

## **2012 Franciscan Banquet Honorees**

### ***Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church***

Honorees are TOR Franciscan brothers and sisters within the Church who:

- Embody Francis' and Clare's witness to creative fidelity;
- Nurture that ecclesial communion of love to which Jesus invites us;
- Embrace the Church with all its ambiguities;
- Energize and give hope to the doubtful and the discouraged.

#### **Sister Linda Bates OSF**

##### **Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, IN**

Sister Linda has spent many years “releasing energies to love” as an Oldenburg Franciscan. Following her ministry in education and school administration, Linda has more recently assumed a pastoral focus, having served as Director of Campus Ministry at Marian College (now University) in Indianapolis and later as Pastoral Associate in West Virginia. She now provides parish leadership in a rural setting in southeastern Indiana. True to our Franciscan tradition, Linda has continued to “stay at the table” in meeting the challenges of parish leadership among the people of God.

#### **Sr. Patricia Burkard OSF**

##### **Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities**

Sister Patricia has served as first General Minister of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities for the past 8 years. Sister Pat played a pivotal role in the 2004 union of three congregations with a common Neumann-Bachmann heritage: Sisters of St. Francis of the Mission of the Immaculate Virgin, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY; the Sisters of St. Francis, Third Order Regular of Buffalo, NY; and the Sisters of the Third Franciscan Order, Syracuse, NY. In addition Sister Pat was instrumental in shepherding the 2007 merger of the Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale with the newly formed Sisters of St. Francis.

During her more than 50 years of vowed service Sister Pat has remained grounded in Francis' principle of faithfulness to the church and has consistently worked within the church structure for change. She has held positions of teacher, principal, Associate Superintendent of Elementary Education for the Diocese of Buffalo, Administrator of the Williamsville Motherhouse and Building Projects, Assistant General Minister, General Minister, and Coordinator of Shared Futures. None of these titles can convey the depth or breadth of Sister's relentless efforts to lead our congregation through continued transformation in keeping with the mandates of Vatican II and the demands of an ever changing milieu for religious life. In the manner of true “fraternitas”, Sister Pat's amicability, commitment to Gospel values, and endless patience instill a sense of joy and hope in those around her.

#### **Sister Andrea Ciszewski FSSJ**

##### **Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph**

Sister Andrea's very being reflects the creative fidelity of Francis and Clare. As the Superintendent of the Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts, Sister Andrea Ciszewski embraces the challenges occurring in the Catholic school system in her diocese. The Diocese of Springfield, like many other dioceses throughout the country, is merging and closing Catholic schools in order to better serve the families and students in that area. One of the many challenges Sister faces is that the people have deep feelings about their schools and often are disappointed with the Church's decisions. Sister Andrea is able to stand in support of the decisions of the diocese as well as to give a compassionate response to families.

Sister Andrea's gift of remembering persons, their significant celebrations in life, their family connections, and her ability to connect personally with whomever she meets, makes her a definite sign of the Good News of God's love for all people. She is able to invite others into a communion of love. Because of her personal love and commitment to Christ and the Catholic Church, she invites all those she meets to see the Church as a place to find God.

In her ministry as General Minister of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, 1990-1998, Sister Andrea worked with two Bishops of Buffalo in forming the Catholic Health System of Buffalo, New York. Being persistent and honest but respectfully challenging to the Bishops in order to preserve the mission of the Congregations of Women Religious who began the ministries in hospitals and various health care institutions, earned Sister Andrea the respect and appreciation of the Bishops. Through these negotiations with the Bishops, Sister Andrea gave hope to the sponsors of the Catholic institutions.

In all her ministries, Sister Andrea has been and is a great leader and a true Franciscan. She has witnessed to creative and sincere fidelity to her call as a Franciscan Sister of St. Joseph. Sister Andrea is, indeed, a true daughter of our Foundress Colette Hilbert and is especially faithful to her call to follow Jesus in everything she does.

**Nancy Crossen OSF**  
**Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia**

Sr. Nancy has been a steadfast and committed educator especially with those who are poor and on the margins of society. At the end of this year, Nancy will have spent 63 years as a teacher and principal. Her dedication and enthusiasm have led her to serving people of all backgrounds, ethnicity, and race throughout the East Coast, including the Irish Travelers in the South. She herself is a simple person, not in the limelight, a 'hidden star' we might say, but one whose steady presence has been a beacon of light to all those whom she has served.

Nancy also has excellent administrative skills and has used her skills effectively both as principal and in congregational administration on the provincial level as Coordinator of Education. In this role, Sr. Nancy was instrumental in strengthening the quality of education and encouraging creativity among faculty and students. We are happy to honor Sr. Nancy Crossen as our Franciscan honoree. She herself has served all with great love in her creative fidelity in the Church. Nancy has released energies of love in all those she has served.

**Mary Eliot Crowley OSF**  
**Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, MN**

For twenty six years Sister Mary Eliot served as Coordinator of Franciscan Values at St. Mary's Hospital on Mayo Clinic campus, Rochester, Minnesota. Sponsorship by influence, after the hospital was no longer owned by the Franciscans, demonstrated Mary Eliot's leadership.

In that capacity Mary Eliot taught by word and example, inspiring the staff with diversity of faiths and religious practices to maintain the hospital's Catholic identity. Together the staff respected the beliefs of others in the healing process. During these years she had many opportunities to embrace the Church with all its ambiguities while she instructed members of the health care team on the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services. Her teaching focused on the call of God through Jesus so that the staff would understand the "why" of the gifts of care, compassion, respect, healing of the whole person and community. This emphasis was more than what a Catholic Hospital can and can't do; it was about what a Catholic hospital can be!

**Sr. Jacquelyn Doepker OSF**  
**Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Charity, Tiffin, Ohio**

Despite some reluctance on Sr. Jacquelyn's part to be placed in the limelight for her efforts to remain creatively faithful within the Church, our community is pleased to honor her in this small way during the Annual Federation Conference. As our Community Minister, Sr. Jackie represented our congregation professionally, with both truth and tact, through the Apostolic Visitation process and in several painful situations in the local church. Throughout, she remained respectful, but refused to compromise our cherished values as Franciscans. Her strength was evident in her humility and in her unquestionable commitment to "that ecclesial communion of love to which Jesus invites us."(*cf. Criteria*)  
Congratulations, Sister Jackie!

**Fr. Francis Eldridge SA**  
**Franciscan Friars of the Atonement**

"In recognition for his dedication and service to the Fraternity as a passionate Franciscan who cares about the dignity of the poor and marginalized, he has served the poor Hispanic and Afro-American populations in South Central, LA for many years. He has helped them find their pride and dignity and celebrate it as a contribution to the society that they live in, oftentimes in the midst of a violent society. Under his pastoral guidance, the small school with its dedicated lay staff has helped the children of the neighborhood achieve the skills to enable them to better their situation. Frank, thank you for being a Franciscan Friar of the Atonement committed to aims of our Congregation dedicated to unity and reconciliation.

**Connie Fahey FSM**  
**Franciscan Sisters of Mary**

Sr. Connie truly embodies this year's Federation theme, "Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church." Today she is involved, not only in her parish, St. John Vianney in Janesville, Wisconsin, and its wider cluster of four other parishes, but with the Catholic Church in Zambia, Africa, and in the newly established Dean-St. Mary's Hospital Janesville. She has organized a centering prayer group for the people of Janesville, does spiritual direction, and gives seminars and reflection days of prayer. Her ministry is not restricted to Catholics in this community that is fairly evenly divided between Catholics and Lutherans. She sees her role in the new Janesville hospital as a mentor of values as she personifies and teaches the employees about the legacy of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary and the values of SSM Health Care. She participates on several of its internal committees and its local advisory board. Since her "retirement" in 2009 as a hospice administrator, she and another Franciscan sister go to Zambia, Africa, to conduct retreats for sisters, priests, and their lay partners in ministry. Bishop Charles Kasonde, Bishop of Solwezi Diocese, writes: "Sister Connie is our God-sent ambassador who has lived with us and among us and understands our situation quite well."

Sr. Connie sees her call as one primarily of connection—empowering others to get involved in meaningful mission. Working with her pastor, Fr. Randy Timmerman, Sr. Connie and the parish's Peace and Justice Committee challenged parishioners to focus each week of Lent on activities to benefit the people of Solwezi, Zambia—a desperately poor area Sr. Connie first visited in 2011. The committee has collected more than 3,000 children's books and money to ship to Solwezi. Sr. Connie, an accomplished musician, held a concert March 4 to benefit the Solwezi people, collecting personal items and a free-will offering. Parishioners sewed dresses and britches for the children. The parish held a benefit breakfast. It was a beautiful, creative way to focus the parish's Lenten energies on a project that would bear great fruit for the poor.

Her pastor, Fr. Randy, says of her, "Sr. Connie has lived here two years. She doesn't have a 'paid staff position,' but she has a strong presence here, making connections with people, giving them hope and guiding them to meaningful ministry. Her quietness and patience—her deep interior life with the Lord—

guide her. She is faithful, seeking God's counsel, staying connected both to Christ and to the Church. Her's is a prayerful engagement with the Lord that compels her to mission—sitting at the feet of the Lord, doing what God says and serving those God loves.”

### **Sister Therese Flerlage OSF**

#### **Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

We have chosen Sister Therese as our 2012 honoree because of her dedication in parish ministry within the Church as shared below in her own words.

“As a Franciscan Sister of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, I have been in the community for fifty years and have spent thirty-five of those years in the teaching field. I have brought and shared the stories of Francis and Clare to many of my students. For the last twenty years, I have worked as a Faith Formation Director with the Parish School of Religion, RCIA, Liturgy of the Word with children, pre-baptismal classes, and sacramental preparation for children and adults. It is in these ministries that I was able to not only share, but live Clare and Francis' creative fidelity.

Besides working in the areas of the south, I have companioned with the poor, downtrodden and abused of our society. Evangelization and the spreading of God's love to all of us reached these areas daily. It was often a daily encounter to give hope to the doubtful and discouraged people that I worked and walked with on the road to their salvation and my path of life as well.

I would never go back and change anything as I thoroughly enjoyed every student that crossed my path and even more so as I journeyed with the RCIA candidates in growing and accepting a faith that gives them everlasting life. Parish life has so much to offer: such as, the many needs and times to just listen to those people who don't know who to trust with their stories and difficulties in life. I am there to meet some of these needs and to use the wonderful stories of Francis and Clare to model for them or give them support in what they are already doing in life.”

### **Lorraine Forster FSPA**

#### **Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration**

The significance of Sister Lorraine's Franciscan presence in Las Vegas, Nevada, is calculable. A teacher of chemistry, math and Latin, she has taught “thousands” of students during her 30 years at Bishop Gorman High School. She now serves as an RCIA teacher to a multiplicity of Latinos, Caucasians, Nigerians and Vietnamese, and for one class managed to instruct two foreign language-speaking students to pray the Apostle's Creed in English in just over a week.

She also sponsors an FSPA ministry grant for and works hands on with a program, St. Benedict Labre Homeless Ministry, which feeds hundreds of men and women. Father John McShane facilitates the mission and wrote of Sister Lorraine's contributions, “She gives without counting the cost.”

Sister Lorraine was recently asked to reflect on her calling, which she replied by recognizing her calling to Las Vegas, “...to provide my weight in gold.” Sister Lorraine believes she was “born to work” and as a gospel worker her work is with the poor.

When asked to accept the community's nomination of this award, S. Lorraine said, “I'll accept the award but rather than the expenses of going there to receive it, will you send me a couple of hundred dollars for t-shirts for the kids.” Her statement sums up her life, it's not about her, it's about the needs of others.

**Barbara E. Goodridge OSF****Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Stella Niagara, NY**

Sr. Barbara has been a pastoral associate at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Columbus, Ohio for the past 12 years. As a spiritual director and member of the RCIA team, she accompanies members of the parish as they seek to deepen their relationship with God in freedom and openness. In the midst of tensions and ambiguities in the Church, she recognizes that the call to deep communion with God and others is at the heart of what it means to be church. When asked about her work, Barbara said, “With all my heart I believe my ministry is to find ways to empower the laity to live out their call to serve. I try to devote myself to helping others take leadership in the church.” We are grateful for the ways her ministry nurtures creative fidelity to the Holy Spirit at work rebuilding the church.

**Carol Hoverman OSF****Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Family, Dubuque, IA**

For more than thirty years, Sr. Carol has been in positions that allowed her to use her creative talents to shape diocesan communications in order to energize and give hope to God’s people. Sr. Carol has been editor of the Dubuque, IA archdiocesan weekly newspaper, *The Witness* since 2002. She has worked for the archdiocese since 1980, serving as director of communications and media relations coordinator. Her pioneering work in the mid-1980’s with communications persons from the four Iowa dioceses launched an innovative project “Real to Reel”, a religious news program that was broadcast in six major media markets in the state.

Sr. Carol was instrumental in the formation of Sisters United News – Upper Mississippi Valley, a cooperative endeavor of nine religious congregations brought together with the goal of telling an accurate and inspiring story of women religious, engaging in prophetic ministries and growing in spirituality. Ads and billboards on religious life, racial justice, women’s suffrage and most recently on immigration have been instrumental in conveying that women religious do, indeed, “embrace the church” and “witness to the Gospel with creative fidelity.”

In her present position as editor of *The Witness*, Sr. Carol writes stories and columns, assigns stories, selects wire features and columns, plans each issue, and serves as photographer when needed. In her words, she wants to “help our readers think beyond their own parish and our own geographic area.” She has not retreated from some of the difficult media challenges of the past decade: sexual abuse, church closures, social justice issues that often give rise to varying opinions.

Early on, Sr. Carol’s creative talents and musical gifts were shared generously through twenty years of teaching elementary school music and service as parish liturgist, organist and choir director. Song composition was another outlet for her gifts and her compositions provided meaningful texts, wedded to sing-able melodies for the congregation’s liturgies.

In her own words, Sr. Carol sums up the important role of the ministry of communications, “In this ministry we’re always sowing seeds. As the words and images are cast to the airways, we never know how the power of the spirit will touch the viewer, listener, or reader. The message may comfort or challenge in ways the producers never knew.”

**Sister Mary Georgeann Kinel OSF****Franciscan Sisters of Chicago**

Sister Mary Georgeann embodies the witness of Francis and Clare to fidelity in her many years as a Franciscan Sister of Chicago. Ministering in a parish setting as a teacher she witnessed the changes in the Church and in her own life as a religious from pre-Vatican times to the present with a positive attitude.

Sister Mary Georgeann's gentleness of spirit, ready smile, and uncomplaining acceptance of life's difficulties inspired and gave hope to the doubtful and discouraged in the parish community as well as in her local community. With a strong spirituality grounded in humility and sweetness of disposition Sister Georgeann continues nurturing the communion of love to which Jesus invites all of us. She is our model Franciscan Peacemaker for 2012.

### **Sister Michele Mangan OSF**

#### **Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Redwood City**

With a poet's vision, Michele, contemplates a world — and the Church within that world — with all its ambiguities, holding it in her heart. This vision leads her to respond with creative fidelity to each situation encountered in her daily life. Her ministry in Diocesan Tribunals has been consistently carried out with wisdom, and compassionate relationship to all applicants for justice. While people who are made strangers and outcasts by society have a special claim on her heart, all those who seek Michele's counsel find their hearts and their mind's opened to new possibilities and to positive responses in the challenges they face. Her Gospel witness is a treasure and sign of hope in our struggling world.

### **Sr. Margaret Alice Martinek OSF**

#### **Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet**

Sister Margaret Alice "has a mission of reaching out and touching the lives of the poor in concrete ways." As Franciscan, she embodies creative fidelity to the Gospel and to the Church in her love for children, for the poor, the hungry, the elderly and the dying. For many years, Sister Margaret Alice served in inner city parishes in Chicago with great heart as evidenced by her Archdiocesan Heart of the School Award in 1997. Wherever Sister Margaret Alice was missioned she found ways to serve God's people as a volunteer. Numerous volunteer hours have been spent at our nursing homes, at soup kitchens, and with Hospice.

She presently continues her ministry to the poor in Selma, Alabama as the Director of Catholic Social Ministry with the Edmundite Missions, giving hope by her peaceful presence and compassionate service. Her ordinary "duties" include giving out food and clothing; expensing emergency funds to aid in extraordinary events such as burnouts and other disasters; being an advocate for the poor and powerless with utility companies, doctors, pharmacies and landlords; assisting persons in filling out necessary paperwork; visiting those in nursing homes and shut-ins; and being a friendly face and quick wit to any and all. Beyond her ordinary outreach services she volunteers, daily delivering hot meals to those who cannot come to the soup kitchen. Sister Margaret Alice also teaches Adult Sunday School at Queen of Peace Parish in Selma.

### **Sister Sandra McKeta SMIC**

#### **Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception**

No matter what she is involved in, Sister Sandra has always tried to live the truth that the People of God includes everyone, and that what we are about is all based on relationships. Her basic stance toward life is that we have a mutual learning from each other, and that it is possible to respect roles while challenging what needs to be challenged without losing the relationships involved. Her goal is always to create a win-win situation, so that all may experience their dignity at the end of the day. It is because of her efforts to live this no matter where she finds herself that Sandra clearly has been part of *Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church* through the years.

Sandra has carried this attitude into her ministry of psychiatric nursing and into her leadership in the US province of SMIC in which she experienced her key role to be the "holder of tensions" as a non-anxious presence during a time in which she led the community into and through the sale of the motherhouse property. Her ministry as Associate Director of the Franciscan Federation gave her great joy in drawing together through the Spirit and Life Committee the brother/sister relationships and enabling the group to

reflect with each other on the beauty, the needs and the warts of church while respecting the wisdom of each one. She saw the purpose of this particular committee to be the concretization for the brothers and sisters of what they need in order to live their Franciscan Life.

Saundra continues to live the ministry of healing through her presence as chaplain, particularly for the oncology patients, in the pastoral care department of St. Clare's Hospital, Denville, NJ. Along the way she has also been actively involved in consultations with clergy and religious around major issues within church today, in which respect for the individual has been key to healing. Her belief in the unity of all of us has been lived through her helping to develop relationships and programs among Sisters in Eastern Europe and Sisters in the US with roots in eastern Europe – that all might grow from the exchange. Hope in her compassionate God of love is what energizes Saundra to continue to live her healing ministry among the People of God in whatever manner it presents itself.

**Sister Alice Francis Nagl FSP**  
**Franciscan Sisters of Peace**

For more than forty years, Sr. Alice has been engaged in preparing children for the reception of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation. She has been loved by her young students, valued and respected by their parents, all of whom feel welcomed in the Church because of her gentleness.

In addition to her teaching ministry, her outreach to the sick and elderly has done much to bring hope to many. All of her service to parish, to community and to the Church is characterized by a humility born of love and fidelity to Franciscan ideals.

**Sister Hilária de Oliveria OSF**  
**Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God**

Sister Hilária is someone who embodies Francis' and Clare's witness to creative fidelity; nurtures the ecclesial communion of love to which Jesus invites us; embraces the Church with all its ambiguities; and energizes and gives hope to the doubtful and discouraged.

Sister Hilária has been ministering in St. James Parish, Newark, NJ, since 1997. Here, she serves both English and Portuguese-speaking parishioners as Director of Catechetics at St. James, although she primarily serves the needs of Brazilian parishioners, helping to prepare four Portuguese Masses each Sunday to accommodate the large Brazilian community. Due to this community's needs, she also serves in St. Catherine of Siena Parish, where immigrants from both Portugal and Brazil require assistance.

As many Brazilians find the more rigid immigration system harder to navigate, many are returning to Brazil leaving those friends and family who are permanent residents or citizens. In both parishes the community is becoming more stable because of Sister Hilária's work. Sister also serves as the coordinator of the Northeast Region of Ministers to the Brazilian community in the United States.

**Sister Ann Rehrauer OSF**  
**Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross**

We honor Sister Ann because of her many years of work in National and Diocesan positions. She has worked side by side with Bishops, clergy, and the laity with integrity, wisdom and a pastoral perspective. She has served the church in many capacities such as a canon lawyer, liturgist, teacher, educator, facilitator, etc. Her great contribution is her care and concern for each individual and her ability to articulate and mediate in a pastoral, sensitive way. She acknowledges and works with the ambiguities of the Church without giving up her own identity.

**Sr. M. Maristell Schanen OSF**  
**Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls**

During the early years of the Sister Formation movement, Sister Maristell served as President of our congregation's formation college and taught theology to novices and young sisters. She continually strove to deepen her understanding of Christology and ecclesiology and of the Franciscan spiritual tradition.

From 1968-1972, as the Franciscan Federation was forming, she was part of the committee that wrote and promoted *Go to My Brethren*, the spiritual document that identified the role of Third Order Regular Franciscan women in the United States. Franciscan and Christian formation work continued to be an important part of her life and ministry.

At age fifty-five, she courageously broadened her service to the world-wide Church, working with Catholic Relief Services in Yemen for five years. This led her to promote dialogue with persons of varied faiths and cultures. In her seventies, she was a member of our congregation's missionary outreach in Tanzania, where she served as secretary and assistant to Father Augustine Shao, Provincial of the Holy Ghost Fathers. When he was appointed Bishop of Zanzibar, she joined him there two weeks before her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and assisted him for eight months. In the course of her world mission efforts, Sister Maristell has never ceased to provide formal and informal education in ecclesiology, Christology and current theology. Just recently, at the age of 93, she taught a series of classes on "Christology in an Evolving Universe."

**Sister Shannon Schrein OSF**  
**Sisters of St. Francis, Sylvania, OH**

As Lourdes University Professor and Chair of Theological Studies, Sr. Shannon is a faithful and creative teacher, author, member of the executive board of the American Theological Society, and lecturer. Through these more than 25 years in the field of theology she has not only enlivened others through her dynamic presentations but she has also empowered others in recognizing and celebrating their own faith journeys. As a Franciscan woman she exemplifies both Francis' love for the Church and his willingness to respectfully challenge it when necessary.

**Joyce Shanabarger OSF**  
**Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart**

The Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart celebrate **Sister Joyce** as our 2012 honoree. She is truly a woman who exemplifies by her life the criteria "*Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church.*"

Sister Joyce...

- ❖ is incredibly creative and brings that dimension alive in her work
- ❖ draws from the depth of her own theological training, personal prayer and reflection
- ❖ nurtures ecclesial community with activities that are grounded in love
- ❖ is a positive, energizing presence
- ❖ is knowledgeable and articulate about the reality of today's issues
- ❖ is able to give hope to the doubtful and discouraged, especially in her volunteer ministry to the women in shelters who are struggling to break free from addictions
- ❖ embodies Francis' and Clare's witness to creative fidelity



## **Marilyn Uhing OSF**

### **Sisters of St. Francis, Colorado Springs**

Sister Marilyn has exemplified creative fidelity through her many years of ministry witnessing Catholic Social Teaching as she counseled and cared for those who are emotionally disturbed and financially vulnerable. She used the occasion of her thesis for her Master's in Social Work to transition our St. Anthony Home for Boys in Albuquerque into a more appropriate St. Anthony Child Care Center that nurtured emotionally disturbed children through loving care and skill building.

As a member of the University of Albuquerque's Sociology faculty, she developed innovative programs such as Upward Bound and High School Equivalency. The great success of these programs was due, in part, to her creativity in recruiting innovative teachers to enhance the quality and accessibility of these programs to underserved minority students.

As a social worker and a Franciscan, she has reached out to the poor, the disenfranchised, the divorced, and to dysfunctional individuals and families. For many years she provided social services in Platte County, Nebraska as director and counselor with Catholic Family Services for the Archdiocese of Omaha, and as parish outreach coordinator in the Diocese of Grand Island, Nebraska. In Colorado Springs, she has served as the coordinator for a Spiritual Companion Program for low-income seniors in SET Family Medical Clinics, developed divorce recovery workshops, and has served on numerous boards including Low-income Housing for Seniors, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and Women Partnering.

As founder of the Franciscan Family Wellness Program which has since evolved into Franciscan Community Counseling, Sister Marilyn continued to energize and give hope to the doubtful and discouraged as she met the needs of those unable to pay for quality counseling services and life enhancement programs.

Presently, Sister Marilyn serves on the board of Franciscan Community Counseling and on the staff of Women Partnering, an OSF sponsored ministry serving financially vulnerable women and children in Colorado Springs. For the past 15 years she has been coordinating Woman's Story, which she developed as a program of Women Partnering, and through which she organizes and coordinates women's retreats, contemplative groups, days of renewal, companions women in their personal spiritual journeys and in their development of leadership skills.

Over the years, she has served several terms on the Leadership team of our congregation. Her talent for creative thinking, delegation and risk-taking has witnessed to her embodiment of our Franciscan values and charism.

## **Sr. Mary Lawrence Vanderburg SFP**

### **Franciscan Sisters of the Poor**

Sr. Mary Lawrence exudes the Franciscan faithfulness of one who has experienced God as a "Tremendous Lover" all through her long life. She knows and understands the issues arising in our Church and through all the turmoil she remains very faithful and loyal. Her perspectives on life and her sense of humor captivate all who come in contact with her.

Sr. Mary Lawrence leaves no doubt that she loves God and that she knows God loves her. Her energetic love and 85 years of life have given her a warmth and wisdom that she shares with all her sisters and with the women in prostitution at Tamar's Place where she works two days a week. She also spends an evening at the "Drop-in-Center" where those who are poor and marginalized come for something to eat and for someone to talk with. She is a gentle woman with a heart of gold that is always available for whatever the needs are in her local community. The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor are delighted to nominate Sr. Mary Lawrence as one who releases energies to love and lives creative fidelity to our Church.

**Patricia Weldon OSF**  
**Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa**

Pat served as a teacher and principal in the Catholic schools, as Senior Services Coordinator for Catholic Charities and as Director of Religious Education. She is currently Pastoral Director of DeFlores Center for St. Rose of Lima Parish in Chula Vista, California.

In her many years of ministry within parish communities, Pat has worked faithfully and effectively. Whether in parish life, within the Catholic schools or Catholic Charities Services, she has always sought to relate well with clergy, administrative personnel and laity. She speaks the truth in love and thus is able to challenge church leaders and parish communities to respect and treat all ethnic groups, which comprise these communities, with justice and compassion.

**Sister Sylvia Wehlisch OSF**  
**Wheaton Franciscans**

Sister Sylvia has been a Franciscan Sister for 50 years. Her dedication to prayer and growth in consciousness has informed her world view and has inflamed her passion for justice. Sr. Sylvia has lived the call of Christ to be a loving presence on Earth, reaching out to those in need, with a preferential option for the poor and the oppressed. Her ministries have been an outgrowth of her passion as she has worked with residents in our low income housing in Wheaton, IL, initiated a transitional housing program for Casa Central in Chicago, and worked with people with HIV/AIDS.

Throughout these ministries, Sr. Sylvia was involved in the struggle for justice in the Church and in the world. She is an active member of Call to Action, dedicated to the continued evolution of the post Vatican II Church. She has stood in solidarity with the poor people of Central America who were suffering as a result of the U.S. backed war in the 1980's. As a Witness for Peace, Sr. Sylvia stood on the border of Nicaragua and Honduras in an effort to stop the killing of innocent people through their peaceful presence. Sr. Sylvia has traveled annually to Fort Benning, Georgia, to advocate for the closing of the School of the Americas. Active in civil disobedience, she has engaged in peaceful protests which have led to her arrest at the Nevada Test Site near Las Vegas, at Fort Benning, and at the Federal building in Chicago.

Currently, Sr. Sylvia is advocating for just immigration reform, including visiting immigration detainees in the McHenry County jail in Woodstock, Illinois, to listen to their stories and to bring them love and hope as she lets them know that they are not forgotten. The Wheaton Franciscans are honored to put forth Sr. Sylvia Wehlisch as the 2012 Franciscan Federation honoree.

**Sister Reginald Zajac OSF**  
**Bernardine Franciscan Sisters**

Sister Reginald was born March 9, 1911 in Taunton, MA and baptized Frances. With a deep desire to follow the example of her patron, Saint Francis of Assisi, she entered the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters on September 8, 1924. Graced by a faithful determination to rebuild the Church, Sister Reginald embraced the ministries of teacher, principal, local minister, director of religious education, and caregiver with creativity and courageous enthusiasm.

Presently, at the tender age of 101, she tutors four Spanish women in the English language. Like Clare of Assisi, her life is dedicated to mirroring God's love, tenderness, and hope to the people of God despite life's ambiguities. She continues to participate in the meetings of the congregation and participated in the General Chapter of 2011.

With much love, admiration, and gratitude, the Congregational Leadership of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters are proud to nominate Sister Reginald Zajac as the honoree for 2012.

### **Sister Sandra Zorko SSFCR**

#### **School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King**

Sister Sandra is a member of the School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King who began her ministerial service to the Church in 1962 as a biology teacher at Mt. Assisi Academy in Lemont, IL. She continued to minister there teaching science, English and theology classes, moderating Rainbows groups, designing costumes for school plays, and directing the yearbook work. She also served as Dean of Students and Assistant Principal. Later she returned as school president. In addition, Sandy taught at St. Vincent Seminary and has administered parish elementary schools and worked as a catechist and Director of RCIA Programs and the Faith Formation Director for the tri-parish communities in the Lemont area. Sister Sandra has also served on our Provincial Council and internationally she spent six years in Rome as a member of our General Council.

Her dedication to forming others in the faith even in the midst of the ambiguities that exist within the Church and the world and her care for elderly who needed to see the Gospel in action and be touched by someone representing the Church are key to her effectiveness in ministry. Though Sandy clearly sees the situations of hurt in the Church she strives to bring the healing and challenging presence of Christ to those whose lives she touches.

### **The Felician Sisters who minister at the Response to Love Center, Buffalo, NY**

#### **Felician Sisters of North America**

When the parish school closed, Sister Mary Johnice Rzaczkiewicz asked the Pastor and Parish Community if the building could be used to serve the people of that community.

Since 1996, Sisters Mary Catherine Raczowski, Mary Johnice Rzaczkiewicz and Mary Rose Szymanski have faithfully ministered at the Response to Love Center in Buffalo, NY. Their Ministry and Mission is following in the footprints of Jesus, touching the lives of others by providing a variety of compassionate programs that assist those in need and enable self-sufficiency!

They inspire hope, healing and peace to the doubtful, discouraged and marginalized in their community by:

- ❖ serving an average of 24,961 meals a year in their dining room; providing personal care, client need and school supplies to over 500 community members annually.
- ❖ assisting clients directly or guiding them to one of 45 active partners who can assist them further with their needs.
- ❖ providing GED, Computer Education and English as a Second Language Classes
- ❖ scheduling activities for Veterans, Food Stamp assistance, Blood Pressure screening, Toy/Food drives, job fairs, Student Retreats - Community Service Opportunities - AmeriCorps VISTA, RSVP - Red Cross Training - Corporate Volunteer Days - County Sheriff Days - Summertime Poverty Youth Awareness Program.

Their day to day efforts truly reflect Francis and Clare's witness to creative fidelity!