

June 2015

Volume 1, Issue 6

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

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



Special Interest Articles:

- Sister Donna Wilhelm: Theme of June Issue
- Rose Marie Bommer: Helping Others
- Social Justice Resource: Action Alert Digest



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

Double-Stuffed with Mint Filling *by Sr. Donna Wilhelm*

In putting together this issue, a theme emerged for me—the image of an Oreo cookie. I noticed not long ago that they are now filling Oreos with different colored filling. So, in reading this issue, imagine an Oreo, double-stuffed, with green mint filling.

This issue is mostly “green stuffing”: a number

of articles about the sacredness of Mother Earth and how we can show more respect for her and be more attuned to her rhythms.

That focus is surrounded by the richness of the lives of two individuals—one, Rose Marie Bommer, our sister associate who is a member of the Social Justice Com-

mittee; the other is, of course, Archbishop Oscar Romero who was beatified last month.

We hope you are inspired, touched, and confirmed in your efforts to be Franciscans who are both living the Gospel and challenging our world to do the same with our lives. ■

Helping Others

By Associate Rose Marie Bommer, Social Justice Committee Member

My mother was my role model. Mom always had time helping at the church and assisting friends and neighbors in our community.

I was born January 2, 1931 in Elyria, OH and as the New Year Baby, was the sixth of eight children. At Holy Cross grade school I was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis. I graduated from Elyria High School.

In 1953 I received my Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree from St. John College in Cleveland, OH. My favorite clinical rotation was psy-

chiatric nursing at Marymount Hospital. Sister Edwardine (Marilyn) Jerzy was head nurse and clinical instructor. She became my role model.

In 1957 I fulfilled requirements for a Master of Science in Nursing (Psychiatric/ Mental Health) and graduated from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.

My nursing experience at St. Elizabeths Federal Hospital for the Mentally Ill in Washington, DC, as Director of Nursing Education at Jamestown State Mental Hospital, Jamestown, ND, and as Assistant Professor of nursing

at Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing in Cleveland, OH prepared me for the nursing skills required to open and maintain patient care on the psychiatric unit at Elyria Memorial Hospital in Elyria, OH. I was a direct care provider to psychiatric patients at St. Francis Hospital, Pittsburg, PA where I was also Clinical Nurse Specialist/Educator.

In 1967 I met Charles F. Bommer Sr., a widower with five children. We were married February 10, 1968. Chuck was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease in December 1972

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Rose Marie Bommer

“Assisting and serving others is the FRANCISCAN WAY.

It gives me great joy in my HEART and LIFE.”

Helping Others... (continued from page 1)

and died July 26, 1973. At the time of Chuck's death I was teaching at Lorain County Community College. I was familiar with Dr. Kubler Ross's book *Death and Dying* and was teaching her concepts on grief recovery. What a painful learning experience it was for me! It took several months before I was able to focus on what I had gained from my short marriage rather than what I lost. The wonderful memories of a loving relationship with my husband, stepchildren, and their children, along with PRAYER have sustained me. Interaction with “my family” continues today.

As an active church member I have volunteered as PSR teacher, Eucharistic Minister, and Lector. My interest in social justice issues prompted me to assist in the establishment of the monthly food collection at our parish. It continues up to today.

I spent many volunteer hours at the Elyria City Health Department Free Clinic and with the County Office on Aging. I was a volunteer driver and met Peggy. I realized she needed more than rides to her doctor appointments and so I became her advocate as well. My motto has always been to help others help themselves. The need to refocus on this motto became necessary when I noticed Peggy wasn't willing to do things she could do for herself. We had many discussions and since she was now living in a safe and protected environment with transportation I realized that it was necessary for me to terminate our relationship.

When my parish signed up to provide two meals a month to the St. Joseph Homeless Shelter I volunteered. Wanting to do something “extra,” I baked healthy muffins and bagged each individually for a “take home snack.” Everyone at the shelter

knew me as the “Muffin Lady.”

My relationship with Marymount Congregational Home has been longstanding. I had the privilege of being a participant in my sister Joan's journey from being a student at Marymount High School to becoming Sister Joan (Josette) Bruskiwicz, SSJ-TOSF.

As an associate of our congregation I have volunteered as a Eucharistic Minister for many months at St. Joseph Villa and for many years at Clare Hall listening, doing projects, and sharing memories with the sisters.

As an associate I benefit from the spiritual, social, educational, and committee opportunities open to both sisters and associates. This gives me a deep and rewarding feeling of community.

Assisting and serving others is the FRANCISCAN WAY. It gives me great JOY in my HEART and LIFE. ■

Earth Watch: Water, a Critical Issue Worldwide by Maxine Smith

Updates in Michigan

The water crisis in the Michigan cities of Flint (the water is rancid coming from their water system), and Detroit (citizens' water being turned off if the homeowner is \$150.00 behind or 60 days past

due on their bill) has caused me to pay more attention to my use of water. The drought in California should give all citizens of our country reason to evaluate their personal use of water and conserve this precious natural resource. Those who live in the Great

Lakes Region of America need to protect our waterways from pollution, over-usage, the industrial poisoning of fish, and the introduction of harmful mussels by freights and tributary waterways. ■

Update on Detroit:
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Social Justice Committee says:

A Resource Worth Exploring

In the inaugural edition of this newsletter we suggested a resource that is available from the Franciscan Sisters of Clinton, IA.



embracing active nonviolence



The Action Alert Digest is a weekly publication that comes via email and contains not only information about

- Active non-violence and peacemaking
- The Environment
- Immigration
- Human Trafficking
- Domestic violence and Sexual assault
- Poverty and Social Justice
- The Death Penalty

but also includes "Action items" that allow you to **Take ACTION** immediately by signing petitions, etc.

It is a marvelous "one stop shopping" resource for many social justice areas. **Please subscribe** if you haven't already..., or at least check it out at:

<http://www.clintonfranciscans.com/news-and-events-take-action.html>



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Detroit's Water Shut-Off Program

At the beginning of the month of May, City of Detroit Water Department Officials announced that the water shut-off program (stopped for the winter months) would be resumed by the end of the month. Approximately 25,000 residents were in danger of having their water shut off because they were \$150.00 or 60 days

delinquent on their water bills. The **Michigan Welfare Rights Organization**, recognizing water as a right for each citizen, called on Michiganders to contact State Officials and President Barack Obama asking for intervention to prevent the water shut-offs.

As of now more than half the affected citizens have made arrangements

with the Water Department for a payment plan with monthly payments that are income-based.

While this is good news, as stewards of humankind and the earth Franciscans must work diligently to ensure all people have their most basic needs of food, shelter, clean air, and water met. ■



Marymount Congregational Home Begins Comprehensive Recycling Program

Every time a contract at Marymount Congregational Home comes up for renewal Sister Joyce Hollkamp “goes shopping.” Joyce compares pricing of various companies, talks to providers, and makes a decision.

This year when the trash collection contract came up for renewal the sisters at Marymount overwhelmingly decided that they would try to recycle more of their trash.

What the sisters realized was that the landfills in the area are full. At this point trash from the greater Cleveland area is being trucked to other counties/ states.

Joyce contacted a local provider and discovered that for only \$5.00 more per month a company other than the one she was currently using would put recycling containers on each floor of the building. Everyone participates, including the children in the Child Care Program there. Joyce says, “The children love to take their cups to ‘that special box.’”

The program is only a few weeks old and surprisingly, what they have discovered is that 60-70% of the trash at Marymount is recyclable! “So many things that we thought were trash are really recyclable,” says Sister Joyce.

Yet another aspect of this effort involves the choice to use only recyclable paper and washable products at Marymount.

“Styrofoam is a last resort. We only use it when there is no other option,” and “we don’t even use recyclable cups in the coffee shop; only washable ones. It’s no big deal,” she says, “to put them in the dishwasher.”

Sister Joyce also plans to monitor the program, getting feedback from the sisters at an upcoming resident meeting.

Congratulations to all for your efforts to care for our planet! ■



God’s Gardens: We respect the earth and recognize that all life is interconnected in a continuing cosmic evolution.

Gardens, farms, little patches of flowers are evident in every part of our nation.

In all of the areas of the country where you find SSJ-TOSF sisters/associates/friends you will find community gardens large and small.

Many are vegetable gardens. The produce from a garden built and sponsored by a Cleveland parish, known as The Edible Forest, will, in a few years, contribute its

fresh fruits to the parish’s food pantry, “The Bountiful Basement.” In a recent parish bulletin post, *The Disciple of the Week*, Sister Francis Therese Woznicki was “seen planting daffodil bulbs around the fruit trees.” Blessed Trinity also has a community garden that produces fresh vegetables for those in need.

There are a couple of gardens in Garfield Heights, OH, too. One, lovingly tended by Sister Francis Therese, by mid-summer will brim with the

beauty of carefully chosen annuals and perennials.

Right next door you will find a small vegetable garden with a variety of lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, and beets. Sister Dian Majsterek tends this space that lies next to a local park and generously shares its bounty with the local deer and raccoon neighbors. She shares it, too, with the Sisters at Marguerite Apartments.

If you already have a home garden you might

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Sister Francis Therese tending her flower garden

God's Gardens... *continued from page 4*

want to bless it using the prayer below.

O God, in your great providence, from the very beginning of time you commanded the earth to be fruitful with every good thing, providing seed for the one who sows and bread for the one who eats. Bless, we pray, the work of our hands: that the land we have cultivated and the seeds we have planted will be enriched with the gifts of your creating and life-giving spirit.

May we find, in your good time, a rich and fruitful harvest to enjoy and to share with ever-grateful hearts, and to praise you unceasingly, now and for all ages unending through Christ our Lord. Amen

If you have an itch to garden, but don't have the time to do the set-up alone, there are many opportunities in each of the areas where we live and minister. A few are listed below. Do enjoy!

Chicago: <http://chicagocommunitygardens.org/>

Stevens Point: <http://wi-stevenspoint.civicplus.com/index.aspx?nid=1046>

Sun City, AZ: http://www.yourwestvalley.com/suncity/article_b8bd10ac-eb20-11e2-abcc-001a4bcf887a.html

Detroit, MI: <http://www.takepart.com/article/2014/08/11/youll-never-guess-which-city-new-king-urban-gardening>

Connecticut: <http://www.ci.bristol.ct.us/index.aspx?NID=366>
<http://www.nbcommunitygarden.org/NBcommunitygarden/Welcome.html>

California: <http://commgardens.meetup.com/cities/us/ca/lomita/>
<http://harvestlots.org/garden-projects/concord-ca/>

Washington, D.C.: <http://dpr.dc.gov/page/dpr-community-gardens>

Florida: <https://www.facebook.com/OldsmarOrganicCommunityGarden>

Indiana: <https://www.facebook.com/TheUnityGardens>
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fort-Wayne-Urban-Gardening/107028326016834>

Ohio: <https://communitygarden.org/find-a-garden/gardens/garfield-heights-community-gardens/>

Tennessee: <http://www.johnsoncitypress.com/article/100492/community-gardening-can-be-fun-educational>

Pennsylvania: <http://communitygardening.meetup.com/cities/us/pa/fairfield/>

Puerto Rico: http://www.nracs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nracs/detailfull/pr/home/?cid=nracs141p2_037312

Peru: <http://www.cityfarmer.info/2010/12/04/a-documentary-on-urban-agriculture-and-food-security-in-lima-peru/>

Brazil: <http://library.iated.org/view/DESOUZARIBEIRO2013COM>



Sister Dian Majsterek tending her vegetable garden

Reducing Our Carbon Footprint: Around the Congregation

Here is what some of our sisters and associates are currently doing:

- I am trying to define my "neighborhood" and staying within it to do shopping, get gas, etc. If there are grocery stores that meet my needs within the neighborhood, then I shop there rather than traveling further.
- I am trying to combine my trips more, when possible.
- I'm trying to drive a little slower when traveling, helping conserve gas.
- I take public transportation as much as I can.
- I recycle daily, as needed.
- I do not use my air conditioner unless it is oppressively hot.
- I am washing clothes in cold water instead of hot or warm.

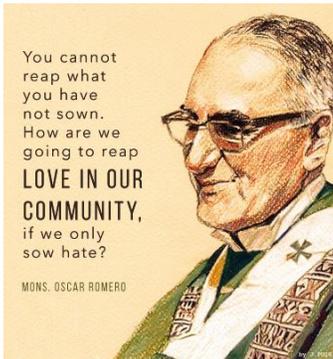
What are YOU doing?

More to be published in future issues.





Archbishop Monseñor Romero Beatified in San Salvador



“Let my blood be a seed of freedom and the sign that hope will soon be reality.”

Archbishop Oscar Romero, martyr for the poor, beatified in San Salvador on Saturday, May 23, 2015.



Sisters Donna Wilhelm, Linda Szocik, and Alexanne Osinski attended the 30th Anniversary in El Salvador in 2010.

We hope you had the opportunity to watch or read about the beatification of *Monseñor* Oscar Romero at the end of May at the Cathedral in San Salvador, El Salvador.

Sisters and associates may remember that three of our sisters were chosen by lottery to attend the 30th Anniversary of the death of the Sister/Lay Woman Martyrs in El Salvador a few years ago.

During our time there we visited many sites important to the Archbishop as well. We also met with various groups that are sponsored by SHARE El Salvador (<http://www.share-elsalvador.org>), a program that strives to accompany the poor of El Salvador as they

work for civil rights, economic development, and women’s rights programs.

Sister Linda Szocik reflected on her experience shortly after the visit:

From November 29 through December 6, 2010 I spent another week in El Salvador. I visited some earlier sites including the chapel of the Hospital Divina Providencia, where Archbishop Oscar Romero was murdered.

There is an amazing mural outside the gates of the hospital. On the mural Romero is seated with a child on his lap and around him many are gathered. All of them have the wounds of the stigmata on their hands and feet. All are

manifestations of the Savior – El Salvador.

Another experience that was also significant to those of us who visited was an education and empowerment program for teenage young women. It gives opportunities for leadership development and scholarship awards that provide tuition and books for the women to attend The Central American University (UCA) in San Salvador. The SSJ-TOSF Justice Fund continues to contribute to these efforts as requested.

You might also want to read an analysis to the event according to NPR at <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/05/22/408813450/what-archbishop-romeros-beatification-means-for-el-salvador-today>. ■

Photos taken in El Salvador in 2010



Young women assisted by SHARE El Salvador.



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 Sister Rose Grabowski by the end of June for inclusion in the July issue of our newsletter, *We Commit Ourselves*.

~Your Social Justice Committee