

Reflecting upon
YEARS

Standing with People Who Need Us Most!

he reunited
Franciscan Sisters of
Mary is a religious congregation
of women within the Roman
Catholic Church. Founded in
1872, the Franciscan Sisters of
Mary sponsor the following
ministries: Almost Home,
SSM Health Care, Woman's Place
(St. Louis); co-sponsor Holy
Family Services (Weslaco, TX),
and collaborate with four other
religious congregations of
women in The Sarah
Community.

President:

Jacqueline Motzel, FSM

Councilors:

Judith A. Bell, FSM Sherri Coleman, FSM Joanne Klenke, FSM

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The story of the lamp...

When Mother Odilia and her companions arrived in St. Louis in November of 1872, they had few belongings. After spending two weeks at the Ursuline Convent, they found a second floor attic apartment where they could live in community.

A neighbor lady noticed that in the evening there was no light in the apartment. She picked up a kerosene lamp and brought it to the Sisters. The Sisters were most grateful for this gift.

The lamp became for the Sisters a symbol of their dependence on the goodness of neighbors to carry on their life and mission.

Message From Jacqueline Motzel, FSM, President Franciscan Sisters of Mary



Dear Friends:

In 1872, two cultures collided in a fertile conception that birthed our congregation. The European culture embodied in a handful of passionate women filled with a fiery desire to embrace the reign of God and the American culture that welcomed these immigrant women into its life. With courage and deliberateness, they set about connecting the culture that formed them with the culture that confronted them.

Without resources enough to purchase a small oil lamp for their home or assurance of food for the next meal, their response to seeing their sisters and brothers struggling, suffering and dying was one of generous stewardship. In that early time, they formed community, centered their lives in prayer, read the signs of the time, engaged the culture and sought ways to transform it. These early formative experiences and cultural conditionings continue to weave through our lives and mission today.

They especially come forward at four-year intervals, when representative members of our congregation gather to renew our fidelity to the church; elect new leadership and establish congregational government structures related to current needs that provide opportunity for effective participation and service. This is the year we meet to elect congregational leadership and set directions for 2007-2011. The process concludes in September with the missioning of our sisters who will serve in leadership for the next four years.

For us this is a time of hope – a hope we share with each person who comes into our lives, especially those who are poor and on the margins of society. This is our mission and our life. It is what has changed and transformed us over the years into the women we are today. It is what we recall in this, our anniversary year, as we celebrate 135 years of our original foundation and 20 years of reunification as Franciscan Sisters of Mary.

With grateful hearts, we give witness to the faithfulness of God and rejoice in how truly blessed we are!

Peace and all good,

Jaqueline Matel form

1



Reflecting upon the



"I believe the sisters who immigrated from Germany in 1872 were full of excitement, yet tentative about what might await them upon their arrival in St. Louis. These women had lots of trust in God and solid belief in their vocational call. Aware of many unknowns, including where to live, how to furnish their home, purchase or find food, and yet not focusing on these, they exhibited a genuine compassionate openness to meet the needs of the people wherever they might find themselves or were called forth to minister to others. They lived together and had a healthy interdependence upon each other for support, affirmation, meeting their basic needs while attending to the needs of others."

Sr. Judy

We will introduce you to our new Leadership in the Fall/Winter issue of FSM Magazine.

Our current Leadership is composed of Jacqueline Motzel, FSM, President, and Judith Bell, FSM, Sherri Coleman, FSM and Joanne Klenke, FSM, as Councilors.

We share a few of their thoughts as their terms come to a close.

congregation in its founding years..

"As committed followers of Jesus Christ, Mother Odilia and her companions possessed a keen desire to serve the people of God, especially those who were 'poor and on the margins of society." Because of this commitment, they crossed an ocean, and arrived in America with the grand total of \$5.00 with which to begin their new life and ministry. It is from such a tiny beginning that 135 years later, their ministry lives on through the sisters and collaborators who followed them."

Sr. Joanne

"Our founding sisters lived in community, adapted to a new culture and language, responded to the needs of the people, paid attention to the signs of the time, centered their day in prayer and committed their lives to following Jesus Christ."

Sr. Jacqueline

Mother Odilia and her companions.

and the congregation today...

"Today, the FSM are searching to find deeper meaning of their mission within the Church and among the people served through our sponsored ministries and through the sisters' individual ministries that address the social justice issues of today's society."

Sr. Judy



"We are women committed to Franciscan evangelical life and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We witness by our compassionate presence and welcoming hospitality to a hope-filled future, and are ready to better the lives of our sisters and brothers in need, especially women and children."

Sr. Jacqueline

"The FSM today have a long history of responding to the needs of many. We have defined our focus, in this era of time, to address the many needs of women and children in particular. A few to mention would include homeless teenage mothers and their children, women in abusive/domestic violence situations, health care for all, care for senior members of our society, trafficking and immigration concerns and women incarcerated. We are more conscientiously aware of what it means to live the Gospel striving to incorporate the four principle values of Franciscan Evangelical life - poverty, prayer, humility and conversion - into our daily living. Today the FSM are searching to find deeper meaning of their mission within the Church and among the people served through the sponsored ministries and through the sisters' individual ministries that address the social justice issues of today's society."

Sr. Judy

"While the Franciscan Sisters of Mary enjoy a respected legacy of service in healthcare and nursing education, we, individually, still seek to follow the example of our foundress, Mother Odilia Berger, and respond to the current needs of which we are aware. This is evidenced in the local founding and sponsorship of Women's Place and Almost Home. Sisters pursue a number of ministries that are much needed and wherever we serve, we desire to be a healing, loving and just presence in mutuality with all those we encounter."





CURRENT FSM LEADERSHIP



Jacqueline Motzel, FSM



Sherri Coleman, FSM



Judith Bell, FSM



Joanne Klenke, FSM

it's been gratifying to serve as Leadership over the past six years...

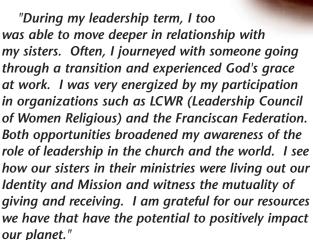
"During my time in the ministry of leadership, opportunities for deeper relationship building with my sisters, being involved in prayer groups, receiving support from my sisters, meeting sisters throughout the United States who also serve their congregations in leadership, serving in local, regional and national organizations relative to religious life and environmental concerns, and coming to an awareness of the heartfelt commitment of many laity who serve on our sponsored ministry boards have been just a few of those gratifying experiences for me.

To experience the communal growth among us and the desire to deepen our call to Franciscan evangelical life is very reassuring and hope-filled amid the uncertainty and chaos of these times for religious life in the United States."

Sr. Judy

"I have experienced both a deepening of relationships with FSMs and broadening of relationships with religious of other congregations and all those who work with them."

Sr. Joanne



Sr. Sherri

"Meaningful experiences for me included companioning others on their faith journey during times of joy and sorrow; witnessing to the Identity and Mission of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and Franciscan evangelical life; bettering the lives of God's people; being centered in daily prayer and scripture; working together to make a difference in the lives of our sisters and brothers, especially those who live on the margins of society."

Sr. Jacqueline



"During the past
23 years, we began
four new ministries.
That's more than in
the previous 112 years!
Countless lives have
been improved,
especially among
women and children."



...with only an occasional disappointment....

"There is always a desire to more evenly distribute the resources of our nation so all peoples have the basics they need to live a productive and satisfying life. For example, no person in our neighborhoods should be without a bed of their own, safe housing, nourishing food, adequate health care and quality education. We need to find new, creative and effective ways to advance the reign of God as related to these critical justice issues."

Sr. Jacqueline

"Disappointments? Probably so! However, my life philosophy is to use negatives or disappointments as stepping-stones for learning. When one takes time to look back over six years, you come to an awareness that "somethings" could have been done differently. However, yesterday is past and today is all that I have and what I've learned from those opportunities, hopefully, I have already transitioned them within the person I am."

Sr. Judy

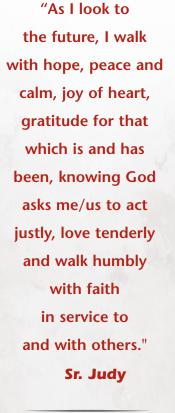
...but with defining times that speak to the future of the congregation....

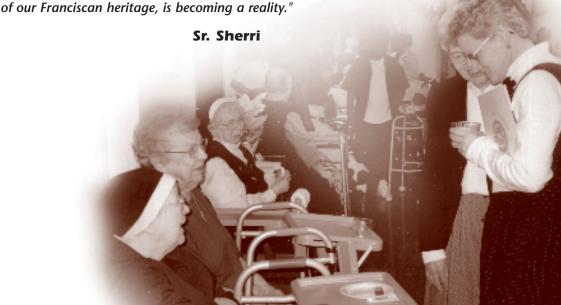
"Our watershed moment came during Assembly 2004 when a planned agenda was replaced with one created by FSM members and leaders that identified significant congregational issues. We continue to address these issues together during annual quarterly gatherings.

These times of working together give hope and vitality to our future. They will continue."

Sr. Jacqueline

"The quarterly gatherings of FSM over the last two years have led us to a moment of mutuality, truth and opportunity. The 52 sisters serving as Chapter members for the 2007 Chapter have been carefully listening to God's call for us and identifying the resources of FSM, which have the potential to be used for all creation. Slowly, surely, the common heart, which is the root





"What has made religious life relevant to the Church and the world has never been about numbers or the form in which it has expressed itself over the past 2000 years. It was and is about unwavering commitment to the Gospel, living in community with others who share this commitment and dedicated service to all the people of God."

Sr. Joanne

...and focus not on numbers but ways to witness....

"Declining membership is an important factor to consider, however, it is not the only factor. What truly diminishes us is diminishment thinking. During the past 23 years, we began four new ministries, which is more than in the previous 112 years! Countless lives have been improved, especially among women and children. To quote anthropologist Margaret Mead: 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has.' We are called to be people of hope and we seek effective and meaningful ways to give witness to this call through our Identity and Mission. We will continue to do that through our lifetime."

Sr. Jacqueline

"As a women religious I am committed to an intimate relationship with God out of which comes a great desire to use my gifts and talents in ways that strengthen and protect all of God's creation. The number of women in our congregation doesn't change that. I am privileged to share my life journey and commitment with FSM as well as women religious from other congregations who offer support, encouragement and companionship."

Sr. Sherri

"For some people, even among religious women and men, the lack of vocations and decline in numbers in our congregations is worrisome. However, when I recall Mother Odilia arriving in the United States with only four companions, she was open to doing God's will and not 'taken up' with only five of them being in St. Louis. Our history demonstrates that these faithful women made differences in many people's lives and were blessed with increased members. I can't get into the 'numbers game'; I believe FSM have a role and mission within the Church and God will sustain that regardless of numbers. If we continue to think only about diminishment of members, rather than how we can best live the Gospel as sister to all, we will become our own self-fulfilling prophecy."

Sr. Judy

...with hope and thankfulness!

"With the new concept of 'federating' being explored among members of the Franciscan Federation, I see vitality blooming with Franciscan congregations. I'm reminded of Jeremiah's words found in Chapter 29, 'For I know the plans I have for you...plans to give you hope and a future...You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart'; and another favorite scripture passage from Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, verses 1-8, 'There is an appointed time and purpose for everything under the heavens...'

And so as I look to the future, I walk with hope, peace and calm, joy of heart, gratitude for that which is and has been, knowing God asks me/us to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with faith in service to and with others."

Sr. Judy

"God is good. God is faithful. We are blessed!"

Sr. Jacqueline



In 2007

we celebrate the **135**th anniversary of the founding of our original congregation.

In 2007

we celebrate the **20**th anniversary of reunification as Franciscan Sisters of Mary.

In 2007 we gathered for Chapter.

Charism

"For the love of God, we choose to live out our call to be the very Presence of the loving, serving, compassionate, healing Jesus among (God's) people."



The primary responsibility of Chapter is to renew the congregation's commitment to its mission in the church.

It also gives direction to the congregation for future planning and elects new leadership for the next four years.

When it is in session, Chapter holds the highest authority within the congregation.

"Chapter is held at regular intervals, to make decisions that enable the group – the Franciscan Sisters of Mary – to be faithful to its purpose and carry out its mission," says

Donna Steinman, FSM

Donna Steinman, FSM. "We elect representative members, according to our constitution, to serve as Chapter members."

"Chapter decisions affect and/or ratify the planning processes of the congregation, but the specifics aren't worked out by the Chapter per se," says Michelle Yates, FSM. "Chapter identifies and discusses, approves or disapproves. The processes are carried out by the leadership team, who are the administrators of the congregation."

"Chapter is a living, continuing process, so it's not always 'starting over'. We hold our charism, our vision, our identity and mission, and our declaration of nonviolence in hand, reconfirming our commitment to them."



Michelle Yates, FSM

"We ask ourselves 'are we doing what we say we're about?'"

"Congregations function best if its members are free to follow the Spirit's lead," suggests Sr. Donna. "While

Vision Statement

As Franciscan evangelical women of the Gospel we embrace our charism to be the presence of the loving, serving, compassionate and healing Jesus.

Transformed and energized, we act in loving and respectful relationship with one nother and with all of God's creation. From a feminist, prophetic stance we promote justice, peace and nonviolence.



The word chapter dates to the eighth century. What we now refer to as Chapter was initially a daily coming together of members of a local monastic religious community to hear a chapter of their Rule read. In time, the gathering place became known as the chapterhouse and the meeting itself came to be called the "chapter".

A couple of centuries later, the term was given to an annual gathering among representative members of large religious orders of men. Seeing the great good that came from these gatherings, the Pope encouraged and promoted them. In 1215, chapters became obligatory upon all religious houses.

For St. Francis, the chapter was a spiritual and fraternal event. As a spiritual event those present were "to treat the things of God"; as a fraternal event it was a time to be reunited with one another, celebrate friendship and rejoice in being called to this particular religious family.

Through the centuries the word "chapter" continues to be used for this significant meeting.

(continued from page 9)

Chapter directions are a means for the congregation to keep to its stated purpose and mission, if a new direction would enhance the life and ministry of the congregation and is not contrary to its basic mission, it could be accepted with appropriate approval."

"Serving as a Chapter member is an exciting but very serious responsibility. Chapter members influence the life and work of the congregation."

Sr. Michelle agrees.

"It's also a little scary and very prayerful," she adds. "As Chapter members we've developed such a feeling of oneness, which has made it especially rewarding."

"Accentuating our sameness keeps us on track. And, while we may not always agree, I think we're listening to each other more, and certainly appreciating our differences as well."

"The spirit lives within us," adds Sr. Donna and Sr. Michelle.

"We know that this is what we are called to do at this time."

Donna Steinman, FSM, and Mary Michelle Yates, FSM, are two of 52 members of the congregation's 2007 Chapter.

Identity & Mission

As Franciscan Sisters of Mary, we live the Gospel as sister to all.

We give our life by being present, hospitable and compassionate, choosing to stand with our sisters and brothers

who are poor and on the margins of society.



Franciscan Sisters of Mary Declaration of Nonviolence

We, the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, live the gospel call to love one another, choosing to be the compassionate, healing presence of Jesus to all, in recognition of the dignity afforded the children of God. We value the sacredness of life and respect the dignity and freedom of each person.

We accept the challenge of the poor calling us to conversion, service and solidarity, we choose an option for the poor knowing full well it requires changes in unjust political, economic and social structure.

We dedicate ourselves to heal the wounded and make decisions in light of what our choices will do to, for and with our brothers and sisters who are poor and marginalized, especially women and children.

We respect, appreciate and live in harmony with creation and direct our actions to preserve the earth.

We further commit ourselves to take corporate and public stands to effect systemic change for the common good based upon our deeply held belief that love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated.

We join and support others who are working for peace and justice.

We commit ourselves to:

- promote the sacredness of life through all its stages and expressions;
- support legislation to curtail the availability of weapons;
- oppose military aggression and the continued build-up of nuclear weapons and promote economic conversion;
- support legislation and other advocacy efforts which provide protection, safety, financial assistance to survivors of domestic violence and child abuse;
- speak out against the use and glorification of violence in our media and culture;
- work for just and human solutions in criminal justice and oppose the death penalty;
- reverse the waste and destruction of our natural environment.

We bless and sanctify these actions as our pledge to transform and renew the world.



Have You Heard

Our Sisters on the Radio?



Since November 2006, several of our sisters have shared thoughts with the St. Louis community on Classic 99 Radio, KFUO FM. Others have listened to the messages by tuning in through the FSM website, where the messages are listed on the lower right of the home page.

At right is a listing of the messages and the sisters who have read them.

We've received a wonderful response to these 60-second messages, as listeners have called us and Classic 99 to say thank you! Also, over the past few months, we have seen a nearly 50% increase in visits to our website, as listeners are encouraged to "visit us at fsmonline.org".

We invite you to
visit us at
www.fsmonline.org
and listen to
our sisters!

(please let us know if you would like a written copy of the messages if you are unable to access our website).



Our best self Vicki Ewers, FSM



He is risen!
Mary Teresa Noth, FSM



Our journey
Donna Marie Steinman, FSM



Live peaceably Jeanne Derer, FSM



People for sale
Mary Ann Linhoff, FSM



Send me! Andre' Evanicsko, FSM



Open your heart Jacinta Elmendorf, FSM



Joyful anticipation! Sherri Coleman, FSM



PresenceMary Joan Meyer, FSM

Visit us at: www.fsmonline.org

Ministry Notes...

Almost Home, St. Louis, recently held it's 14th Annual almost Home Golf Classic. It was a great day of golf! Several members of Almost Home and their children joined golfers for dinner, and talked about their experiences.

If you would like to make a donation to Almost Home, or to learn more about this ministry for teenage mothers and their children, visit www.fsmonline.org and click Ministries.



Holy Family Services, Weslaco, TX, recently invited children and families to a birthday celebration for all who were born at the birth center, which is located ten miles from Mexico in the Rio Grande Valley. Over 500 people enjoyed the day!

Since it's founding in 1983, over six thousand babies have been born at Holy Family Services, and countless families have been served throughout the community. If you would like to offer a gift in support of this ministry or to learn more about it, visit www.fsmonline.org and click Ministries.



SSM Health Care shares its heritage with the Franciscan Sisters of Mary as it too celebrates 135 years of ministry! The mission of SSM Health Care is: Through our exceptional health care services, we reveal the healing presence of God. To learn more about SSM Health Care, visit our website at www.fsmonline.org and click Ministries.

Woman's Place,

St. Louis, recently held its popular Trivia Night. This year's theme was Celebrating our Good Earth! If you did not get to attend, but would like to send a donation, or if you would like to learn more about this ministry which provides a safe place for women who have experienced domestic violence, sexual abuse, or the violence of gender discrimination, visit our website at www.fsmonline.org and click Ministries.





Our Sisters Are in the Spotlight



Big Shoes to fill at Mercy Hospice After 25 years, founder retires

By Johanna D. Wilson,
The Sun News/MyrtleBeachOnline.com

Sister Connie Fahey came to Horry County (South Carolina) 25 years ago dedicated to a vision designed to comfort the dying during their last days.

Mercy Hospice was that conception, and it was birthed in 1981. It gave the sick an alternative: They could die at home, surrounded by loved ones serving as primary caregivers aided by professionals trained in their areas of need.

The work Fahey started will continue and expand under Steve Scoma, assistant executive director of Mercy Hospice, who will take over Fahey's job.

Fahey is credited by Scoma and others for its present progress and future functions of Mercy Hospice.

"She came in at a time when leadership was real critical and going through some transitions in the community and health care system, " Scoma said. "Her leadership navigated us through those times and placed us where the agency is today."

With the backing of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, the Catholic Diocese of Charleston and Bishop Ernest L. Unterkoefler, now deceased, Fahey spearheaded the creation of Mercy Hospice.

"I think her power of leadership is magical," said Sally Z. Hare, distinguished professor emeritus of Coastal Carolina University who turned to Mercy Hospice when her mother suffered with cancer before it took her in 2000. "She has the gift of empowering others to do all they can in being caretakers of the dying."



Sr. Connie Fahey



Sr. Marylu Stueber

Marylu Stueber, FSM, congregational Archivist, has received word that St. Mary's Infirmary is listed on the National Registry for Historical Buildings.



As a Red Cross worker, **Ramona Meurer**, **FSM**, recently ministered in Amarillo, TX, before helping survivors of tornadoes in El Paso, TX.



Sr. Ramona Meurer

FRANCISCAN

SISTERS OF MARY

2007

Jubilarians

50 YEARS

Mary Catherine Ann Dahmen

Cecilia Lackman

Mary Bridgid McNamara

Mary Anne Murphy

60 YEARS

Mary Bernetta Armstrong

Marie Weiss

70 YEARS

Mary Damien Francois

80 YEARS

Mary Louise Mayer

(See our Jubilarians' photos in our Fall/Winter issue of FSM Magazine!)

Sisters of Selma:

Bearing Witness for Change

On March 7, 1965, Alabama state troopers and a sheriff's posse on horseback used clubs and gas to beat back voting rights marchers on the Edmund-Pettus Bridge in Selma. Dozens of people were injured; two were killed. Shown on national television news, the event, which came to be known as "Bloody Sunday," stunned and outraged Americans.

Religious leaders from around the country flocked to Selma to join the march to Montgomery.

"I am here because I am a Negro, a nun, a Catholic, and because I want to bear witness."

Mary Antona Ebo, FSM, a member of the congregation now known as the Franciscan Sisters of Mary, was among that group. Accompanied by Eugene Marie Smith, FSM, (now deceased) and other sisters, priests, ministers and rabbis from



St. Louis, Sr. Mary Antona and the other religious participants made civil rights history. In fact, in describing the involvement of the visiting sisters in the Selma demonstrations, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said their presence "had a special significance because the public know a nun to be a woman of great sacrifice."

Sisters of Selma: Bearing Witness for Change is a one-hour documentary produced by Hartfilms in partnership with Alabama Public Television. It has aired in St. Louis and throughout the country.

"Who knew the historical importance of this march? Now, nearly 50 years after the event, it remains a significant example of advocating for the respect and rights of all persons," explains Sherri Coleman, FSM, Leadership Councilor, Franciscan Sisters of Mary. "Most of us won't be part of seeking justice in a way that will be remembered and referred to repeatedly in the years to come; however, our courageous actions may influence us for the rest of our lives."

You can learn more about the documentary by visiting <u>Home.earthlink.net/~sistersofselma/sos.htm.</u>

If you would like to learn more about the march on Selma and Sr. Mary Antona's participation, please email us at info@fsmonline.org, or call us at 314-768-1824.



Sr. Mary Henrica Strassman

August 14, 1906 - November 3, 2006

Rose Otillia (known as Lillie Rose) Strassmann was born August 14, 1906, in Verona, WI. She was the eighth of ten children born to John Henry and Mary (Strasli) Strassmann. Although when she was younger she wanted to be a teacher, when she later met the Sisters at St. Mary's Hospital, Madison, WI, she realized she wanted to become a nurse.

She entered the congregation now known as the Franciscan Sisters of Mary in 1927, and as a novice was given the name of Sr. Mary Henrica. She professed her final vows in 1933. She became a registered nurse in 1936, with her first assignment in pediatrics at St. Mary's Health Center, St. Louis. She also ministered at St. Mary's Health Center, Jefferson City, St. Mary's Hospital, Kansas City, St. Mary's Hospital, Madison, St. Francis Hospital and Health Center, Blue Island, Mount St. Rose, St. Louis, and St. Joseph Health Center, St. Charles. In 1967, she began to minister as a geriatric nurse at St. Mary's Ringling, Baraboo, until she retired from nursing in 1986.

Sr. Mary Henrica returned to St. Louis from Baraboo in 1988 and continued to enrich the lives of others through her ministry of prayer. She enjoyed watching things grow and flowers blossom; the changing seasons were a delight to her. Sr. Mary Henrica's favorite prayers were the rosary, the memorare and devotion to the Sacred Heart.

In August, 2006, Sr. Henrica celebrated her 100th birthday; 79 of those years were spent in religious community. Her life exemplified love, prayer and service. On November 3, 2006, God called her to a forever home of everlasting joy.

"Sing a New Song."



Sr. Mary Gabriel Henninger

January 16, 1913 - December 22, 2006

Sr. Mary Gabriel expressed her love for the congregation and our foundress, Mother Odilia, as an author and historian. She authored books, pamphlets, historical compilations, songs, and even composed skits and plays.

Philomena Margaret Henninger was born January 16, 1913 in Sharpsburg, PA, the twelfth of thirteen children born to Albert and Wilhelmina (Burkhardt) Henninger. She worked as a secretary and store clerk after she graduated from high school and at one time planned to enter college as an English and History major.

She entered the congregation now known as the Franciscan Sisters of Mary in 1940; Sr. Mary Gabriel professed her final vows in 1947.

She began her ministry as a registered nurse, after graduating from Saint Louis University, serving at the former St. Mary's Infirmary, Mount St. Rose and Firmin Desloge Hospital, all of St. Louis, and at St. Mary's Hospital in Kansas City, MO.

After attending Marquette University's School of Journalism, she began the Odilian Center, an organized Sister-visitor program at SSM St. Mary's Health Center, and also ministered as librarian at St. Mary's Hospital, Kansas City and Mount St. Rose.

Sr. Mary Gabriel enjoyed research, reading, collecting jokes, listening to semi-classical music (especially Perry Como), breeding parakeets and tropical fish.

The meaning of the name Gabriel - God is my strength - was applicable to Sr. Mary Gabriel, as she sought a personal and loving relationship with God.

Called into the silence of the early morning of December 22, 2006, to "Come home for Christmas", Sr. Mary Gabriel responded with the words "My soul rejoices in you my God."

"How great are your works, O God, how very deep are your thoughts."



Sr. Mary Alma ToonNovember 26, 1921 - December 29, 2006

Sr. Mary Alma Toon's religious life was a time of growth, love and healing as she felt the compassionate Jesus walking with her.

Mary Maude Toon, the fifth of fifteen children, was born on November 26, 1921, in Fancy Farm, KY, to Charles Kelvey and Mary Alma (Roberts) Toon. The family faced difficult times but retained a joyful, playful spirit.

She answered an ad for a nurse aid at SSM St. Mary's Health Center, St. Louis, and began working in the serving kitchen on the fourth floor, answering lights and taking care of flowers. Mary Maude liked what she saw in the sisters, and, in particular, Sr. Eleanor Marie Kaminski, who took her under her wing. She entered the congregation now known as the Franciscan Sisters of Mary in 1940, and professed final vows in 1946.

She ministered at St. Francis Hospital and Health Center, Blue Island, IL; SSM St. Joseph Health Center, St. Charles, MO; the former Mount St. Rose, St. Louis, MO; and SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center, before returning to St. Mary of the Angels Convent.

Sr. Mary Alma retained the fun-loving spirit of her family in serving her sisters. By her labors she helped them, providing good humor, singing a tune and enjoying life - all with an ever-ready smile on her face.

In her kindly presence and wisdom, Sr. Mary Alma taught others to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. As God gave her a wisdom given to the gentle of heart, she rejoiced.



Sr. Helen Wyrwich June 14, 1916 - February 12, 2007

Sr. Helen learned the value of working together when her family lost everything in a flood and the children had to find jobs to help the family survive troublesome times. God's strength was always there for her. She enjoyed challenges and was open to life's possiblities.

Helen Adele Wyrwich was born June 14, 1916, to Peter and Catherine Fetsch Wyrwich, in Rhineland, TX. She entered the congregation now known as the Franciscan Sisters of Mary in 1936, and was given the name Sr. Mary Rose Virginia. She resumed the use of her baptismal name of Helen after Vatican II. She made her final vows in 1942.

She ministered as a registered nurse in the operating room and as night supervisor at St. Mary's Ringling Hospital, Baraboo, WI; as obstetric supervisor and head nurse at St. Mary's of the Ozarks, Ironton, MO; in post partum nursing at St. Mary's Hospital, Madison, WI; as night duty nurse at SSM St. Mary's Health Center, St. Louis; and as emergency room supervisor at St. Mary's Health Center, Jefferson City, MO. Sr. Helen cared for patients with tuberculosis at the former Mount St. Rose, St. Louis, served as a patient visitor at SSM St. Joseph's Health Center, St. Charles, MO, ministered as a radiotherapy nurse in a return to SSM St. Mary's, St. Louis; she then became a receptionist for the SSM Information Center until she retired in 1992, becoming part of the FSM intercessory prayer ministry.

Family concerns were always uppermost in Sr. Helen's mind and prayer. She often visited with them when she could, offering a compassionate presence and letting them know she loved them.

Confident of God's love, Sr. Helen could move forward in life with faith in God to guide her ways. The gift of eternal life was given to Sr. Helen on February 12, 2007, when God helped her untie the ribbons of life by which she had been bound, to receive the promise of God's everlasting love.

[&]quot;I am your disciple."

[&]quot;In God is my Joy."

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