



Welcome to our Spring issue!

We hope you enjoy reading this robust edition, featuring submissions from our member communities. Some commemorate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi's "The Canticle of the Creatures" by describing ways their communities express God's abundant glory and blessings through sustainable practices, care of creation and advocacy for the dignity of all people. We invite you to take a moment to read "The Canticle" and then reflect on how Francis' prayer remains fresh, living and active today through the holy women and men who carry on his ministry and radical love in the world.

The Canticle of the Creatures

St. Francis of Assisi, 1225

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessing, To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no human is worthy to mention Your name. Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, Who is the day and through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful. Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather, through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night, and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong. Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs. Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation. Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned. Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no one living 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 shall do them no harm. Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility. ☪

A sustainable, charism-based collaborative repository
for the combined archival collections of Franciscan entities across the United States.

Our Common Home

Wheaton Franciscan Sisters strive to protect God’s creation



Wheaton campus



Cosmic Walk



Solar panels



Native prairie

by Kevin Korst, Archivist
Wheaton Franciscans
(Wheaton, Illinois)

Encompassing more than 60 acres, the Wheaton Franciscan Motherhouse and its surrounding property have been the heart of the community since the Sisters moved there in 1947. While the Wheaton Franciscans have used the land to develop impactful ministries – including low-income housing, a physical rehabilitation facility, and residences for HIV/AIDS patients – there also has been an emphasis on preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the campus.

Over time, this Franciscan love for God’s creation has manifested and evolved in abundant ways. Beginning in the early 1990s, staff from Buildings and Grounds began the process of converting large sections of the back into native prairie. In addition,

several miles of walking trails, known as the Peace Path, were installed. Other notable projects include planting a pine grove and numerous other trees, adding bee hives, installing solar panels on the Motherhouse, and constructing a meditation garden. There also has been a concerted effort to recognize Native Americans, primarily the Potawatomi, who once inhabited the local area.

Today, the Wheaton Franciscan Campus stands as an example of how humanity can both thoughtfully utilize and preserve the world’s vast natural resources. Each year, thousands of nearby residents, patients and visitors find peace and healing through its idyllic settings. In a time of accelerating climate change and America’s retreat from positive global leadership, this message of hope and possibility is now more important than ever. ♻️



Peace Path

Researcher incorporates Allegany archival finds in online talk



View Dr. Luzarraga's presentation at this link:

www.tinyurl.com/Luzarraga

Passcode: 8C=V4jXe

by Anne Holliday, Communications Coordinator, and Ellen Winger, Archivist, *Franciscan Sisters of Allegany (New York)*

In February, the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany hosted Dr. Ramon Luzarraga, associate professor of theology and religious studies at St. Martin's University in Lacey, Washington. He and Dr. Anna Perkins of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica are co-authoring a book on post-colonial Catholic theology in the Caribbean.

The Allegany Franciscans were the first American-founded congregation of women religious to administer a mission outside of the United States. They have served in Jamaica since 1879.

Dr. Luzarraga spent the week researching the Allegany

Franciscans' mission publication, *ZEAL*, as well as the general Jamaica historical collection. One facet of his research concentrates on how orders presented their mission plans to their donors versus the people they pastored.

"The Allegany Franciscans did a very good job of presenting the same face to all sides," he said.

He also was researching how the Sisters worked with local governments and church leadership, and how Caribbean theology responded to the missions.

Looking through the archives allowed him to find "first-person voices from people who worked on the ground."

Dr. Luzarraga continued his research in March at the Allegany Franciscans' small archive at Immaculate Conception Convent in Kingston, Jamaica.

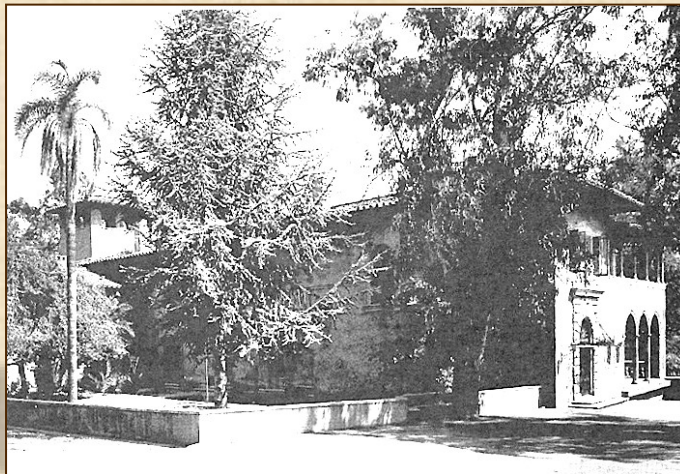
On Feb. 16, Dr. Luzarraga gave an online presentation to the American Catholic Historical Society, in which he talked about U.S. Missionaries in the Caribbean. His presentation featured materials from several collections, including those of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, and is a wonderful example of how archives can enrich scholarship. [↗](#)



ZEAL originated in 1952 as a bi-monthly magazine, recounting the experiences of the Sisters at home and abroad. Initially available by subscription, ZEAL changed to an advertising magazine in 1985. Today, ZEAL is an annual publication featuring stories of impact from the Sisters' ministries. From the beginning, the Sisters and staff used their on-site printing press, camera and darkroom equipment to create and publish each issue (see photos above).

“No strangers to adversity and resilience”

California fires inspire mobilized response through generations



Sierra Madre Motherhouse (1942)

by Melissa Martin, Archivist *Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, St. Francis Province (Redwood City, California)*

A native Californian from the Central Valley, I have always enjoyed our warm and bountiful summers. It's very difficult, therefore, to settle with the fact that fires and drought continue to ravage our state. I feel grateful that I am part of a community of Franciscan Sisters who are no strangers to adversity and resilience.

In early February, the Eaton fire swept through Altadena and surrounding areas in southern California, including Sierra Madre. This is near where our Sisters, in 1938, established a convent, school and teaching college after leaving the first motherhouse at Monrovia.

Just 15 years after settling the convent, on Dec. 27, 1953, in the nearby mountain range, fire erupted and came within three blocks of the Sierra Madre property. Sisters mobilized and helped prevent the fire from reaching the buildings. For more than a week, the fire ravaged. Today, the property is the site of Alverno Heights Academy, a Catholic

elementary and middle school. The school community was also on high alert during this year's Eaton fire, and luckily only a small portion of their vegetation sustained damage.

Unfortunately, the Eaton fire did affect some family members of our Sister Linda Gonzalez.

“My nephew, Steven, was terrified for his and his wife's lives. They got out with just the clothes on their backs. They are now trying to figure out what needs to be done to replace their home. My niece, Candy, and her family were displaced from their home for two to three months, living in motels until the fire department said it was safe to return. They are still in the process of cleaning up. This has been extremely difficult as well as costly for their families.” ∞





Sister Mary Catherine Raymond finds joy tending to nature at Stella Niagara.



Sister Alice Metzger enjoyed her coffee in the midst of God's creation on the farm.



Sister Karen Allen's love for conservation was integral to her life for 97 years.

Sisters' spirituality, action emphasize conservation, care for creation

Submitted by Sister Mary Serbacki, Archivist
Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity,
Holy Name Province (Stella Niagara, New York)



During this 800th anniversary of Francis' Canticle, it seemed fitting to bring a story out of the archives and onto the pages of *Troubadour*. Originally written by Sister Teresa Miklitsch for the July 2023 issue of *Glance*, the congregation newsletter of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, the story below is adapted for this publication.

For many of our Sisters, a relationship with Mother Earth is one lived out every day in conservation and care for all of God's creatures. For three Sisters in particular it was part of their daily spirituality and actions.

Sisters Mary Catherine Raymond and Alice Metzger lived out a sustainability charism for several years on a farm in southeastern Ohio. They were beekeepers for 35 years and, as farmers, they understood the necessity of crop rotation for soil and plants. They used natural insect repellents, and their gardens and the wildlife were protected from harmful chemicals. Composting was a natural habit of their chosen lifestyle, and use of rain barrels became common for watering plants and other needs.

On the grounds of the Motherhouse at Stella Niagara, New York, Sister Karen Allen introduced composting and conservation, now a major part of our daily rituals and commitment to sustainability. Leading by example, these Sisters also made bird feeders, planted flowers and trees, reduced, reused, and recycled. They prayed that our planet and all of the cosmos will continue to benefit from our practices.



Since the publication of the original article,
two of our Earth Mothers have died:
Sister Karen in July 2024 and Sister Alice in March 2025.
"Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Death." 🌱

"Praise be to you, my Lord.' In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. 'Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.'" (Laudato Si 1)

My Hebron Trip

One for my archives



"I am at home with all people and, when separated by distance and language, my personal memory archives serve to keep my hope and love alive." — Sister Kathie (third from right)

by Sister Kathie Uhler *Franciscan Sisters of Allegany (New York)*

This past November, I was given a rare opportunity to visit the Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in Hebron in the Israeli Occupied Territory of the West Bank. I served on the Hebron Team for six years in the 2000s and grew to know and love many of the Palestinian Muslims there. With the Gaza uprising and expanding war, my prayers for them were not enough; I needed to have physical assurance of their well-being. At CPT's invitation, five of us from the U.S. formed a group through Zoom meetings and traveled to Hebron to stay with the Team from Nov. 7-17, 2024.

To exemplify the horror, yet hope, of what I experienced, I will tell of our visit with a Palestinian Muslim who is a nonviolent peace activist: Issa Amro, "the real deal," as I always knew him. The motivation for Issa's life of sacrifice is expressed in the words of the former Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah: *"The international community must help us by recognizing that the root cause of this war is the negation of the right of the Palestinian people to live in its land, free and equal."* (America, Oct. 7, 2024)

Making our way to Issa's house was itself an ordeal: an Israeli soldier denied our travel on a paved road. Instead, we trekked a mile or more up a very rocky path where, in spite of two guys from the group holding my hands, I got winded and everyone had to stop. Our




Issa Amro

view, which overlooked the valley and its ancient olive trees, was wonderful.

Issa lives in a house formerly owned by Israeli settlers. (N.B. By the 4th Geneva Convention, that Israel signed, it is unlawful for a country to occupy another, except very briefly. Israel's occupation of Palestine is the longest in history – since the "67 War.") Through a third party, Issa obtained occupancy. He is surrounded on every side by settlers and his every movement is monitored by cameras designed to keep him on edge. Issa's very presence is a courageous act of nonviolent resistance. He has been dragged out of the house at times by soldiers, beaten and tortured, leaving his right arm in pieces and partly immobilized. When arrested, he does not enter a plea deal but goes all the way to trial in the Israeli court, with sympathetic Israeli lawyers, I might add. Issa has not won many trials but, as he says, his international reputation is his best protection. Media all over the world feature stories and photos of him.

Issa talked about his willingness to be arrested, detained, even killed for the work of freedom.

"The threats do not deter me," he says. He speaks of being on the right side of history, for the long term, and about power, not by soldiers, or guns, or checkpoints, but by "a deep moral conviction of the unwavering dignity and unshakable belief in freedom." 



by Sara Woelfel, Archivist Assistant *Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi (St. Francis, Wisconsin)*

Lake Franciscans restore forest



to its ancestral identity

The windows of St. Francis Convent frame glorious views of Lake Michigan – daily sunrises, moody gales, tranquil stillness, and seasonal colors. The splendor of this happily situated home is among the greatest treasures of The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi and they recognize their privilege and responsibility to tend it well.

Since the foundresses first set foot on their Wisconsin land in 1849, generations have cultivated each acre with devotion. That care continues to this day with renewed insights from a 2009 environmental assessment. The resulting report led to Earth Echoes, a plan to increase the biodiversity of natural systems, adapt land practices to climate change, pursue sustainable water and energy use, and exercise mindfulness in consuming resources. With the help of local experts, organizations, volunteers, and grant funds, the

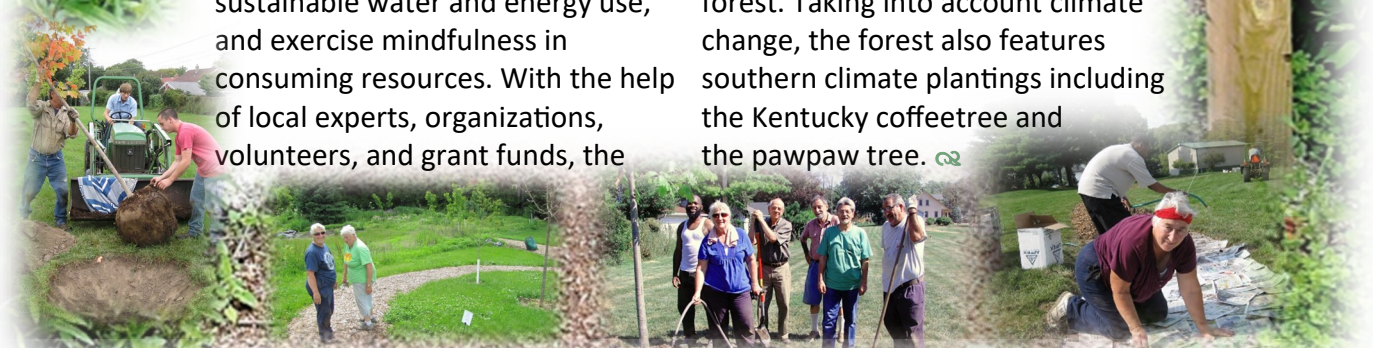
Sisters brought greater intention to maintaining the land “in a mindful, natural, and spiritual way” to be a model for sustainable urban land use that will leave a legacy for future generations.

One flourishing development is the Urban Forest. Evolving in stages since 2012, this corridor from the adjacent Seminary Woods to

Lake Michigan provides habitats for birds, insects and mammals; includes plantings that remove carbon dioxide from the air while adding oxygen; and

nurtures the soil to become more porous, allowing rainfall to seep downward and replenish the water table. Located on land previously used for an athletic field, the Urban Forest plantings restored the site to its ancestral identity as part of the Lake Michigan coastal forest. Taking into account climate change, the forest also features southern climate plantings including the Kentucky coffeetree and the pawpaw tree. ♻️

A May 20 news broadcast featured the Sisters' beehives, another expression of their care for creation: www.tinyurl.com/OSFbees



Adapted with permission from the Spring/Summer 2025 issue of *Troubadour* of The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi

National media share Sisters' reactions to Pope Leo XIV

International gathering of women religious places American Sisters at the scene of historic election

Approximately 900 general superiors of congregations of women religious gathered in Rome May 5-9 for the triennial plenary assembly of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG). By God's providence, this gathering that only happens every three years overlapped with the historic papal conclave just blocks away.

When the white smoke erupted from the Vatican chimney at 6:07 p.m. on May 8, the UISG sessions had ended for the day and Sister Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, director of the




Sisters Sue Ernster and Joanne Schatzlein at UISG

Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi of St. Francis, Wis., and Sister Sue Ernster, president of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse, Wis., found themselves in St. Peter's

Square in time for the announcement of the first American pope, Leo XIV.

Later that evening, as they dined at an outdoor café table, they caught the attention of ABC World News Tonight Anchor David Muir and his crew. The resulting interview with Sisters Joanne and Sue aired on a May 9 special edition of 20/20 titled

“The American Pope: Leo XIV.”

In addition, the *Global Sisters Report* interviewed the two Sisters and included their commentary in the May 12 article [“Sisters at UISG celebrate Pope Leo XIV, friend to women religious.”](#) 



David Muir (left): “Outside a café, we met Franciscan sisters from the U.S. – Joanne Schatzlein (right) and Sue Ernster (second from right) – from Wisconsin. ‘I’m just curious what you make of the history of this moment.’”

Schatzlein: “Incredible. It’s incredible. I think we’re still just in shock. And I think we’ve been looking for some way to explain how to go home and bring some hope to the people that are being left out of our system right now as an American. And we find that the election of the first American pope is just unbelievable. And he’s a good man.”

Muir: “There’s been so much talk for so long that there would never be a pope from the United States. Do you think inside the conclave in the chapel they actually thought an American voice in this moment might be of value?”

Ernster: “I think the Holy Spirit was definitely at work in this election.” **Muir**: “How so?”

Ernster: “The Holy Spirit knows what is needed at this time to be most effective in the world.”

- Interview excerpt from ABC 20/20 special edition “The American Pope: Leo XIV”

Truth, Justice & Healing: FSPA meets with Bad River Band

by Meg Paulino, Archivist *Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (La Crosse, Wisconsin)*



Sister Georgia Christensen is pictured with the Peter Whitebird paintings that FSPA repatriated to the tribe in 2022.

Continuing to learn and understand the impact of their former Native American school is part of the Truth, Justice & Healing ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), La Crosse Wisconsin.

Sister Georgia Christiansen and I traveled to Odanah, Wisconsin, where from 1883 to 1969 our community operated St. Mary's Indian Boarding School. The trip included a visit to Moka'aangiizis-iban Bad River Tribal Museum and Historical Center, where we were surprised to see a display from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) project led by our Sister Macaria Murphy. Her work helped preserve significant aspects of the tribe's ancient culture, including the construction of a birch bark canoe and the harvesting of wild rice. The exhibit was profoundly moving and brought us to tears.

We also attended the Repatriation Committee's monthly meeting, where we shared important tribal land agreements from the 1800s, maps, and flooding information relevant to ongoing discussions. The conversations were deep and meaningful. Sister Georgia's organically beautiful and heartfelt apology to the committee was well received. We hope to continue building this relationship as we work to better understand the complex connection between St. Mary's and the tribe. 🌿

FCA welcomes inquiries, is open to new member communities

The Franciscan Central Archive board is in conversation with several communities of women religious who are interested in learning more about the collaborative, the benefits of the charism-based approach and the process for joining. Established in 2018, the current partner communities include:

- 1 Franciscan Sisters of Allegany
- 2 Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
- 3 Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester
- 4 Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi
- 5 Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate
- 6 Wheaton Franciscans



Sisters of St. Francis of Penance & Christian Charity

- 7 Holy Name Province
- 8 Sacred Heart Province
- 9 St. Francis Province

The latest FCA news & announcements by Holly Fiedler, President, FCA

Repository site discernment

This is a pivotal year for the FCA as we are in the process of determining the site for our future repository. The FCA is an interested party of the Chicago Collaborative Archive Center (CCAC) with the Order of Friars Minor, Our Lady of Guadalupe Archives and Library (combined six U.S. provinces); the McGreal Center at Dominican University; and Preservation Chicago. The CCAC's primary focus is on two downtown Chicago sites. However, there now are two additional sites under consideration. These are religious-owned properties – one in Illinois and one in Wisconsin. Financial considerations and benefits for each site are being compiled and will be presented at an August meeting of FCA community leadership. The FCA intends to determine the future repository site by early 2026 so we can initiate a capital campaign and move toward making our physical repository a reality!



Memorandum of Understanding

The FCA is taking many steps to formalize and grow as an organization. We are grateful for the active participation of our member communities. Shortly, the board will reach out to each community's leadership to hold Memorandum of Understanding meetings. The board appreciates the work of the Archives Committee and our lawyer in drafting this document.



Grant applications

The FCA and the Franciscan Forum have been working on various archival projects during this past year. We have been awarded another Academy of American Franciscan History (AAFH) grant to continue advocacy and assistance efforts for Franciscan archives and to initiate a multi-year project to build a Franciscan database, starting with the creation of a Franciscan directory. We are fortunate Dr. Denise Gallo agreed to perform the research and initial compilation of the directory. In addition, the FCA and Franciscan Forum are preparing project descriptions and will be applying in August for a "Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices" grant administered by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR). If you have a Franciscan collection that could benefit from being part of this grant application, please reach out to the FCA.



Franciscan Federation presentation

On April 23, the FCA accepted an invitation to speak at the Franciscan Federation's presentation for the Convocation of Canonical Leaders meeting moderated by Sister Janet Gardner, OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Providence of God. Veronica Buchanan, ACWR executive secretary and FCA secretary, spoke of the canonical and historical value of congregational archives and current efforts by ACWR and various collaborative archive initiatives to preserve and share these collections. FCA President Holly Fiedler discussed the FCA's services, unique attributes, planned facility, and funding. Sister Sue Artone-Fricke, OSF, provincial minister, Sacred Heart Province, Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, provided leadership perspective and explained why her community chose the FCA. The presentation also included additional leadership statements as well as a recording of Sister Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, director, Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. The FCA extends sincere thanks to each of the leaders who contributed to this presentation.



Mission Statement:

The Franciscan Central Archive (FCA) preserves, protects, and provides access to the records of its Franciscan entities for the purposes of research and knowledge through a collaborative repository that will carry the Franciscan charism and legacy into the future.

We recognize the urgency for Franciscan congregations to find permanent repositories for their archives that will safeguard the community's charism and legacy for future generations. The Franciscan Central Archive will be a physical center, following national archival standards, with a reading room, exhibition space, lecture hall, and robust virtual presence. Researchers will be able to study congregational ministries, shared vocations, and Franciscan charism across the collections. The FCA will be supported by charism-based educational programs and social engagement to ensure its members' legacies are carried into the future. Participation is open to Franciscan communities and organizations.

Services and Initiatives

- Provide guidance and resources concerning archives
- Assist leadership with hiring or contracting archivists
- Guide needs assessment and strategic planning for members and FCA
- Assist members to prepare their archives for transfer
- Seek grants and donations to assist members and reduce costs
- Enable donor development and gift campaign to support efforts
- Initiate agreements for members
- Facilitate move of members' archives to the FCA
- Promote and increase accessibility to FCA collections, bringing forth the shared Franciscan spirit

Volunteers and Funding

- Funding is dependent upon grants, donations, legacy gifts, and participating member contributions. We need your help to see FCA through next steps and into the future.
- Volunteer assistance is welcome for grant writing, development, fundraising, administrative tasks, and other projects.



PURPOSE

History & Memory
Knowledge



GOALS

Preserve
Inform & Connect
Foster Collaboration
Engage & Inspire



VALUES

Responsible Stewardship
Integrity & Accountability
Professional Service
Sustainability



Executive Board

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Holly Fiedler

Vice President:

Sister Celia Struck, OSF

Secretary:

Veronica Buchanan

Treasurer:

Sister Mary Serbacki, OSF

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