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*A*nnouncing... **The site for the future FCA facility!**

The Board is pleased to announce that we will be purchasing land in Frankfort, Illinois, from the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart for the future home for the FCA!

Join us for a webinar on **November 5th at 3 p.m. ET** for interested **Franciscan entities** (congregations, colleges, universities, secular, related ministries, etc.) that may need assistance with their archive and/or a future home for their archives. We will be sharing our vision, services, and plans, followed by discussion. To register please follow this **LINK**.



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

Site decision comes after years of discernment

by Holly Fiedler  FCA Board President

In 2017, Franciscan Federation President Kathie Uhler, OSF, sent a letter to Third Order Regular U.S.A. leadership requesting a nationwide discussion about the future of Franciscan archival holdings. A working group of archivists and leaders came together. Those meetings led to the formation of the Franciscan Central Archive Initiative (FCA).

By 2020, the FCA began reviewing repository options and joined the Chicago Collaborative Archive Center (CCAC). Through 2025, the CCAC explored several different sites. This included supporting the landmarking of a site while working with a developer on a formal proposal. The proposal was under review with the General Services Administration when the process halted with the new administration. Another potential building was coming to auction, but the developer was not ready to move forward given its current projects and not enough committed parties to meet the deadline. The CCAC is now focusing on programming and services for archives until a viable facility is available.

In 2024, the FCA Board committed to its Council of Partners that they would have a site determined by 2026. Since the start of this year, the FCA leadership has been in meetings and had site visits for its future facility. On August 11, the FCA board invited leaders of the partners to a meeting in Atlanta at the **Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus** where the sites were presented. Discussions followed and the leadership teams submitted feedback.

Today, we are assisting various Franciscan entities, including universities and, thus far, the FCA has 10 partners whose archival collections will be held within our future facility:

- ◇ Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity
 - Holy Name Province, Stella Niagara, NY
 - Sacred Heart Province, Denver, CO
 - St. Francis Province, Redwood City, CA
- ◇ Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY
- ◇ Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, MN
- ◇ Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, WI
- ◇ Wheaton Franciscan Sisters, Wheaton, IL
- ◇ Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, IL
- ◇ Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, La Crosse, WI
- ◇ Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, Lemont, IL



Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus



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.

Art in the Archive

Sister Kay Francis Berger



by Elizabeth Piskorski, Archivist

Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate (Joliet, IL)

The Joliet Franciscans have long expressed their dedication to God through art. One such artist who continues to inspire the congregation and beyond is the Joliet Franciscans' very own Artist Laureate, Sister Kay Francis Berger.

Sister Kay Francis sought out the Joliet Franciscans in 1976 when she had "a profound sense that her vocation was evolving. Conscious of the God-given artistic abilities she had received, she discerned that she was being called to devote herself single-heartedly to participate in God's mission as a Franciscan artist," per her Alleluia letter. Indeed, the Joliet Franciscans see the individual gifts of each Sister as a blessing from God, and Sister Kay Francis's artistic gifts were welcomed.

She primarily worked with sculpture, pencil and paper, and

watercolor in her studio "The Canticle," but never stopped experimenting with new techniques. Sister Kay Francis grew to know St. Francis deeply through sculpture. While working on his likeness in the studio, she often called

"My interpretation strives to express strength and ruggedness as well as serenity in a person totally immersed in the love of God."

him "Frankie," recalls Sister Marianne Saieg. Through art, St. Francis and St. Clare became her companions on the Franciscan journey.

"My interpretation strives to express strength and ruggedness as well as serenity in a person totally immersed in the love of God," said Sister Kay Francis of her portrayals of St. Francis which are specific and recognizable to those who know her work.

Sister Kay Francis's creations are ubiquitous in the Franciscan world. They are in congregations across the United States. Even in Assisi one may stumble on her murals or art in a church. Because of Sister Kay Francis's generosity in spreading her works, the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate are still tracking down the many gifts she shared. Through the process of archiving and inventorying Sister Kay Francis's art, the Joliet Franciscans are ensuring that her gift for sharing the image and faith of St. Francis reaches far into the future. ☪



My worldwide ministry with Franciscans International at the UN

by Sister Kathie Uhler, OSF 

Franciscan Sisters of Allegany (Allegany, NY)

When I first heard of Franciscans International (FI), it was love at first sight! This romance started in the early 1980s when a committee of the three branches of the Franciscan Family evolved the idea of FI into a non-governmental organization (NGO). FI would provide a voice for Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi at the United Nations (U.N.).

Kevin Smith, OSF, opened the FI office in 1990, serving as the first director. At that time there were some 1.2 million Franciscans worldwide. Our voice was trusted because we established an 800-year tradition of direct service to the poor, the practice of nonviolence, and care for the Earth as our Sister and Mother.

“What took you so long to get here?” the U.N. Assistant Secretary-General asked Brother Kevin.


He then hired me as assistant director in 1993. The next year, with his blessing, I began forming an FI international delegation to attend the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in August 1995.

Earlier that summer, the U.N. granted FI the most comprehensive NGO status: Category I, with the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (*see photo*). At the time, FI was only the 43rd of 1,700 NGOs granted that status. This status came with benefits, including FI having the privilege of making oral and written statements in ECOSOC sessions and contributing to agendas.

1993-2001 2008-2011



Franciscans International Co-Directors Kathie Uhler and Ignacio (Iggy) Harding, caught in a reflective mood during the U.N. Commission for Social Development. (c. April 1997. From the *FI Quarterly Newsletter*, 1997 / 4.)

Over the years, with co-director Ignacio Harding, OFM, I led other FI delegations to U.N. conferences in Japan, Australia, Mexico, The Hague, and New York City. In 1999 I served as Secretary General for the U.N. People's Peace Conference. Because U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan mandated this conference, it had the distinction of being held in the U.N. General Assembly Hall in New York. 



FCA Connection

When Sister Kathie moved on from FI in 2001, Sister Florence Deacon, OSF, became director from 2001-2005, helping to carry on the work Sister Kathie initiated in her early years in FI leadership.

This is one of many special connections among our FCA partners. Read the story on page 5 for more on Sister Florence's justice work.

"You have been places I could never go, and have seen things I could never see."



Global justice work inspired by the Signs of the Times

I've had a knife pulled on me, a gun aimed at me, and artillery shells falling around me as I huddled in a Middle Eastern air-raid shelter. My passport stamps span five continents where I was feted by diplomats and pursued by journalists. I've met and learned from the movers and the shakers...and from those who were moved and shaken.

As part of a community of women religious that sent Sisters to stand in solidarity against racism with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and to advocate for farmworkers and participate in grape boycotts alongside Cesar Chavez, I have lived my vocation most fully when immersed in social justice advocacy around the world. Whether working to eradicate poverty, championing women's rights, or joining peacemaking efforts, these experiences helped me read and respond to "the signs of the times" with a freedom emboldened by my Sisters who said "yes" time and again to my international leadership roles, service and educational opportunities, and far-reaching travels.

Starting with my first trip abroad when I met with Yasser Arafat during a clandestine middle-of-the-night meeting, I look back and consider the

providential ways God has given me access to the private lives of people in need, encounters with influential leaders with the power to make substantive change, and a voice to use my international platforms to bring awareness to injustices at home and abroad, in the Church and in wider society. After a long conversation with a United Nations expert years ago, he summed it up well, "You have been places I could never go, and have seen things I could never see."

My life as a woman religious has been expansive and, at times, downright unbelievable. I pray God continues to move my heart and raise my voice to create a more just and peaceful world. ☪



by Sister Florence Deacon, OSF ☪ Director
Office of Justice, Peace & the Integrity of Creation
Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi (St. Francis, Wisconsin)



An expert in history, politics, women's studies, and global issues, Sister Florence Deacon has worked as a middle-school teacher, a university professor, Franciscans International director, LCWR president, an OSF congregation director, and a justice and peace coordinator.

Meeting the Needs of the Times Canticle Place and the HIV/AIDS epidemic

Canticle Place, circa 1997



by Kevin Korst, Archivist ☞ *Wheaton Franciscan Sisters (Wheaton, IL)*

By 1990, more than 100,000 Americans had died of HIV/AIDS-related causes, with the toll continuing to climb throughout that decade. Across the country, many cared for the sick and dying while raising awareness of the disease. Patients, often stigmatized and ostracized, found it difficult to obtain treatment, work, and affordable housing. Recognizing these needs, in 1992 the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters began developing plans for housing dedicated to those living with HIV/AIDS.

Spearheaded by Sisters Pat Norton and Alice Drewek, the project, later named Canticle Place, faced challenges on the road to completion. As development progressed, the Sisters found that some nearby residents hesitated to support the ministry, while others, gripped by fear, were

openly hostile. Even so, plans moved ahead. In 1994 the Sisters received approval to build a structure on the Wheaton Franciscan campus. One year later they broke ground and the facility formally opened its doors in December 1996.

Today Canticle Place is run by Mercy Housing and features 12 independent living units. A testament to the compassion and dedication of the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters, it is the first and only housing facility in DuPage County, Illinois, devoted to meeting the needs of persons with HIV/AIDS. Although life expectancy has climbed dramatically over the last 20 years, more than one million Americans live with this devastating disease. Canticle Place not only met the urgent needs of the time, it endures as a lasting model of compassionate housing. ☞

August 1995 Groundbreaking Ceremony

Sister Alice Drewek (at podium), Sisters Pat Norton and Mary Ellen McAleese (far right)




December 1996 Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

(Left to right) Sisters Mary Ellen McAleese, Pat Norton, Alice Drewek



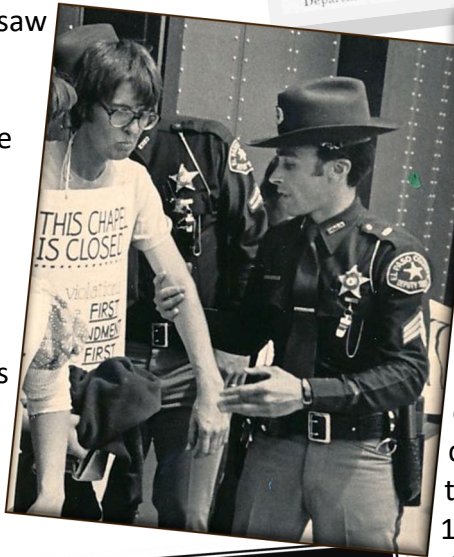
Gospel Imperative to Act: Sister Marie Nord

by Sister Marisa McDonald, OSF,  Archivist, Councilor
Sisters of St. Francis (Rochester, MN)

A biology teacher in early religious life, Rochester Franciscan Sister Marie Nord, OSF, walked a diverse path of activism for causes dear to her heart, such as the climate and unjust systems of oppression. She became a social justice coordinator for her congregation, protested nuclear weapons, and gardened organically.

What led her on this path to activism? Was it an early sense of outrage as she saw

a first-grade classmate of a different culture teased? Maybe that helped spark her advocacy, but Sister Marie also offered this motivation: “When teaching biology and science you run into a lot of the problems of environmental concerns. I started looking into causes.” In particular, she wanted to be part of the anti-nuclear movement, because “if we didn’t resolve the nuclear issue,



**“I CAN’T BE SILENT.”
SISTER MARIE NORD**




OFFENSE:	Criminal Mischief (Class IV Felony)	EDUCATION:	B.S. Degree
PLEA OR CONVICTION:	Found guilty jury trial	OCCUPATION:	Peace Activist and Laborer
		FINANCIAL:	Poor

we didn’t need to worry about any other problems.” Sister Marie engaged in civil disobedience in the late 1970s and 1980s at Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant , the U.S. Air Force Academy, and other locations. Authorities arrested her a few times, and she served a six-month stint in a federal prison.

“I can’t be silent,” Sister Marie said,

spurred by “Church in the Modern World,” a 1965 Vatican document that states, “Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and humanity...”.

While still believing strongly in anti-nuclear causes, Sister Marie refocused on connecting with the Earth as an organic farmer in New Mexico. Ever a teacher, she sought opportunities to raise awareness about the fragility of the planet and the steps individuals can take to protect it.

Though she died tragically in a car accident, Sister Marie’s voice still echoes in our time. If she were here today, what might she say to us? 

FCA summer advocacy efforts create connections

by Holly Fiedler  FCA Board President



This summer has been a flurry of activity! In addition to the day-to-day work of the FCA, we had several opportunities to join colleagues from around the country to learn, share and spread the good news about the momentum that's building as we undertook the important work of discerning our FCA site. We are energized for our next big steps forward And wanted to share some details about our summer travels and engagements.

In early June, the FCA was represented at the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (AFCU) Symposium 2025, held on the beautiful campus of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration's Viterbo University, **La Crosse, Wisconsin**. The university administration and staff warmly welcomed attendees and were generous hosts.

Keynote speakers included The Very Reverend Michael A. Perry, OFM; Sister Ilia Delio, OSF; and conservation biologist Curt Meine. Veronica Buchanan and I advocated for the FCA and archival preservation through rich conversation at our vendor table. Highlights included listening to the speakers, sharing meals with other attendees, and the following: **"Continuing Catholic Identity with an Ecclesial Public Juridic Person (PJP),"** presented by Joe Kruse, Sister Helen Elsbernd, FSPA, and Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA; **"A Contemplative Experience of the Canticle from a Pilgrim's Lens,"** presented by Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF FSSH; and Sister Thea Bowman, FSPA, Night with a Mary of the Angels Chapel tour, dinner, and Sister Thea documentary and panel.

Throughout, we enjoyed spending time with FSPA sisters, especially Sisters Sue Ernster and Georgia Christensen, and their archivist, Meg Paulino! We came away feeling invigorated and look forward to growing relationships with several of our new contacts.

SUMMER ADVOCACY continued on page 8 ...



Mary of the Angels Chapel



... SUMMER ADVOCACY continued from page 7

At the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) 2025 Assembly from Aug. 12-15 in **Atlanta, Georgia**, Veronica Buchanan and I both hosted vendor tables. She represented Archivists for Congregations of Women Religious (ACWR) and I represented FCA. We took great pleasure in speaking with many Franciscan leaders while forging new connections for potential future partners!

Compared with previous years, we noticed Franciscan leaders expressed a more fervent and focused energy concerning their archives. We talked with them about forming plans for their archives, assistance in hiring an archivist, assessing their collections, how to improve the housing of their materials, and how to prioritize projects. The FCA welcomes these types of conversations and is ready to offer our collective expertise to assist you with details big and small!



LCWR
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
★ Atlanta

Georgia

Indiana

★
South Bend

CUSHWA CENTER
for the Study of American Catholicism

The Conference on the History of Women Religious (CHWR): Lives and Archives 13th Triennial Meeting was June 22-25, administered by the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame in **South Bend, Indiana**. This conference offered many meaningful panel sessions discussing women's religious history and its archival care. Each Sister story offered a history of ministry and advocacy which underscored the importance of preserving the legacy of women religious. ∞

Presentations discussed ongoing efforts and related challenges. The FCA's Executive Secretary Veronica Buchanan was part of **"Archives in Transition: Challenges, Risks, and Opportunities."** Others sessions included:

- **"The Current Reality of the Archives of Women Religious"** by Veronica Buchanan (*Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati*)
- **"Planning for the Future: Preserving the Archives of Catholic Women Religious"** by Jennifer Head (*Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary*)
- **"How the Larger Historical Community Can Assist Women Religious in this Process"** by Michele Levandoski (*School Sisters of Notre Dame North American Archives*)
- **"A Future for Religious Archives: KADOC-KU Leuven and the Heritage of Women Religious in Flanders (Belgium)"** by Kristien Suenens (*KU Leuven*)

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



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Vice President:

Sister Celia Struck, OSF

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