



Missionary Franciscan Sisters

USA Circle Newsletter



Summer Edition 2014

Gathering 2014, April 21-27, 2014
Kennebunkport, Maine



“Among Mother Ignatius’s great virtues was her ability to inspire those around her to do their best...”

Gathered in Kennebunk, Maine as Missionary Franciscan Sisters, faithful women and faithful witnesses in Communion, we began each day of our USA Governance Circle Gathering with the proclamation, “Behold I make all things new!” Surrounded by an atmosphere of contemplation, joy and the beauty of God’s creation, we moved through the week in a rhythm of prayer, silence and work.

During the week our Sister Nancy was called home to God and two of our delegates made trips to the Urgent Care Center, reminders of our fragility and dependence upon God.

We moved with ease through our tasks led by the Spirit and the sense of unity among us. As sisters and followers of Saint Francis, Saint Clare and Elizabeth Hayes, we celebrated our Franciscan vocation.

It has been 120 years since Elizabeth Hayes died, yet her spirit and her commitment to living the Gospel were present among us in Maine and continue to be present in our community.

We are told that “among Mother Ignatius’s great virtues was her ability to inspire those around her to do their best...” Since coming home from the Gathering, it seems that stories of chance meetings with former students, stories of our life together in the past and now abound. Religious life as we knew it has changed and continues to evolve in ways beyond our imagination. However, what we know to be true is that God is alive and that as Missionary Franciscan Sisters we are called to recognize and proclaim God’s presence in all persons we meet, honoring their unique giftedness and inspiring them to do their best!

Gathering 2014 Photo Gallery



St. Francis Academy Named A National Blue Ribbon School



On September 24, 2013, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the names of 286 schools identified by the U.S. Department of Education as the National Blue Ribbon Schools for 2013.

St. Francis Academy was honored with inclusion in this elite group as our standardized test scores in reading and math placed us among the top-performing schools in the nation and the state.

Fifty private schools were among the awardees this year including four Catholic elementary schools from the Archdiocese of Newark. The Council for American Private Education nominates private schools. All winning schools were honored at an awards ceremony November 18 - 19 in Washington D. C. Sr. Dora Sartino, Sr. Una Toomey and Ms. Deborah Savage, principal of St. Francis Academy, attended the ceremony.

“Excellence in education matters, and we should honor the schools that are leading the way to prepare students for success in college and careers,” said Director Duncan. “National Blue Ribbon Schools represent examples of educational excellence, and their work reflects the belief that every child in America deserves a world - class education.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FACULTY AND STUDENTS

OF SAINT FRANCIS ACADEMY !

HONORING SR. ISABELLE LOHAN
AT THE
2014 FRANCISCAN FEDERATION BANQUET



Thomas of Celano describes St. Francis as “friendly in behavior, serene in nature, affable in speech, generous in encouragement, faithful in commitment, tireless in prayer, fervent in everything!” (1Celano 83)

These same words also describe our Sister Isabelle Lohan. In her quiet and unassuming way, Sr. Isabelle has spent more than 50 years “cultivating kingdom power.” As a missionary in Egypt she fostered a sense of community among her students who were both Christian and Muslim. As a member of the formation team in Papua New Guinea she prepared women for mission and ministry. Presently serving a diverse population in Augusta, Georgia, sister is reminded of Jesus’ mandate to the disciples: “Go and teach all nations.” Today she hears Jesus say, “All nations have come to St. Joseph Parish!” Sr. Isabelle truly embodies this year’s theme for the Franciscan Federation Conference: Cultivating Kingdom Power.

VISIT TO ST. CATHERINE'S ISLAND GEORGIA



Bishop Gregory Hartmayer, OFM, Conv. (Bishop of Savannah) invited Julie, Pauline, and Georgette to accompany him and other diocesan staff to visit the oldest church in the diocese on October 14. Others on the expedition to St. Catherine's Island included reporters from the "Savannah Morning News," "Georgia Public Radio" and the "Catholic News Service."

Santa Catalina de Guale mission, located on St. Catherine's Island, an undeveloped barrier island 35 miles south of Savannah, is a 16th century Spanish mission rediscovered by archaeologist Dr. David Hurst Thomas 32 years ago. In 1981 Dr. Thomas, curator with the American Museum of Natural History in New York, discovered the mission site after five years of excavations.

Bishop Hartmayer wanted to see the mission site where fellow Franciscans first brought Christianity to the New World. As Bishop of Savannah, he is now in charge of advancing the cause of the Georgia Martyrs, a cause for beatification of five Spanish friars who were murdered by Indians in 1597. Two of them met their deaths on St. Catherine's, two near present-day Darien and a fifth on St. Simons Island. In March 2007, Fr. Conrad Harkins, OFM, then vice postulator of the cause of the martyrs, took 500 pages of documents that form the case for the cause to the Vatican.

Julie, Pauline and Georgette were thrilled to be a part of the expedition to St Catherine's, and learned that the relationship between the archaeologist and the Catholic Church, begun in the 1980s, will continue. Dr. Thomas explained that because there are no living descendants of the Guale Indians (they became extinct in the 1760s), the Catholic Church is the cultural descendant of the mission.

Julie summed up their adventure on St Catherine's Island by saying, "It was a moving experience to be in touch with great people who are our spiritual ancestors." Pauline captured the experience in this way, "What an unexpected opportunity we had to reflect on the Franciscan charism lived out fully many years before us in Georgia! I couldn't help but think of our own sisters and how fully they lived the charism in their day in the Savannah Diocese, which may have been why the Bishop invited us. May we MFIC's in Georgia today have the good health to continue this great tradition".

During his homily at Mass, Bishop Hartmayer said, "I am sure in the encounter between the Friars and the Native Americans they learned from each other." He linked the Georgia martyrs' evangelization to our "new evangelization" we are called to embrace today.



TENAFLY HAS TALENT



(Quilters: Kathleen Toman, Margaret Gallagher, Estelle, Mairead, Margaret O'Shea, Rosalie, Nora Brick, Helena Walsh, Therese, Walter, Noreen Dennehy, Chris O'Connor, Patricia Kelly, Francoise)

Margaret Gallagher came in March from Ireland to spend a few weeks with the sisters in Tenaflly. She helped out around the house and got involved in art projects with Helena. One project involved making a quilt. Each sister who wanted to participate was given a square of cloth on which to work. When the squares were completed Margaret attached them together to make a larger quilt which was then sent to Florida to help a poor baby. Nancy Bandini, who comes once a month to conduct arts and crafts for the sisters, also embroidered names on the quilt. This was a time for great camaraderie and creativity as well. Many thanks to our dear friend Margaret who traveled so far to be with us again.



" You cannot step twice into the
same river,
for other waters are continually
flowing in."

Heraclitus

Recently, I took a ride past a favorite place which held wonderful childhood memories for me. The place was in the country...then, the only house on the street. The open, well cultivated fields were gone, as having been neglected, nature had taken back her own. The house, while familiar, had an enclosed front porch...so different from the great open porch that we spent so many happy hours playing and sitting on. The pond across the street was not easily accessible any more as the undergrowth had sprouted up and obscured the view. Nash Road now had another resident not too far away. While much still looked the same...so much had changed.

Life is always changing for us. Each one of us can tell a similar story. We can look back at our religious life and it looks very different to us now. Change can be a struggle or an adventure...we can rail against it or we can embrace it...but, surely, we are always moving forward, it is one thing that is a constant in our lives and will continue to be.

If we pay close attention, nature is constantly teaching us...because it is in constant flux...caterpillars into butterflies; nectar into honey; tadpoles into frogs; seeds into flowers and trees and on and on. We are surrounded with change and ever emerging beauty.

The coming years most assuredly will include changes, as we plan for our future and begin to widen our circles of relationships in many areas. However, Col.1:17 tells us that in the midst of all the change around us and within us, we have nothing to fear because Christ "holds all creation together."

Blessings,

Donna