joseph's Home the men are provided with health care through a nurse employed to be supportive of the men, and through life skills classes to better equip

them in their journey through life.

These men are directed to education, employment opportunities, and other resources through the direction of a social worker.

**A**ll of this moves them toward their goal of securing permanent, long term housing.

Joseph's Home is a Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System. It was started in July 2000 when the sisters

responded to a Chapter resolution to meet an unmet need for homeless men being discharged from a hospital with nowhere to go to heal.

In Joseph's Home they find people who understand their homeless situation, will listen to their story, and help them regain their sense of self. ■

*Editor's Note:*  
Sister Sandy LoPorto has ministered as the staff nurse at Joseph's Home since 2004.

*"Stemming from our Franciscan values and the fact that all life is interconnected, members, vowed and non-vowed, are encouraged to be engaged in ministry with those living on the margins of society and struggling to live with dignity."*

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments  
26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

**Faith in Action**

These actions are provided by the **Center of Concern.**

[www.coc.org](http://www.coc.org)

- ❖ [Tell Congress to Reform Our Criminal Justice System](#)
- ❖ [Stand #withMalala for Girls Education](#)
- ❖ [Buy Fair Trade Chocolate for Halloween](#)
- ❖ [Join the Fight to Stop Food Waste in America](#)
- ❖ [Call for Generous Response to Refugee Crisis](#)
- ❖ [Help Ensure Justice for Victims of U.S. Bombing of Hospital in Afghanistan](#)

## Do You Know My Name? by Fr. Timothy Mulroy, SSC

He was another homeless man who had found himself a place to sleep alongside ten or fifteen others in the underground walkway of Fujisawa train station. After ten o'clock at night when the station had grown quiet, these men used to set out their mats and settle down for the night. Before they fell asleep, however, a small group of us, composed of members of several Christian churches, provided them with hot tea, rice cakes and warm blankets. We also used to spend a few moments chatting with each of them.

One night after I had exchanged greetings with one of these men, he looked at me straight in the eye and asked, **"Do you know my name?"** His question surprised me. "No, I don't," I responded sheepishly. Then, I started wondering to myself, "As the only non-Japanese person in this group of volunteers, why is he asking me this question? Why does he seem more concerned about his name than about the hot tea and

rice cakes that I'm offering him?" However, he just stood there looking straight at me. Then, he said gently, "My name is Honda. Can you remember it? Please don't forget it."

In that very moment, it was as if a window opened in my mind, and I no longer saw this man as simply as another homeless person, but rather as a unique human being who longed to be recognized and called by his name: Mr. Honda. Living as a homeless man, who had already lost his job, his home and his family, the threat of losing even his name must have felt like the loss of his very self. He was in grave danger of becoming a "nobody." In that moment I realized that, for Mr. Honda, being called by his name was much more important than hot tea and rice cakes! I quickly reassured him that I would remember his name, and after I said goodnight to him, I promised myself that from then on I would always greet him as Mr. Honda. My heart was still

full of the emotion of that encounter as I returned to the church around midnight.

The next morning, as I entered the parish office, the parish administrator looked unusually serious. "What's up?" I inquired. His response was slow and deliberate, "Remember the homeless man with whom you had a long chat at the station last night?" "Yes," I responded, "Mr. Honda." Then, he continued, "Late last night he became ill and was rushed to the local hospital. He died there a short time ago."

As I tried to grasp this sad news, suddenly I got a glimpse of the immense joy that Mr. Honda must have felt when God called him by his name and led him home. ■

*Rev. Timothy Mulroy, SSC is the Director and Publisher of "Columban Mission" a publication of the Columban Fathers. Copyright © 2015. It is included in this newsletter with his permission.*



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## Benefit for Benjamin's House Emergency Shelter

On Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup> a special fundraising event will be held at Turtleback Golf Club to benefit **Benjamin's House Emergency Shelter** in Rice Lake Wisconsin.

The event, entitled **"Raising It Up: Dueling Pianos,"** will be hosted by Benjamin's House and Barron County Restorative Justice Program and will include a night of music, laughter, and fun.

We wish them a very successful event!

For more information, or to order tickets, contact Lori Bowman at Benjamin's House at 715-736-2437 or [executivedirector@benjamins-house.org](mailto:executivedirector@benjamins-house.org)





## Caring for Our Common Home *by Associate Maxine Smith*

### **Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology**

*“Our Franciscan spirituality inspires and guides us in responding to any needs calling out to us.”*

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments  
26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter

The Michigan sisters and associates are reading the encyclical of Pope Francis, **Laudato Si’**. Sister Virgianne Wantuch provided members of her local community with a copy of our Holy Father’s encyclical and all are currently reading it.

The Michigan SSJ-TOSFs are invited to St. Anthony’s

Convent on October 24, 2015 for a morning of prayer, a short video, reflection, and discussion of the encyclical and issues concerning global warming and the care of our earth.

The video and discussion guide have been provided by the **Catholic Climate Covenant**. Those present will have the

opportunity to take the **St. Francis Pledge**.

Pope Francis has left Americans with many reminders of the importance of:

- God,
- Family,
- the Outcasts of society, and
- our Common Home, Earth. ■

## Action

- **The Global Catholic Climate Movement** is a newly formed international coalition of religious congregations and Catholic organizations, including LCWR. Become a part of its growing influence. [catholicclimatemovement.global](http://catholicclimatemovement.global)
- **Take the St. Francis Pledge.** All across our country, Catholics are taking the pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor and joining the Catholic Climate Covenant. [catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/](http://catholicclimatecovenant.org/the-st-francis-pledge/)

## Human Trafficking

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> **Sister Dorothy Pagosa** gave a presentation on human trafficking to students at the monthly Newman Center Dinner at the University of Wisconsin in Steven’s Point. She gave a similar presentation to parishioners from Holy Spirit Parish that same evening.

Sister Dorothy connected Human Trafficking with all systems that demean the value of women and small children including the economic, social, cultural and religious systems.

She states, “The good news is that if you are



working on bringing justice to any of these issues, you are helping to reduce victims of human trafficking.”

Sister Dorothy is available to give talks on:

- human trafficking,
- immigration, or the
- environment. ■

### **REMEMBER...**

We welcome your submissions in the form of

- “Sightings”
- Brief write-ups of your activities, “prototypes,” suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources.

**Please send these to Associate Maxine Smith** by the end of October for inclusion in the November issue of our newsletter, *We Commit Ourselves*.

*~Your Social Justice Committee*