

# Footprints



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Published quarterly, Footprints reflects the mission, spirit, and values of the Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, Iowa.

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## Cover Photo



*James Anthony Nyangas of Safe Water for Life and Dignity stands with a woman at the newly constructed Sister Water Project well in the village of Boma in September 2016.*

# Footprints

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# Leadership

*"Praised be You, My Lord, for Sister Water,  
humble, precious, life-giving and pure."  
--St. Francis of Assisi, Canticle of Creation*

Water is essential for life on earth, not just human life, but all life. Among many uses, water is needed for drinking, cooking, cleaning, washing, and agriculture. There is no substitute for this precious resource, and yet we waste it, we pollute it, we take it for granted, and we even commodify it.

Water scarcity and critical water problems remain a problem of great concern, so over 10 years ago, the Sisters of St. Francis initiated the Sister Water Project (SWP) as a way to address the lack of potable water in Honduras and Tanzania, areas where our congregation ministered. Sisters and Associates began by becoming educated on water issues, and came to realize many of us and our society in general, considered access to clean water the norm. Many of us took water for granted, while others had little if no access to this necessity.

"Access to safe water is a fundamental human need and therefore a basic human right. Contaminated water jeopardizes both the physical and social health of all people. It is an affront to human dignity." -- Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General

In 2006, our Sisters, Associates, and supporters, embraced the call to action and officially launched the SWP with the goal of raising \$42,000 to bring water to those in need. Little did we recognize then how this initiative would capture the hearts of so many people. To date, generous benefactors have donated more than \$975,000, 20 water systems have been supported in Honduras, and over 130 villages in Tanzania have received restoration and/or building of wells. In the past two years alone, over 80,000 people in 59 villages in Tanzania have potable water because of the efforts of the SWP. In addition, over 70 people have contributed many hours of service assisting with these water projects.

The Sister Water Project is indeed a humble "heart project" that reawakens our consciousness, helps us appreciate the gift of water, and builds solidarity with people in need. There is no doubt that one small project could have a ripple effect beyond imagining!

*Praise to you, O Compassionate One for those who help bring clean water,  
Care for Mother Earth and Sister Water, Peace and Justice for all.*

*--Sister Kathy Knipper, OSF  
Sister Water Project Coordinator*

## Our Mission

Rooted in the Gospel and in the spirit of Sts. Francis and Clare, the Sisters of St. Francis live in right relationship with all creation.

## Focus 2014 - 2020:

In our personal, communal and public life, we commit to ongoing conversion as we: deepen our relationship with Mother Earth and Sister Water | stand with persons who are poor | make peace and practice nonviolence.

This is who we are; this is what the global community can expect of us.

## Leadership Team

Sister Cathy (Kate) Katoski  
*president*

Sister Marie Cigrand  
*vice president*

Sister Mary Lechtenberg  
*vice president*

Sister Kathy Knipper  
*vice president*





Sisters Rita Goedken and Judy Sinnwell in Pozitos. Contributed photo.

## 10 Years of the Sister Water Project

It was 2006 when the Sister Water Project (SWP) was officially launched. **Sisters Virginia Jennings and Rita Goedken** presented an explanation of SWP to the community at that year's fall assembly. The goal of the project was to raise \$42,000 to bring safe drinking water to Tanzania and Honduras, both of which were countries Dubuque Franciscans had served in or were serving in. Sisters Rita and Virginia invited sisters and associates to become involved.

It was a ripple effect that followed: sisters and associates started to spread the word about their goals of bringing clean water to villagers in Tanzania and Honduras. They gave talks at parishes, met with donors, and did interviews with the local press.

The media coverage would lead to a collaboration with the Dubuque Rotary Club, who were looking to support a water project, and Mission Honduras from LeMars, Iowa. Those connections as well as Lenten parish projects, contacts with former students, and other creative initiatives, helped the Sister Water Project collect \$100,000 in donations in just six months. We look back at each year to see just how the SWP came to be what it is today.

### 2007

During the early months of 2007, the SWP explored possibilities for effective action in Tanzania. In Sanya Juu and Rauya, Tanzania, where the rainy seasons provide abundant rains, the SWP worked in collaboration with the Holy Spirit Sisters and with Father Francis Mallya, the pastor of the Rauya parish, to provide for stormwater harvesting. **Sister Frances Nosbisch**, who had taught in Rauya, Tanzania, served as an important link.

By April, 2007, the Leadership Team of the congregation approved funding for the installation of nine simtanks (stormwater collection tanks) for sites requested by the Holy Spirit Sisters and the first SWP in Tanzania was installed in May 2007. The simtanks were stationed at the Charlotte Health Center near Sanya Juu, which provided health care for the people of the surrounding area. In Rauya, simtanks provided for stormwater collection near the Theological Pastoral Center, and near two small dispensaries which provided health care and health education to the people of the area.

*(Continued on the next page.)*

In November of 2007, a 30 member mission team, including **Sisters Michelle Balek, Ruth Fagan, Rita Goedken, Mary Beth Goldsmith, Renae Hohensee, Ruth Kleitsch, Davida Loosbrock, Nancy Miller, Judy Sinnwell and Rosie Vaske** helped install a potable water system in the village of Pozitos, a village of about 40 families, with 130 people, and no electricity in the village. They worked side by side with Honduran villagers, digging a trench 18 inches deep and a spade's width wide. They dug through clay, rocks, and mud with pick axe, spade, machete, and steel bar, up hills and down, alongside coffee tree groves and banana trees.

The village's water system was the first completed Sister Water Project in Honduras. "When water flowed into the tank for the first time, you could hear shouts and songs of thanks," said Sister Judy Sinnwell.

"There wasn't a dry eye anywhere," when fresh water began to flow on the last day of the project, said Mary Frances Sack, one of the team members. "There are so many things in life where you don't know if you've made any difference," she said. "But here we saw a concrete difference made in people's lives."

In the fall while visiting the Salvatorian Prior Peter Schuessler, Sister Judy made a casual comment about the Dubuque Franciscans' SWP. Peter mentioned that the Salvatorians had community members in Morogoro, Tanzania, and were collaborating with an NGO called Safe Water for Life and Dignity (SWLD) on ways to get potable water to little villages in the countryside. Thus the collaboration with the Salvatorians was initiated through contact with Father Tom Tureman and later Father Dan Pekarske.

In October 2007, Father Tom, Director of International Missions for the Salvatorians from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, communicated the need for immediate assistance to the villages around Morogoro which were experiencing severe drought. In desperation, the people of the village began digging holes in the dry riverbed in an effort to find much-needed water to drink. One woman said, "My prayer every morning is for a cup of water to drink." In a few hours after the communication from Father Tom, Sisters Rita Goedken and Virginia Jennings passed this information on to the rest of the Leadership Team who unanimously decided to grant the funding immediately. A check was written to the Salvatorians who would wire the money to Tanzania for the rehabilitation of three wells and the installation of a new well in the drought region.



*The Holy Spirit Sisters with the simtanks installed by the Sister Water Project. Contributed photo.*

## 2008

**Sisters Dorothy Heiderscheit, Virginia Jennings, Judy Sinnwell, and Rita Goedken** traveled to Tanzania. They visited every site in northern Tanzania where the simtanks had been installed. They then traveled seven hours south to Morogoro to meet with Father Dan Pekarske and visited every one of the wells that had been rehabilitated. "It was awesome to experience the hospitality and welcome wherever we were in Tanzania. They were so grateful, so appreciative," said Sister Virginia about the trip. "We went out in the rural areas and saw how the people live and the polluted awful sources of their water and then also got to see the joy in the faces when the well was completed and how the quality of life was changing for them in just a few months."

A team of 29 volunteers, which included **Sisters Carol Besch, Bertha Bonert, Pat Farrell, Clara Streng, Nancy Meyerhofer, and Brenda Whetstone**, participated in the 2008 SWP service trip. The team was housed in a parish center in the town of Esquias in Honduras. Each day the team traveled to Las Guamas to dig ditches and bring pipes to family homes in the village. The team worked side by side with the local villagers--young and old, men and women. Rev. Tom McDermott, pastor of St. Ludmila Parish in Cedar Rapids, who was a member of the team said, "I believe peace begins with justice. It's not right that we have so much and these folks don't even have clean water." Since the distance between the village and the water source was quite long, the SWP team was not able to dig all the trenches needed. The following week, students from Briar Cliff University in Sioux City, Iowa, completed the project and saw the water flow come to the community.

*(Continued on the next page.)*

## 2009

On May 15, 2009, Sister Clara Streng and Mount St. Francis employee Pat Sievers organized a Sister Water Walk-a-thon at Mount St. Francis for sisters, associates, and employees.

Later that summer, a committee was initiated to give guidance to the SWP effort. The committee met quarterly in the evenings with a one all-day meeting in the fall. Concerns of the committee were ongoing education in the area of water scarcity, fundraising, and decisions concerning the allotment of water funds.

In 2009 the Congregation of the Humility of Mary from Davenport, Iowa, began donating funds annually for a ring well in Tanzania. Sister Pat Miller, CHM, coordinates this project in Davenport and promotes awareness of the needs in Africa.



*School children at a Sister Water Project well in Tanzania. Contributed photo.*

## 2010

In February 2010, the SWP committee decided to send funds for a water project in the colonial of Bella Vista in Honduras and the local prison in Gracias, Honduras. They also approved funding for 11 simtanks for the Bendel Memorial Secondary School, Moshi Diocese, Tanzania.

In May 2010, Sister Pat Farrell met with Gary Gansemer of the Dubuque Rotary Club and Father Tom Tureman to explore the possibility of another new funding package for the Rotary group in Tanzania. Dubuque Rotary had already set aside \$5,000. The suggestion was that if the Sister Water Project and the Salvatorians each donated \$2,500, then the total sum of \$10,000 would receive



*Members of the 2011 Sister Water Project service team in Honduras. Contributed photo.*

matching funds from within the Iowa Rotary group. The committee approved this proposal and allotted the funds for this joint project. "Clean water is something we take for granted," said Dubuque Rotarian Gary Gansemer. "I've never cherished a glass of water as much as I have the last two years."

## 2011

On January 2, 2011, the third SWP Team left for Honduras. Sister Pat Farrell led the group and **Sisters Nancy Schreck**, Ruth Kleitsch and Brenda Whetstone participated with the team. The 19 members of the team visited the house in Gracias before traveling on to the village of El Pelon in the department of Intibuca. Catholic Relief Services coordinated the integration of the Sister Water Project team with the work of the local village members. This work was challenging, and Sister Pat advised the team, "not to even think about keeping up with the work pace of the Hondurans." Volunteers partnered with Hondurans digging trenches as a massive water system serving seven communities advanced toward completion. The main line of 18 miles to the village had been completed, and the work of the SWP team was to dig trenches to the households in the community.

"Our team left with the mission of water, but soon we realized that our mission encompassed so much more," said SWP volunteer Anna Lucas Marin. "We spent our days working along with or along side Hondurans. We spent nights in companionship with our team and our Honduran neighbors. We were shown generosity from the day we arrived until the day we departed. I witnessed first-hand on this trip that it isn't what is given, but rather, how it is given."

*(Continued on the next page.)*

In May of 2011 James Anthony Nyangas, the president of Safe Water for Life and Dignity (SWLD) visited from Tanzania. While in the United States, James spoke to parishes, schools and the Dubuque Rotary Club about the partnership between SWLD and the SWP. He also met with the SWP committee and shared a detailed report of each step of the process that the SWLD team undergoes beginning with funds arriving in Tanzania until the completion of each well. By the end of 2011, the Sister



*Sister Water Project Committee Member Sheri Hosek uses a SWP well in Tanzania in 2014. Contributed photo.*

Water Project had funded projects in 45 locations in Tanzania. Most of the financing was for the construction of ring wells for rural villages, but some of the money went toward pipe hook-ups, simtanks, and underground water storage tanks for schools, clinics, parishes, and the surrounding areas they serve.

## 2012

On June 14, 2012, James Anthony Nyangas and Father Dan Pekarske drove to Dubuque from Milwaukee to connect again with members of the SWP committee and to renew the friendships that James had made during his visit in 2011.

In 2012, ring wells were built in 12 villages in southern Tanzania, and one system of rain water harvesting through a large holding tank was built in northern Tanzania. By the end of 2012, donated funds to the SWP were nearing \$500,000.

## 2013

On Sunday, March 17, 2013, sisters, associates, donors, and friends celebrated raising over a half a million dollars for the SWP at Mount St. Francis. "I think you can be very proud of yourselves and the SWLD people," said Father Dan Pekarske, in attendance at the celebration. "Africa is a continent that is littered with well meaning projects. Someone came in and built this or put that up and then they left. A year later or two years later, it broke or it needed something and no one knew what to do. You have funded through the SWP about 50 wells and

each and every one of those wells is operating," he continued.

When the Sister Water Committee shared their fundraising news with SWLD representatives via Skype, they responded that the celebration had already begun in their country: "The people in Tanzania celebrate every time they fill their buckets with clean water." By the end of 2013, eight more wells had been built/rehabilitated in Tanzania.

## 2014

In June 2014, Sister Water Committee Members Sheri Hosek and Brian Gilligan traveled to witness the projects funded in Tanzania. They spent two weeks traveling with the members of SWLD in the Morogoro region, witnessing new well constructions, visiting existing wells in use, and celebrating final well installations with local villagers. "We have learned much about SWLD and the inner workings of the group and the people," said Brian Gilligan. "The trip was invaluable for that reason alone, but to witness the need and the help thus far given is off the charts. The things I have seen I will never forget." Donors Rudy and Sheryl Tekippe also joined Sheri and Brian for a few days while in Tanzania and together they visited Sister Water Project well sites. SWLD helped complete/rehabilitate an additional 14 wells by the end of 2014.

*(Continued on the next page.)*



From L to R: Sisters Pat Farrell, Mary Beth Goldsmith, and Franciscan Associates Jane Shey and Mary Stephany work to dig a trench in Honduras in September 2016. Contributed photo.

James Anthony Nyangas visited Mount St. Francis again and gave updates on the SWP in Tanzania. In December of 2015, the SWP had completed its 100th well in Tanzania.

## 2016

On September 24, a 14 member mission team, which included Sisters Nancy Miller and Terri Rodela, traveled to the Honduras to meet Sisters Pat Farrell and Mary Beth Goldsmith where they worked to make potable water accessible to three villages near La Iguala. Volunteers dug trenches for the installation of PVC pipes, which would connect to a water tank high in the mountains. *(Read more on page 9.)*

To show their solidarity with the

mission team in Honduras, sisters, associates, and Mount St. Francis employees held a Sister Water Project walk on September 24. *(Read more on page 11.)*

“The SWP has led us far beyond where we initially imagined going. The project has been a source of inspiration for many and a concrete gesture of effective solidarity with people who lack a basic necessity for life,” said Sister Kathy Knipper. “We are proud of our community commitment and grateful for all those who have joined us in this effort. The continued need is immense, the challenge remains, and our commitment is unwavering.” ■

*(This article was written using “The Origin and Early History of the Sister Water Project,” by Sisters Rita Goedken, Virginia Jennings, and Judy Sinnwell as well as “Sister Water History,” by Sister Carol Besch.)*

## 2015

In 2015, the SWP committee developed a Sister Water Ripple Effect Lenten calendar.

The focus of the 2015 Lenten calendar was to create awareness of and provide education on water issues while raising funds for the SWP each day of Lent. “We invited everyone to print this calendar and use it throughout their 2015 Lenten observance to learn water-related facts, tips, or challenges, causing them to think about their own water usage,” said **Sister Kathy Knipper**. Many parishes and schools in Iowa and other states used the calendar for their Lenten almsgiving.

The SWP committee also implemented a SWP speaker’s bureau in 2015. The speaker’s bureau offered free presentations to schools, civic organizations, and non-profit groups to share the SWP story and help raise awareness of water issues and water usage.

## Sister Water by the Numbers

Number of completed/supported water projects in Honduras: 20  
 Number of completed/supported water projects in Tanzania: 137  
 Number of service trips: 6 (4 to Honduras, 2 to Tanzania)  
 Number of volunteers who participated in service trips: 98  
 Total donations: \$975,000



Members of the Sister Water Project service trip to Honduras with their host family in La Iguala. Contributed photo.

## SWP Honduras Trip 2016

by Jessi Russo



*“At home you can donate clothes or money, but to physically get in there and work with the people--it felt like instead of helping--you were actually serving.”*

Mary Myers, Sister Water Project Volunteer

On a Friday night out with her girlfriends Erin McGrane of Cedar Falls asked her friends to let her know of any mission trips they might hear of. Two days later she spotted a flyer for the Sister Water Project service trip to Honduras posted in the back of her parish at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Waterloo, Iowa.

“I saw it and thought, ‘OK, I guess here’s my sign,’” said Erin. “I was talking about it on Friday, and there it was on Sunday.”

The trip scheduled September 23-30 was to help make potable water accessible to people in rural La Iguala as part of the Sister Water Project. Volunteers were needed in rural La Iguala at the end of September to help locals dig trenches for the installation of PVC pipes, which would connect to a water tank high in the mountains.

Sister Water Project Committee Member Brian Gilligan was also one of the 14 volunteers on the trip. He explained that due to the high altitude of the water source in the mountains 10 miles from the villagers’ homes, locals in the area of La Iguala had been working for 23 years to plan and fund the complex water project.

(Continued on the next page)

“These people have never had running water,” said Brian. “They collect rain water off the roof of their homes. In the dry season, they rent a truck and buy water at a town two hours away.”

So when the 14 member service team, which included **Sisters Nancy Miller and Terri Rodela**, arrived from the United States to help break ground on the project that would soon allow for water to flow into villagers’ homes, the joy was evident.

“The Hondurans were very happy and very excited to see us—it was almost like we were rock stars,” said volunteer Steve Kennedy of Waterloo.

Every morning the team, which also included **Sisters Pat Farrell and Mary Beth Goldsmith**, who minister in Honduras, would be driven 45 minutes to the work site at the mountain.

“Then we would throw a shovel, pickaxe, or hoe over our back and walk another 45 minutes up the mountain to get to the job site,” said Steve.

The volunteers dug trenches alongside 60 Honduran men from the local villages.

“It was hard work but it didn’t really bother me. I was glad to do it and just kept on going,” said Erin.

Though the work was physically demanding, volunteers didn’t bemoan the conditions.

“We were challenged by that terrain but I never heard much complaining,” said Steve. The spirit rises to the occasion.”

For Mary Myers of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, working alongside local villagers who would have ownership of the water project was special.

“At home you can donate clothes or money but to physically get in there and work with the people—it felt like instead of helping, you were actually serving,” she said.

The volunteers’ dedication to the project touched Sister Mary Beth Goldsmith.

“I was amazed and impressed with how the whole team entered into the experience and wanted to get the most out of it,” she said. “When I say this, it was not only how much work was completed, but in the interaction that I saw each team member make in a effort to form a



Top photo: Volunteer Sue Webber high fives a young girl in La Iguala. Bottom photo: Volunteer Erin McGrane stands in a trench she helped dig. Contributed photos.



relationship with the Honduran people.”

At the end of the week, the American volunteers found it difficult to say goodbye to the Honduran people who they had grown close to.

“It was hard to leave because you felt like there was more to do,” said Mary.

The project continues in Honduras and will take villagers another 5-6 months to complete.

Now back at home, the volunteers hope the people they served in La Iguala will soon know the joy of running water.

“While we worked, we were dirty and couldn’t wash our hands. We had to use hand sanitizer and wipes,” said Erin. “The first time I was able to wash my hands, I started crying when I turned the water on because I know the Hondurans never get to do that. That was an emotional moment.” ■

*Donations can be made to the Sister Water Project by mailing a check to the to the Dubuque Franciscans: Sister Water Project, 3390 Windsor Ave., Dubuque, IA 52001 or online at <http://www.osfdbq.org/>. Click on “donate now” in the top right hand corner.*

# DBQ Franciscans Host Walk for the Sister Water Project

On Saturday, September 24, the Dubuque Franciscans hosted the Sister Water Project Walk at Mount St. Francis.

The walk was held to show support to the service team members who traveled to Honduras with the Sister Water Project on the morning of September 24. “It was important to show our solidarity with the sisters and volunteers in Honduras,” said **Sister Kathy Knipper**.

The volunteers worked to make potable water accessible to people in the rural village of La Iguala, near the town of Gracias.

Over 100 sisters, associates, and Mount St. Francis employees participated in the Sister Water Walk and raised a total of \$3,722. Participants of the walk wore T-shirts with the Sister Water logo and a quote from W.H. Auden: “Thousands have lived without love, not one without water.” The quote was also printed on the T-shirt in Spanish and Swahili, which are the native languages of

Honduras and Tanzania where the Sister Water Project is working to provide safe water to villagers.

Sisters, associates, and staff also donated 1,504 bottles of water at the event. Resources Unite, a non-profit in Dubuque, delivered the water bottles collected to residents in Flint, Michigan, in October. ■



Sister Rosie Vaske (right) with Mount St. Francis employee Andrea Peterson.



Sister Pat Heuer waves to the camera as she participates in the walk with (from left to right) Sisters Edith Halbach, Myra Weigl, Rita Green, and Mary Arnold Staudt.



Sisters Imogene Klein and Joanne Streck take part in the Sister Water Project Walk.



Sister Romaine Pickart gets a helping hand from Sawyer Adams at the Sister Water Walk on September 24. Contributed photo.

# God's Incredible Goodness in the SWP

by Sister Nancy Miller, OSF

“**P**erspective changes” was a repeated comment made by members of the Sister Water Project (SWP) service teams. Having served on two Sister Water Service Teams to Honduras, in 2007 to Pozitos and in 2016 to La Iguala, I have a unique perspective.

It was a privilege to be part of both SWP teams and to be able to work alongside the Honduran people in digging trenches in order to bring water to their villages. The Honduran people, especially the children, welcomed us into their village and home and the women prepared three meals daily for us. It was humbling and their hospitality was beyond words. Working alongside the Honduran men digging, pickaxing through rocks and shoveling dirt to create trenches was hard work, yet gratifying as we got to know each other despite language and cultural differences. It was amazing how people from a variety of backgrounds could come together and bond as a larger community, working together for a common goal.

In both Sister Water Project service teams, people entered into the experience with great enthusiasm, even though it was new territory, a new experience, and at times very challenging. People bonded together and looked out for each other – a sense of community was created among ourselves and with the Honduran people.

We were perpetually called to be patient, flexible, and open to changing plans, recognizing that we were in a different cultural reality and needed to let go of schedules and a sense of having control over anything. There was a constant reminder that we were in God's presence with the

Sisters of St. Francis and others praying for us. On both trips, traveling over water covered roads and potholed mountainous trails, led us to prayerful intercessions as well.

There were 30 North Americans on the 2007 team. In 2016, there were 18 on the team--with 16 North Americans and two native Hondurans. In 2007, we worked with the Hondurans from one village; in 2016, we worked with villagers from three different villages, 20 each day from each village – so we were constantly meeting new people, and they were also getting to know each other.

With a smaller team in 2016 it was easier to get to know each other. Our housing and sleeping accommodations were very cozy (one could say) so it created a certain kind of close living and need for good communication. A sense of community was built during our team's evening sharing sessions and even though we were exhausted, tired and needed a shower, everyone's openness to share was a real graced time.

We listened to the stories from various local Hondurans about their dreams to bring water to their villages and for a better life for their families. We learned from the beginning that we were a part of a much bigger plan of bringing water to this region of Honduras. This plan was part of major collaboration and support from a broad network of civil, religious and diverse organizations. We met with officials from the Water Engineers For the Americas and leaders from other municipalities and participated in several ceremonies and celebrations.

One “peak” experience with the Honduran people was a meal we shared on the mountainside – it was an experience of true community and sharing eucharist. At noon time, the women literally carried pots of food up the mountain on their heads and shoulders and fed the multitude of workers – North Americans and Hondurans--women and men, people from diverse backgrounds and we shared food and eucharist in the beauty of the mountainous countryside. It reminded me of Jesus feeding the multitudes on the mountainside. It was a powerful experience.

We concluded our last Sister Water team meeting reflecting on how we were going to “Pay it Forward.” As I said, “perspective changes” and each time I shower, I am reminded of the Honduran people as they continue their work for safe potable water. I will share their story and ask people to continue to be generous to the Sister Water Project. On our way home on the airplane as we approached Miami in turbulent weather, the clouds suddenly dissipated and a double rainbow appeared. What an awesome sign of God's incredible goodness! ■



Sister Nancy Miller in Honduras during the 2016 Sister Water Project service trip. Contributed photo.

# Safe Water for Life and Dignity

By James Anthony Nyangas

**S**afe Water for Life and Dignity (SWLD) began in 2006 by six men who were students at the Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Morogoro, Tanzania. I was one of the founding members and chosen by the group to be the first president and CEO.

I was motivated to help the poor who are suffering from the lack of clean and safe water, among these poor are peasant farmers, women and children of Tanzania. Today, despite the fact that SWLD and the Sister Water Project (SWP) have completed hundreds of water projects, serving thousands of people there are still so many communities, which lack clean and safe water. The extent to which the water problems persist challenges us to continue with the work. Water is essential to life. Without water there is no life. It is a gift to life. Therefore, the work SWLD and SWP are doing is greater and more important than what we are. There is no other noble work than helping our people who suffer from the shortage of water.

Members of SWLD have jobs outside of our work with the SWP. I am a lecturer and permanent employee at Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania. Daniel Chuma is a Lecturer at Jordan University College (former Salvatorian Institute of Philosophy and Theology) and Novatus Mugendi is a private teacher. We are full-time volunteers to SWLD. Each of us spends at least three hours a day during week days and 8 hours during weekends in the fields for SWLD, a total of 23 hours a week.

When I am at the side of a well and clean water is pumped out for the first time, I feel so excited and relieved that our people finally have clean water. The people are also very happy and the whole occasion becomes so emotional. Some villagers even cry as they are overwhelmed by joy. Some community members show their gratitude and appreciation by singing, dancing and giving



Members of Safe Water for Life and Dignity (from L to R): Novatus Mugendi, Daniel Chuma, and James Anthony Nyangas. Contributed photo.

gifts to SWLD and staff such as live chicken, grains, etc. This gesture makes us really extremely happy. We always tell the villagers its not us (SWLD) who made it possible but the generous donors who should be thanked. We are just instruments or vessels God has sent to serve His people. ■

## Remembering Fr. Dan



Father Dan Pekarske, SDS (left) with Sister Carol Besch, Marcel Chukwuma, and Sister Michelle Balek at Mount St. Francis in March 2013.

Father Dan Pekarske, SDS, died September 27, 2016. Father Dan was an important part of the Sister Water Project's history since he was instrumental in the SWP's partnership with SWLD in Tanzania. SWLD began with his help at the Salvatorian Institute, in Morogoro. He was host to **Sisters Virginia Jennings, Judy Sinnwell, Rita Goedken, and Dorothy Heiderscheit** on their visit to Tanzania in 2008 and visited Mount St. Francis several times. The Sister Water Project Committee has named a well in Mwaja, Tanzania, in his honor.

# Sisters Partner with Catholic Charities for Immigration Simulation in Dubuque

by Dan Russo for *The Witness*

Whatever position you take in the debate about immigration, one thing is very clear — average Americans have little to no knowledge about how our current immigration system actually works. Catholic Charities of the Dubuque Archdiocese partnered with the Dubuque Franciscan Sisters to help remedy this lack of awareness about the immigration process by holding an “immigration simulation” on October 28.

About 75 volunteers, many of them Catholic Charities employees or community members from around the Archdiocese of Dubuque who work with immigration issues, gathered at Steeple Square to participate. Over the course of several hours, part of the group pretended to be immigrants of different types attempting to enter the country and/or receive legal status. Others played the role of immigration officials, attorneys, judges, and even human smugglers and con artists that try to take advantage of immigrants. Participants were given a backstory of who they were to portray, some money, forms and other necessities. They were then asked to go through the immigration system. The stakes were high — some could end up in jail, deported or defrauded, while others found the opportunities they needed.

Each 15-minute increment counted as four years. By the end of the exhaustive exercise, a select subset of people became citizens, others were still working at other various points in the system, and some remained in foreign countries or without legal status domestically. In one word, the system is “complex.”

“If we do a simulation and people are not confused then we’ve failed,” said **Sister Shirley Fineran**, who led the simulation. “Many of (the immigration forms) change and they are 20 pages long. If you don’t speak the language, it is all the more complicated. The process is challenging and difficult and long,” she added. “When people are undocumented, it’s not necessarily that they don’t want to start the process, it’s that it takes so long and some people have no hope.”

According to statistics from the Department of Homeland Security, the United States admits about one million legal permanent resident immigrants a year and another roughly four million on long term legal temporary status. This makes our nation the leading country in the world when it comes to accepting immigrants legally. These figures don’t include the myriad of people who enter the nation without legal permission each year. The Pew Research Center reports that the U.S. foreign born population in 2015 was 44.9 million, a record high.

The system does work well for many, but many others suffer, including those who are victims of labor and sex trafficking and those families who are separated. Some have no hope at all of legal entry. The gathering prayed for comprehensive immigration reform. Some participants, like Father Paul Ouderkirk, had experience helping immigrants — in his case during the aftermath of the 2008 immigration raid in Postville, Iowa.

In the simulation, he portrayed a young adult refugee from Africa who, with the help of two brothers and a mother, was eventually able to navigate the system to citizenship. For him, the entire simulated process from refugee camp to citizenship ceremony took 12 years.

“Doing this simulation, you realize how important it is that we have comprehensive immigration reform. A Band-Aid approach is going to fail,” said the priest.

Catholic Charities provides services to immigrants and has recently hired a full time immigration attorney after assessing the great need in the region.

“There’s a lot of misinformation out there,” said Tracy Morrison, executive director of Catholic Charities. “We want to provide quality affordable representation.”

Mike Mbanza, who provides legal services to immigrants as part of his position with Catholic Charities, played a government official during the simulation. “I hope that they (the participants) came to realize how frustrating and challenging the process is for immigrants to get lawful status,” he said. “I’m an immigrant myself and I went through the process,” he said. “The reason I became a U.S. citizen is because I didn’t give up. I think all people should have hope and know this is a land of opportunity and not give up.” ■ *This article first appeared in *The Witness*.*



Sister Shirley Fineran, OSF, speaks at the immigration simulation on October 28. Photo by Dan Russo of *The Witness*.

# Returning to the Source

by Sister Teresine Glaser, OSF

One of the presentations during the April Gathering invited participants to reflect upon Mother Earth through the writings of two men named Francis: Francis of Assisi, the founder, and Francis of Rome, the pope. Prompted by this approach, some participants expressed their desire to delve more deeply into the writings St. Francis directed to his brothers and sisters. In each of his 30 writings Francis addresses specific instructions related to living in the footsteps of Jesus. Aware that he could not pass on the Gospel message personally to his many followers, Francis expressed his intention that they read his letters. He closes his First Letter to the Faithful with the following exhortation: “In the love which is God we beg all those whom these words reach to receive these fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ written above with divine love and kindness. And let whoever does not know how to read have them read to them frequently. Because they are spirit and life, they should preserve them together with a holy activity to the end.”

Franciscan friar Thaddee Matura advises Franciscans that “to reconnect with the freshness and vigor of the Franciscan spiritual current, one must return to the source,” i.e. to Francis’ own writings.

During the week following the September Gathering, eight women took Matura’s advice seriously, returning together to immerse themselves in Francis’ writings. As reported by all participants, the most meaningful aspect of this shared time was the responsibility each person accepted to share her insights about one writing with the group. This accountability, along with sharing presentations of each participant, brought Francis’ writings alive in ways participants had not previously experienced. Several weeks later, Franciscan Associate Mary Ann Koch wrote, “I am still marveling at how much I enjoyed my week of study with our little group.”

*Sisters Teresine Glaser (with book), Mary Assumpta Glaser, Madonna Lang, Liz Cummins, Mary Lee Cox, Jeanette Homan, Meg Gemar, and Associate Mary Ann Koch gather at MSF to learn about the writings of St. Francis.*



Vocation Minister Sister Pat Doody (to the right of the sign) with members of DAVA at the NRVC award banquet. Contributed photo.

## Dubuque Area Vocation Association Recognized for Collaboration

At the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) held in Overland Park, Kansas, October 27-31, 2016, the Dubuque Area Vocation Association (DAVA), received the Mustard Seed Award.

The Mustard Seed Award is given to an individual or group that has made a significant impact on vocation ministry through a small, local initiative that has grown to include other individuals, groups, and organizations.

DAVA represents 12 congregations of religious women and men in the Upper Mississippi Valley, including the Dubuque Franciscans, who collaborate with the Archdiocese of Dubuque to promote vocation awareness. As vocation ministers, they reach out to nurture, promote, encourage, and help those who feel called to religious life.

The NRVC is a professional organization of vocation ministers who present religious life as a viable option in the Catholic Church. NRVC promotes vocation awareness, invitation, and discernment to life as a religious sister, brother, or priest. Nearly 300 participants gathered in Overland Park for the 15th Biennial Convocation with this year’s theme: “Awakened by the Spirit: Called to Discipleship” which emphasized the invitation from Pope Francis to those in consecrated life to “Wake up the World.”

## Beneficiary Designations - The Three Easiest Ways to Leave Your Legacy

by Sister Cathy Katoski, OSF

**A**lthough many people think of a will as the easiest way to transfer assets after their lifetime, it doesn't cover everything. In fact, retirement plans, IRAs, life insurance and commercial annuities are controlled by separate beneficiary forms. These beneficiary designations trump your will, making them effective and easy ways to leave a legacy.

**1. Retirement Plans and IRAs** - A charitable contribution from your retirement plan or IRA is a tax-wise gift. Here's why: a retirement plan or IRA is typically the largest source of assets that generate taxable income when paid to a beneficiary. More than half of your retirement plan assets could be subject to income and estate taxes. If you are considering a gift to your favorite charities after your lifetime, it is better to leave taxable assets to charity and give nontaxable assets (such as stocks and real estate) to your loved ones.

**2. Life Insurance Policies** - Maybe you once needed life insurance for your loved ones, but now your family's requirements have changed. Why not use the insurance policy to help advance the

mission of your favorite charities? Not only will you make a substantial gift at a relatively low cost, but it is revocable at any time should you need to change your plans.

**3. Commercial Annuities** - Commercial annuities carry an income tax burden when paid to named individual beneficiaries. The income tax is due on the growth of the annuity--what its value is worth when you die, over what you paid for it. The tax burden makes these assets another popular choice to leave to a tax-exempt organization.

**The Importance of Updating Your Designations** - Beneficiary designations can be modified at any time to meet your changing needs. Experts suggest reviewing them every two to three years when you review your entire estate plan. This is especially true for life insurance policies. You may have named your parents when you got the policy in 1968, but they died in 1995.

To complete a gift from your retirement plan, IRA, insurance or commercial annuity, contact your company or agent for a change-of-beneficiary form. ■

## Franciscan Common Venture Volunteers Travel to Honduras to Help Build Parish Center

**A** team of six volunteers traveled to Gracias in Honduras, with the Franciscan Common Venture Program November 19-27, 2016, to help the local faith community construct a much needed parish center. Team members were Dan Shea, Marion, North Carolina; Brandon Walls, Dyersville, Iowa; Dan Allman, Peosta, Iowa; Cindy Kobusch, Peosta, Iowa; Joe Schoeckmoehl, Cascade, Iowa; and



Franciscan Common Venture volunteers show their "hands for service." Photos by Sister Phyllis Manternach.

Kathleen Allman, Peosta, Iowa. "They did incredible work and Father Loncho is very happy with all they have accomplished," said **Sister Brenda**

**Whetstone**, who ministers in Honduras. "Our days began early and ended late in the evening. The team was tired but have enjoyed themselves. It was rainy and a little cold--lots of mud, but no dampened spirits with this group! They jelled well and it was a privilege to work with them." ■



Back row (L to R): Dan Shea, Brandon Walls, and Dan Allman. Front row (L to R): Cindy Kobusch, Joe Schoeckmoehl, and Kathleen Allman.

# In Remembrance

## Sister Ramona Colling January 15, 1921 - October 3, 2016



**V**alera Colling was the seventh child born to Fred and Mary (Marx) on a farm in Granville, Iowa. Both her parents were of

Luxembourg heritage and the family spoke the language in their home. Valeria was very proud to be bilingual and she could speak it throughout her entire life.

Living on the farm was one of her greatest joys. It was there that she learned to appreciate nature: flowers, birds, growing crops, sunrises and sunsets, the rising moon, and the list continues. Leaving farm life was one of the most difficult things about entering the convent.

After attending school at the age of five in a one room school house

until third grade, Valeria attended St. Joseph School in Granville. The school ended with 10th grade, at which time she joined the group who commuted to St. Mary's Academy in Alton for grades 11 and 12. With this educational background she thought she should be a teacher and after some college years, Valeria began teaching in a one-room rural school with nine students in the fall of 1939.

On August 25, 1943, Valeria took the train from Marcus, Iowa, to Dubuque by herself and became one of 16 aspirants entering Mount St. Francis.

On August 25, 1944, Valeria was given the name **Sister Mary Ramona**. Completing the novitiate training, Sister began her teaching career in the elementary schools at Hospers, Dubuque, Ionia, Stacyville, Larchwood, and in the high schools at Dubuque, Waterloo, and Sioux City.

In 1994, Sister celebrated her Golden Jubilee, and decided to retire from classroom teaching. However, she couldn't break from school completely, so she tutored students with special needs, did some substituting, filed in the business office, helped with mailings, judged speech contests, and worked outside in the yard. As she said of her retirement, "I kept comfortably busy."

Sister Ramona also enjoyed her time reading, playing cards, watching the game show, Jeopardy, playing bingo, and sharing stories. And who can forget that at the age of 93, Sister had her first plane ride with the pilot, Steve Wagner, an employee at Mount St. Francis.

Sister is survived by her sisters Agnes La Bohn and Florence Smid, her nieces and nephews, and her Franciscan sisters with whom she shared 72 years of her life. ■

## Sister Solano Breuer January 14, 1918 - November 29, 2016



**Coletta Magdalen Breuer** was born at her family's farm home in Glen Haven, Wisconsin on January 14, 1918. She was the second

youngest of eight children of Arnold and Anna Mumm Breuer. Her elementary schooling was with the Notre Dame Sisters in Glen Haven. She boarded with a family in Tennyson, Wisconsin, for the first two years of high school and completed her junior and senior years at the public school in Bloomington, Wisconsin.

After several years of helping in her parental home and at the homes of some of her married brothers and sisters, she pursued the call to religious life. By this time she and her parents had moved to the town of Glen Haven. Reading the many Catholic magazines and the Butler's Lives of the Saints found in her home influenced her vocation. Having a cousin, **Sister Rose Zimmer**, in the Franciscan community living in Dubuque, was one of the determining factors as to where to enter.

Coletta entered Mount St. Francis on September 6, 1941, and a year later, on August 12, 1942, was given the name **Sister Mary Solano**. After the novitiate years she began 19

years of general housework at Mary of the Angels in Dubuque followed by 35 years at St. Francis Home and Stonehill Franciscan Services, where over the years she was a nurse aide, a dietary aide, housekeeper, and floor coordinator. Nothing was too menial for her to do. In fact it was said that Sister would seek out the most confused residents and with infinite patience help them with their personal needs.

Sister is survived by her sister, Anne Wagner, her sisters-in-law Agatha Breuer, and Dorothy Breuer, her nieces and nephews, and her Franciscan sisters with whom she shared 74 years of her life. ■

## Rest in Peace

**Hubert Rodrigue**

Brother-in-law of Sister Davida Loosbrock

**Lynn Bakula**

Sister of Sister Kay Forkenbrock

**Joel Klisart**

Brother of Sister Mary Klisart

**Gerald Kelchen**

Brother-in-law of Sister Mary Ann Helle

Along the way...

## BCU Dedicates Sisters of St. Francis Prayer Garden

Briar Cliff University held a dedication ceremony on Oct. 2 for the new Sisters of Saint Francis Prayer and Reflection Garden on campus.

Located between Heelan Hall and the Chapel of Our Lady of Grace, the peaceful setting was designed to honor the 191 members of Briar Cliff's founding order who have served at the university — from the school's 12 foundresses to the group of sisters who still currently work and teach at the university.

All 191 women are listed on a commemorative plaque in the garden.

"Our commitment to our students builds upon those simple life teachings modeled by these influential women," Tina Stroud, vice president of university relations and a Briar Cliff alumnae, said at the ceremony. "They embraced us, challenged who we thought we were going to be and taught us the importance of self-sacrifice."

The garden was made possible thanks to generous donations from BCU alumni, many of whom attended the ceremony. The event, which included a blessing from Rev. Gerald Feierfeil, was held in conjunction with Homecoming and Alumni Weekend on campus.

If you wish to make a donation in honor of a sister, visit [www.briarcliff.edu/PrayerGarden](http://www.briarcliff.edu/PrayerGarden). ■



Dr. Hamid Shirvani, president of BCU, with the sisters currently serving at Briar Cliff (from left): Sisters Ruth Schock, Janet May, and Sister Shirley Fineran. Not pictured is Sister Mary Jane Koenigs. Photo contributed by BCU.

## Sister Karla Kloft Protests Dakota Access Pipeline



Sister Karla Kloft with her travel companion Chad Feuerhelm in Standing Rock, North Dakota. Contributed photo.

Sister Karla Kloft traveled to North Dakota protest with the Standing Rock Sioux, who oppose the Dakota Access pipeline's construction, near the Sioux reservation on November 17 and 18.

"What is going on there is absolutely horrible and those people have a right to their water. It's another instance where big money tries to roll over the little people," said Sister Karla.

While there, she met people from all over the country and even as far as Scotland who had come to protest the pipeline. "It's a real community. They care about each other and they have a common goal. It was a beautiful atmosphere. It was really profound."

Since returning from North Dakota, Sister Karla continues to think about all of those protesting. "I've come home with a really heavy heart because of the oppression of these people — yet I have hope in a sense because there is such a spirit and spirituality of the people."

On Monday, November 14, several Dubuque Franciscans joined a protest at U.S. Bank in downtown Dubuque to show their opposition to the bank's financial support of the Dakota Access pipeline. Together the protesters chanted, "We can't drink oil, stop this pipeline!" and also sang "Water is Life."

On December 4 it was announced that the Department of the Army would not allow the pipeline to be drilled under a dammed section of the Missouri River and it would look for alternate routes. ■

## Sisters Offer "Franciscan Way of Life" Process in Dubuque

If you're looking to grow your spiritual life in 2017, consider joining the Dubuque Franciscans in a program designed to provide a deeper understanding of Franciscan values.

"Franciscan Way of Life" is a free two-year process that is presented monthly in Dubuque beginning January 2017.

Participants in the program will meet from 2-3:30 p.m. every third Wednesday of the month beginning January 18 at Holy Trinity Church, in Dubuque; or 6-7:30 p.m. every third Thursday beginning January 19, at Shalom Spirituality Center, in Dubuque.

"Franciscan Way of Life" is available to men and women of all faiths who want to learn more about Franciscan Gospel values and how to incorporate those values into daily life," said Sister Pat Doody, OSF. "Participants will learn about the stories of St. Francis and St. Clare, medieval Italy, Franciscan spirituality, and the Franciscan values of conversion, poverty, and contemplation."

To register or for more information, please contact **Sister Pat Doody** or **Sister Michaela Galles** by phone at (563) 583-9786 or by e-mail at [doodyp@osfdbq.org](mailto:doodyp@osfdbq.org) or [gallesm@osfdbq.org](mailto:gallesm@osfdbq.org).

# Living with Clean Water in Tanzania

We asked our partners at SWLD in Tanzania to interview villagers about how their lives have been

affected by the Sister Water Project. We are grateful to our benefactors who have helped us bring clean water to Husna, Hamidu, Mariam, and so many others. ■



Name: Husna Sadala

Age: 20

Children: 1

Husna used to walk two to three miles to fetch water from unprotected sources. She noticed that the food cooked in unclean water did not taste right even when the water had been boiled. Husna said her family experienced stomach diseases and skin infections due to drinking and bathing with unclean water. Now she has a fast, easy, and reliable source of water that is safe for cooking, washing clothes, doing dishes and bathing. Husna said the SWP well has increased solidarity with villagers as they gather at the water point to discuss social issues.

Name: Hamidu Salehe

Age: 67

Children: 9

Hamidu used to obtain water from a shallow well or buy water from vendors who sold water from unknown sources. It was difficult to get enough water for his large family. Hamidu would wake up very early in the morning to wait in line at an unprotected well, which was almost three miles from his home. He experienced many fights between people over water. Hamidu no longer has to wait in line or search for water and the SWP well has saved him time, so he can now participate in agricultural activities, which helps him earn some food for his family. Hamidu has also witnessed his family's health improve since the installation of the SWP well.



Name: Mariam Gujege

Age: 41

Children: 2

Mariam used to walk between two and three miles to obtain water from unprotected sources. Those wells were shallow and dried up during Tanzania's dry season and she and other villagers suffered due to the shortage of water. There were often conflicts between villagers over water due to scarcity of it. Now Mariam has clean and sufficient water for her household. Her distance to the water source has been reduced to less than .5 miles.

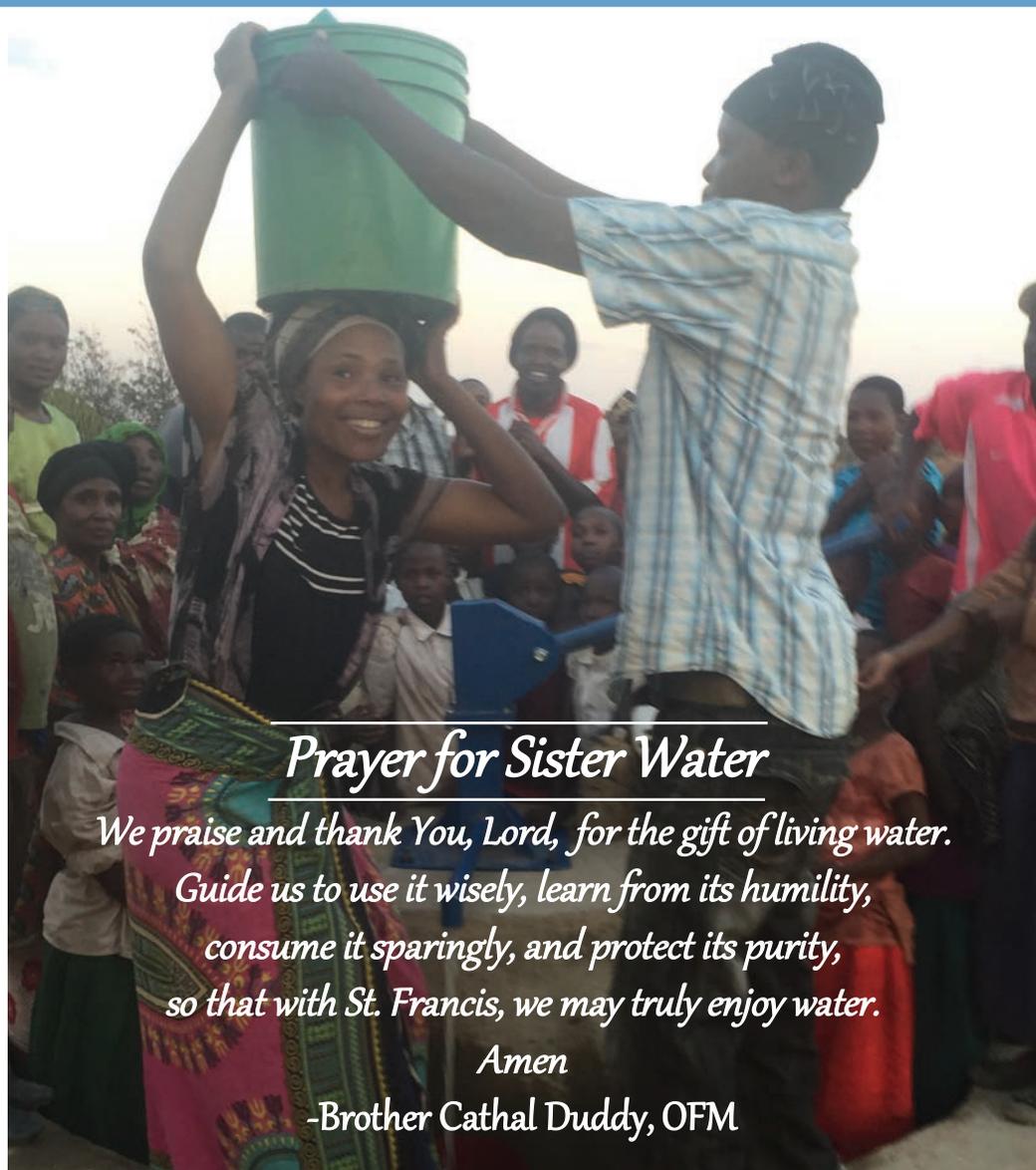
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## *Prayer for Sister Water*

*We praise and thank You, Lord, for the gift of living water.*

*Guide us to use it wisely, learn from its humility,  
consume it sparingly, and protect its purity,  
so that with St. Francis, we may truly enjoy water.*

*Amen*

*-Brother Cathal Duddy, OFM*

## Calendar of Events

### **JANUARY 18, 19**

Franciscan Way of Life, 2-3:30 p.m. every third Wednesday of the month beginning January 18 at Holy Trinity Church, in Dubuque; or 6-7:30 p.m. every third Thursday beginning January 19, at Shalom Spirituality Center, in Dubuque. For more information, call MSF at (563) 583-9786.

### **MARCH 1**

Retreat: "Today's Challenge of Conversion: Learning from Francis" with Fr. Mike Crosby, OFM Cap., 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Shalom Spirituality Center, 1001 Davis St., Dubuque. For more information, call Shalom at (563) 582-3592.

### **MARCH 1-3**

Retreat: "Time to Grow in Our Discipleship" with Fr. Mike Crosby, OFM Cap., Shalom Spirituality Center. For more information, call Shalom at (563) 582-3592.