

# WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

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

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

## Special Interest Articles:

What's for Real? 1

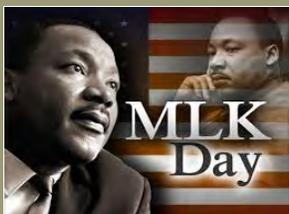
Celebrating MLK  
Day 1

Let's Go to Selma 3

Introducing the  
Social Justice  
Committee 3

Reaching Out in  
Love for the  
People of Haiti 4

Books, Films,  
Conferences,  
Web Sites! 5



*"The time is always  
right to do what is  
right."*

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

## What's for Real?

– MARYGRACE PUCHACZ, SSJ-TOSF

**W**hat's "for Real" today as a Franciscan? Beyond all the lofty pledges - what propels us to live, breathe and express the best from deep within?

Francis of Assisi fully embraced the breadth and depth of his God present in all beings and in the beauty and sacredness of whatever life asked of him. The weave of culture and history in his time was the backdrop of what Francis transcended and etched across the centuries.

The recent events of our World cry for Peace. Peace – the silent presence of God amidst our everyday realities. What does today ask of us as Franciscans? The transparency of Francis' Spirit calls us to encircle our World with great Love and Peace – one life at a time. Today our challenges are testing the integrity and fabric of our humanity. Together our Collective Consciousness of Peace will move us to a reawakening, a reverence of the sacred and a

bowing to God's awesome presence in all.

How does this become Real? Peace that is of God, and is God in the silent beauty of one person as well as the vast translation of our World, is the magnificent mystery of Oneness. The time is now to transcend ourselves – our Oneness holds the promise of Peace.

Peace starts in our unique expression of life—making it Real...

*Continued on pg. 2*

## STEVENS POINT CELEBRATES MLK DAY

January 19, 2015

– SISTER ROSE GRABOWSKI, SSJ-TOSF

**O**n January 19, 2015 our community of Stevens Point celebrated the national holiday of Martin Luther King, Jr. The celebration was made possible through the generous contributions from faith communities of the area.

I was fortunate to be a member of the committee which gathered to select the speaker, bake cookies, and plan and set the stage.

Our speaker was Barbara Hickman, the first black female graduate of the University of Wisconsin,

Stevens Point. I had seen an article about her and when I contacted her, she agreed to come back here and present her talk: *"The Power of a Dream."*

Our program included music sung by the Wisconsin Master Chorale: *National Anthem, Lift Every Voice, Sing, Siyahamba: We are marching in the Light of God.*

Barbara challenged us with "The potential of greatness lies in each of us" and "Our dreams must be stronger than our memories."

Following the speech, a group of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders from Rosholt Elementary School performed *Like a Mighty Stream* and *Dreams that Children Dream*.

We prayed for hearts to share from the abundance we have in our lives, so that no longer will people find themselves imprisoned by poverty, prejudices, or ignorance.

As Martin stated, *"The time is always right to do what is right."* This was a perfect ending with delicious cookies and fellowship. ■

*Francis of Assisi fully embraced the breadth and depth of his God present in all beings.*



## *Real. . . (continued from page 1)*

... in our attitude and thoughts that sidestep judgment and refrain from criticism. It becomes authentic in the challenge of using a gentle quality of words that are affirming and supporting. The knowing of our hearts will guide how we choose to reverence each other. We are called to carry a climate of Peace in our Minds, Hearts, and Souls.

Researchers are digitally measuring and validating how Heart Rate Variability is directly correlated to the quality of our feelings and thoughts. Quantum

science has verified that an electrically magnetic field indeed surrounds us. When we choose to think in positive ways and use peace-filled words we have far reaching effects on each other and the environment around us. Human emotions are even being linked to weather patterns. Some of the oldest sacred texts speak of pure consciousness that unites our World. Anger, negativity, rage and global conflicts can be reverted. In some measure these are expressions of the explosion of Stress and

Tension in our outer world. Studies bear out the measurable effects of unrest and its barrier to well-being and true Peace.

We are now called and compelled to be people of Peace. Our collective response to this moment in history is nothing more than the individual choices we make in each moment of each day. Each time we clearly choose a new way of "becoming" deep from within, our outer world mirrors goodness far beyond ourselves. We are embarking on an individual and collective response to a profound sense of peace. ■

## Let's Go to Selma

– SISTER DONNA WILHELM

In 1965 Martin Luther King Jr. went to Selma, AL to begin a campaign that would contribute to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Sister Marian Droba, ssj-tosf responded to Dr. King's call to join a third attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery, AL after a first attempt ended in a brutal attack on the marchers by Selma law enforcement.

Of her experience she writes "Why did I go to Montgomery? ...This was a crusade, a crusade that confronted evil with love. There was no doubt that both the black and the white man came together "to love the hell out of Alabama." We were with her. She took us there.

Now 25 years after that historic march the story is retold in Lee Daniel's film "**Selma**." This is a must see film for every generation especially in a time of racial unrest and renewed struggle to end racism in our country. "Selma" confronts us with the violent reality of our not too-distant distant past, our attitudes, and the blatant injustices that existed in our nation.

"**Selma**" is a clear depiction of the leadership of Dr. King and his ability to daily listen to the voice of God. One powerful scene highlights

when he dramatically ends the second attempt to cross the Edmund G. Pettis Bridge on the outskirts of Selma.

"Selma's" depiction is not perfect. Critics have pointed out that though the film is an accurate portrayal of Dr. King's moral leadership, it not so in its representation of the relationship between King and President Johnson. The film sets up an antagonistic relationship between the two men that does not hold up to a presidential historian's account. (See Maureen Dowd [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/18/opinion/sunday/not-just-a-movie.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/18/opinion/sunday/not-just-a-movie.html?_r=0)).

The film is however, not only a reminder of what happened in those days in Selma, AL and in Meridian and Greenwood, MS where Sisters and Associates of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis also "confronted evil with love." Sister Helen Skok, who spent 30 years in Greenwood, MS in an interview commented,



"We've taken the 'Whites Only' and 'Colored' signs off the doors, but we have a long way to go."

"Selma" is a call to continue our mission of 'loving the hell out of all of the places where we experience hatred'. It may be Ferguson, or Cleveland, or New York and wherever we find ourselves today. **Let's Go to "Selma" again – together!**

to watch trailer  
[www.imdb.com/title/tt1020072](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1020072)

## PREACH ALWAYS AND IF NECESSARY USE WORDS (attributed to St. Francis)

– SISTER DOROTHY PAGOSA

**A** child of the sixties/seventies I saw the effect of the Vietnam War on male students at Cleveland State University where I graduated with a BS in Business Administration/ Accounting. One of my friends there had come back from the war with his two legs gone. He had stepped on a mine. I never blamed him for the war, as others have been accused of doing. Didn't have much choice back then... army wasn't volunteer. I remem-

ber how excited he was when his wife became pregnant with triplets (not sure how excited she was). He was still a man (or so he felt he needed proof).

I engaged in demonstrations back then. I also remember being home, sick, on the day that the Kent State massacre happened. I remember Dorothy Fuldheim announcing the list of dead and wounded and thinking – they're killing us now. A speech therapist, an

ROTC student from Lorain, two non-violent demonstrators killed. I learned that there is a cost to speaking out.

I have always appreciated our congregation's commitment to Social Justice and Franciscanism. I was proud to be selected to represent our congregation at the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice. 8<sup>th</sup> Day concentrates on faith-based systemic change.

In 1986, shortly after joining 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center, I

### Continuing to Introduce the Social Justice Committee (part 2 of a series)

joined a delegation going to El Salvador to accompany Salvadorans back to their village in the hopes that paramilitaries would not shoot North Americans. Unfortunately there was bombing and no shooting, so the accompaniment was called off. Instead, we took testimony from *campesinos*. One man said to me "Go back to your President and tell him, no more money. We do not receive it in charity, only bombs and bullets." That instilled in me the necessity to challenge my government's involvement in the Salvadoran War. I felt I fulfilled that promise when I asked President Bush in 1989 why we were killing priests in El Salvador. This made

many newscasts and caused some discomfort among certain people and cheers from others.

I paid a cost when I crossed the line in Fort Benning, GA, protesting the School of the Americas which even the Pentagon has been forced to admit had been teaching counter-insurgency warfare and torture. I spent three months at a Federal Prison in Peking, IL. I always attended the Sunday masses which were celebrated on Thursday. Twice during my stay, the presider used the phrase "*Preach always and if necessary use words.*"

I have been involved in issues of homelessness

and poverty for a long time. Since I have come back to 8<sup>th</sup> Day, I have taken the congregation's mandates to heart. I concentrate on immigration through Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants.

Environmental issues including tar sands, fracking and other ways we are changing the climate are also on my list. Human rights and peace are always a necessary challenge. Racism is also a challenge to me.

I am proud to be part of the Social Justice Committee. Every member is an example of how to "preach always and if necessary use words." ■



Sister Dorothy

## Reaching Out in Love to the People of Haiti

– SISTER DONNA WILHELM



Raffle baskets

**A**s we walked through the door of the Knights of Columbus Hall we saw a familiar sight, Sister Francis Therese selling tickets, offering wristbands, and greeting us with a joyous smile. Sister Sandy LoPorto and I were joining others at The Third Annual Fundraiser to support the Haiti Committee of Blessed Trinity Parish.

The Haiti Committee, as its Mission Statement says, “was formed as an expression of our parish mission of building a just society and service to all God’s people.” The fundraiser is the primary support for that mission.

Parishioners and friends enjoy an evening of food, fun, friendship and games in order to support a variety of works in Baraderes, Haiti.

For over three years, the fundraiser has enabled members to provide the resources for the native Community of the Little Sisters of Therese to build a vocational school and has provided sewing machines for a tailoring course. Volunteers have worked with Uplift Haiti to begin a “Seeds for Gardening” pilot program and more recently the funds raised have enabled the drilling of two wells and the purchase of a generator large enough to provide electricity for the entire school building.

This year’s fund will be used to send a medical mission team to Baraderes on April 7, 2015 to

continue the collaboration with the people there. The fundraiser event, bi-monthly meetings, and Haitian coffee sales after Mass each month are the work of a small group of dedicated parishioners which includes Sister Francis Therese Woznicki, who states, “Working with this group of dedicated parishioners expresses, for me, one of our Community’s ‘Deepest Desires’: **Bond with others in ever-widening circles of Compassion and Peace.** It is a joy to do so.”

Thanks to all those who participated and to those Associates and Sisters who have offered donations throughout the year to support this effort. Please look for this event in 2016 and join in an enjoyable evening and this important cause. ■



Sister Francis Therese Woznicki explains Haiti Project to a visitor

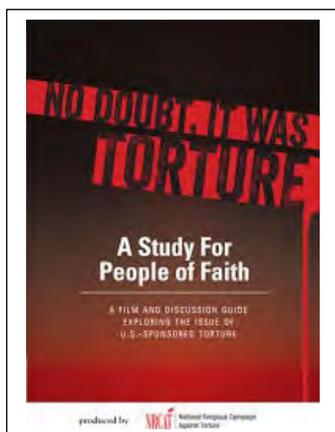
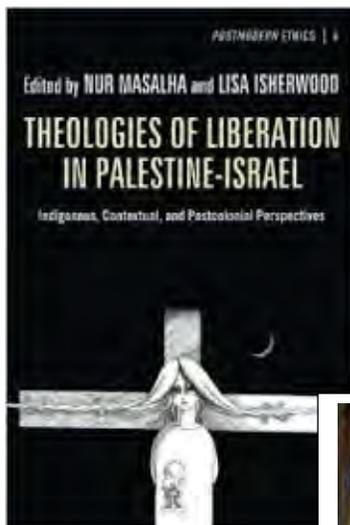


Sister Sandy LoPorto wins a little cash from a sideboard raffle.

**As FRANCISCANS centered on the revelation of the emerging COSMIC Christ, contemplating and celebrating this DIVINE action in our loves, (one of) our deepest desires is to:**

- ***Bond with others in ever-widening circles of Compassion and Peace.***

## Watch a Film



## Websites of Interest

Justice Conference of Women Religious  
[www.JCWR.org](http://www.JCWR.org)



8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice  
[www.8thdaycenter.org](http://www.8thdaycenter.org)



Franciscan Federation  
[www.franfed.org](http://www.franfed.org)



## Remember!

We welcome your submissions in the form of:

- "Sightings"
- Brief write-ups of your activities, "prototypes," etc.
- Suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources

## You may be interested in knowing:

The Sisters and Associates of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis contribute to the following projects:

- **Coalition for a Better Life : Project Ujamaa** Violence prevention, Cleveland
- **Quixote Center** [www.quixote.org](http://www.quixote.org) Irrigation project in Nicaragua, D.C.
- **B'nai Jeshurun/ Arts of Thanksgiving** Promoting diversity through the arts, Cleveland

### Your Social Justice Committee:

Donna Wilhelm, Dorothy Pagosa, Maxine Smith, Marjorie White,  
 Michele Richardson, Shannon Fox, Rose Grabowski, Rose Marie Bommer