

**Associates of the Missionary
Franciscan Sisters of the
Immaculate Conception**



St. Francis, St. Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes:
 Our Franciscan Institute3

The Associates Program4
 In the Church ♦ In Our Institute ♦ The Path to Associate
 Membership

Contractual Agreement7

The Tau: Emblem of the Association8

Mission Statement of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters
 of the Immaculate Conception9

Franciscan Prayers10
 Prayer in Honor of Our Foundress, Mother Mary Ignatius Hayes
 ♦ From the Second Letter of Clare to Agnes of Prague ♦ The
 Testament Prayer ♦ Prayer for the Entire Order ♦ The Praises
 of God ♦ Prayer of Enlightenment ♦ The Canticle of the Sun

Missionary Franciscan Sisters
Immaculate Conception Circle



August 2005

Dear Associate,

Welcome to the Associates Program of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. My strongest hope and desire for you is that by being an Associate, you may better come to know and reverence the goodness of God acting in and through your life. May this journey take you to places unknown in your heart, freeing your spirit of love through prayer and commitment to your fellow human beings.

I hope that by reading and studying this revised edition of our Associates manual you will be able to grasp the full meaning of our Franciscan message: "to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rule of St. Francis).

Our Foundress, Elizabeth Hayes, was an Anglican convert from England. She had an incessant longing to work for the poor and neglected of society. Our sisters have continued that calling whenever and wherever we find ourselves in mission. We believe that another way that our charism will continue to thrive and spread through all parts of our world is through our Associates Program.

Thank you for walking this journey with us. Through our association may each of us become more authentic witnesses of the Gospel. May we be messengers of peace as we ". . . manifest God's universal compassion through inclusive non-dominating relationships of love" (MFIC Mission Statement).

A special word of thanks to Sr. Julie Franchi and the Boston Associates for their work on revising the Associates manual.

So, let us pronounce together our *Nunc Coepi*, that is, let us begin!

Pax et bonum,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Suzanne".

Sister Suzanne Fondini, mfc
USA Minister

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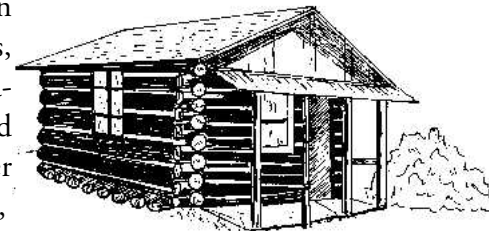
**St. Francis, St. Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes:
Our Franciscan Institute**

In the thirteenth century, Francis of Assisi responded to a call from God to a radical Gospel life. Francis became a prophet in the marketplace, in contradiction to the forces of greed and hatred of his times. He was a Christ-presence bringing joy and peace to all. His followers, men and women, professed and lay, have continued his legacy of Pax et Bonum (Peace and Goodness) to this day—in Franciscan religious orders and in lay Associations.

One of Francis' early followers was Clare of Assisi, who was a respected friend and adviser to Francis. Her example has helped to inspire many other women to choose a Franciscan way of life.

In 1858, Elizabeth Hayes, a convert from Anglicanism, embraced the Franciscan charism by becoming a professed member of the Franciscan Community in Glasgow, Scotland. Taking the name Mary Ignatius at the time of her religious profession, she also took a fourth vow in addition to the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience: she vowed to devote her life to the foreign missions.

Following that call, after fifteen years of ministry in Scotland, Jamaica, Paris, Rome, and St. Thomas, Elizabeth Hayes founded our Institute—the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception—in a one-room log cabin in Belle Prairie, Minnesota, in 1873. Through trials, difficulties, and frustrations, with trust in God she maintained her courage, determination,



and unswerving faith in carrying out her vow to spread Christ's Word throughout the world. Our Institute today continues the legacy of Elizabeth Hayes, with ministries in the United States, Canada, Bolivia, Peru, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Egypt, Ireland, England, and Italy.

The Associates Program

In the Church

Over the centuries, led by the Holy Spirit, religious communities have involved lay people in their mission and ministry. These men and women have also been inspired by the Spirit and have desired to be affiliated with religious orders. This, in fact, is how the Third Orders Regular and Secular of Saint Francis were begun in the thirteenth century.

In Our Institute

In the early years of our Institute, two Associations were established: the Association of Saint Anthony of Padua for the promotion of good literature and the Association of the Angelic Crown in honor of Saint Michael the Archangel for promoting priestly and religious vocations.

Today our Institute continues our association with men and women who desire to share in our mission and ministry, living the charism and spirituality of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception without becoming vowed members.

Associates agree to be actively involved with the life and mission of the Institute through prayer, faith sharing, and the sharing of gifts and talents. Whenever and wherever possible, they participate in the ministries of the Institute on a voluntary basis.

In imitation of St. Francis, St. Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes, Associates endeavor to follow Christ and spread the good news by living exemplary lives. They strive toward total dependence on God and charity toward all, but in particular toward the poor and needy.

Associate members reserve time for personal prayer and meditation. They participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice as frequently as possible. They are encouraged to devote themselves to Our Blessed Mother, St. Francis, St. Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes.

The Path to Associate Membership

Eligibility

Adults, 18 years of age or older, who live according to Christian values and who desire to share in the spirituality of the Institute—that is, to participate in the mission of living and proclaiming the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis, St. Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes—are eligible to become Associates. A person who is interested in becoming an Associate enters a period of discernment and formation.

Formation

The formation program includes study of St. Francis, St. Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes; Franciscan spirituality and charism; the history of the Institute, especially the USA Governance Circle; and the meaning of Franciscanism to professed religious and to lay Associates. At the end of the formation period, the candidate and the Community determine if the candidate is called to be an Associate of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

Mutual Commitment

All Associates and the Community make a mutual commitment. The signing of this agreement annually creates responsibility on the part of each Associate and the Institute.

On the Part of the Associate

- ◆ Associates commit themselves to regular personal prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and some form of ministry appropriate to their life situation.
- ◆ Their commitment is a promise, not a vow, and it is a temporary and renewable relationship with the Community.
- ◆ Associates familiarize themselves with the spirituality of St. Francis, St. Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes, on which the charism of the Institute is based.
- ◆ Associates take part in monthly meetings, gathering for prayer, support, and a deepening of Franciscan spirituality.
- ◆ Associates provide for their own personal needs and assume responsibility for their own financial and legal affairs.
- ◆ Associates do not take on any legal or financial obligation toward the Institute.

On the Part of the Institute

- ◆ The Community provides the Associates with opportunities for sharing in our spirituality and for deepening their life of faith.
- ◆ The Sisters commit themselves to praying for the Associates and to welcoming them as persons who have a special bond with our Institute.
- ◆ The Institute does not have any financial or legal obligation toward the Associates.
- ◆ Associates receive all pertinent communications of the Community.
- ◆ Associates are invited to participate in Community celebrations and gatherings.

Contractual Agreement

I, _____, voluntarily enter into an agreement with the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception for a period of one year.

I understand that by means of this agreement:

I am entitled to the help and support of the Sisters by sharing in their spiritual benefits.

I will be involved actively in the life and mission of the Institute and in particular of the Immaculate Conception Circle. This will take place through attendance at monthly Associate meetings, prayer, and faith sharing.

I will participate in the ministries of the Immaculate Conception Circle whenever and wherever possible.

I also understand:

That there are no financial or legal obligations or responsibilities on the part of the Institute or on my part toward the Institute.

That all canonical ties, such as the right to vote and the right to hold office in the Community, are excluded.

That this voluntary agreement between the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and me will be evaluated at the end of a one-year period. Termination may be initiated by either party at any time.

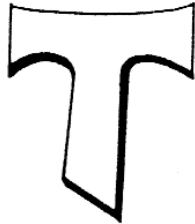
Associate Member

Date

USA Minister

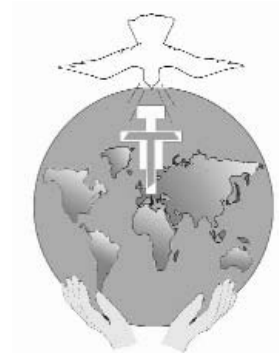
Director of Associates Program

The Tau: Emblem of the Association



The Tau is a letter of both the Hebrew and the Greek alphabets. It had great meaning for St. Francis, signifying for him the assurance of salvation. He adopted it as a symbol of his conversion, his devotion to the Cross and to the person of Christ and His mission. Because of its importance to St. Francis, the Tau is for us, Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, a cherished emblem and the special cross of our Associate members.

Mission Statement of the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception



We, Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, commit ourselves by profession of vows to:

- ♦ Manifest God's universal compassion through inclusive non-dominating relationships of love.
- ♦ Trust in God's providence and live in a manner that affirms the right of all to a just share of earth's resources.
- ♦ Discern together the voice of the Spirit which has called us to be one in our diversity.

In the spirit of Francis, Clare, and Elizabeth Hayes, we promote ever-widening circles of communion as we:

- ♦ Open ourselves to a life of continued conversion in response to the call of the Gospel.
- ♦ Identify with the victim, the poor and the marginalized in seeking a peace built on justice.
- ♦ Reverence creation, acknowledging the right of all God's creatures to enjoy its blessings.
- ♦ Address the need within ourselves for repentance, forgiveness and healing while promoting a message of reconciliation.

Franciscan Prayers

Prayer in Honor of Our Foundress, Mother Mary Ignatius Hayes

O God, you chose Mother Mary Ignatius to lead many women to commit themselves to the Franciscan way of life. Through her intercession we ask you to grant us all our needs. We ask also that we may find our joy as she did, in a generous and faithful response to your call. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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From the Second Letter of Clare to Agnes of Prague

What you hold, may you always hold.

What you do, may you always do and never abandon.

But with swift pace, light step and unswerving feet, so that even your steps stir up no dust,

Go forward

Securely, joyfully and swiftly
on the path of prudent happiness,

Believing in nothing,

Agreeing with nothing

which would dissuade you from this resolution

or which would place a stumbling block for you on the way,

So that you may offer your vows to the Most High

In pursuit of that perfection to which
the Spirit of the Lord has called you.

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The Testament Prayer

We adore you Most Holy Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all of your churches throughout the world and we bless you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Prayer for the Entire Order

Almighty, just and merciful God, grant that we may do for your sake what we know you want us to do, and always want what pleases you; so that cleansed and enlightened interiorly and fired with the flame of the Holy Spirit, we may be able to follow in the footprints of your son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and so make our way to you Most High, by your grace alone, you who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity, and are glorified, God, all-powerful, forever and ever. Amen.

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The Praises of God

You are holy Lord, the only God, who does wonders.

You are strong, you are great, You are Most High,

You are the almighty God, ruler of heaven and earth.

You are three and one, Lord, God of gods;

You are good, all good, the highest good,

Lord, God, living and true.

You are love. You are wisdom; You are humility;

You are patience; you are beauty; you are meekness;

You are security; You are rest; You are joy; You are our hope and joy;

You are justice; you are moderation; You are all our riches,

You are enough for us.

You are the protector; You are our guardian and defender;

You are strength; You are refreshment.

You are our hope; You are our faith; You are our charity;

You are all our sweetness; You are our eternal life.

Great and wonderful Lord, God almighty, merciful Savior.

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Prayer of Enlightenment

Most High, Glorious God, bring light to the darkness of my heart. Give me right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity. God give me insight and wisdom, so that I might always discern your holy and true will.

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The Canticle of the Sun

Most High all-powerful good Lord, Yours are the praises, the honor and all blessing.

To you alone, Most High, do they belong. And no person is worthy to mention you.

Praised be you my Lord, with all your creatures.

Especially Sir Brother Sun, who makes the day and through whom you give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor, and bears the signification of you Most High.

Praised be you my Lord, for Sister Moon and the Stars, You have formed them in heaven, clear, and precious and beautiful.

Praised be you my Lord, for Brother Wind, And for Air: cloudy and serene and every kind of weather, By which you give your creatures sustenance.

Praised be you my Lord, for Brother Fire, By whom you illumine the night, And he is beautiful, cheerful, robust and strong.

Praised be you my Lord, for our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Praised be you my Lord, for those who give pardon for love of you, and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace, For by you Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be you my Lord, for our Sister Bodily Death, From whom no living person can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.

Blessed are those whom death will find in your most holy will, for the second death will do them no harm.

Praise and Bless my Lord, and give God thanks, And serve God with great humility.

