



Dedicated to Serving God's People...

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Manitowoc, Wisconsin

As a community of consecrated women, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity have a common purpose of participating in the three-fold mission of the Church—witness, fraternity and ministry.

The consecrated life of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity is also one of service in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi. Like Saint Francis, they discern their service in “out of the way” urban and rural areas of Arizona, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin. Sr. Annette Kurey reflects: “When I go to a new place and a new culture, especially a place that is poor, I lean on that grace of obedience and know that God will get me through no matter what is ahead.”

The sisters come together daily to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, knowing that the Paschal Mystery is the heart and center of a Christian community. To further incarnate the presence of Christ among them, they join Him in the common celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and a



daily hour of contemplation. Like Saint Francis, they treasure God's presence in His Word.

To liberate themselves from the principal obstacles to love—a divided heart, the fascination of material things, and the tendency to pride, they profess the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. As a religious-apostolic congregation, they dedicate themselves to and remain available for a diversity of roles in Catholic education, Catholic healthcare, community services, and ministry to the needy and the poor. They accept new forms of apostolic activity which are compatible with the aim and spirit of their congregation.

Today, they may serve as parochial and secondary teachers, instructors on the college level, Parish Administrators, Health Care Administrators, music teachers, medical ethicists, spiritual directors,

directors of religious education and youth ministry and in community outreach. From the Motherhouse at Silver Lake in Manitowoc, the sisters may be found teaching at their conservatory of music, serving at Our Lady of Good Help Shrine, hosting Camp Franciscan for young women and working with young adults at their college: Silver Lake College of the Holy Family.

In Michigan, for example, you will find them assisting in campus ministry at Michigan Tech. In Mississippi, they assist in three parishes. Franciscan Sisters offer a ministry of hospitality in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. In Omaha, a Franciscan sister serves at the Pope Paul VI Institute directing the Center for NaProEthics. In Ohio, they work with Genesis HealthCare System as mission director, chaplain and other work. In Arizona, the sisters work at St. Peter Indian Mission on the Gila River Reservation. Where there is a need, the sisters have responded.

The community been involved in health care and education for well over 100 years. In 1985, because of the ever-increasing complexities of health care delivery in the United States, the congregation's various health care ministries—which include acute and long-term care facilities, senior housing and physician clinics—were incorpo-





rated into the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity HealthCare Ministry, Inc. In 2012, the name was changed to Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Sponsored Ministries to reflect the addition of the congregation's Silver Lake College of the Holy Family, located in Manitowoc.

In all their services to others, they strive to live faithfully their vowed commitment to extend peace, share faith, bring hope, sow love, spread joy, seek truth, promote justice, bring healing, foster reconciliation, and communicate the moral and spiritual truths of the Faith. Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity welcome young women caught by the spirit of Saint Francis and fired with a burning love for Jesus, to join them in service to God's people. ☁



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In the Spirit of the Founders. . .

An Apostolic Life Built Upon Love

The history of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity is a glimpse into the early days of religious life in the United States. In 1854, Rev. Ambrose Oschwald and 133 other men and women departed Germany for eastern Wisconsin to establish a community modeled on the lives of the early disciples of Jesus. Called Saint Nazianz after St. Gregory Nazianzen, Father established two Third Order Regular Franciscan communities a few years later.

In 1865, Rev. Joseph Fessler, a newly ordained priest from Saint Nazianz, asked 23-year-old Teresa Gramlich, a member of the community, to come to his parish as a catechism teacher. In 1866, Teresa took up residence in a building across from the church. That same year, another group of people led by a Precious Blood priest came to join the colony. Among these was a Precious Blood Sister, Mary Ann Graf, who after meeting Teresa, convinced two other Precious Blood Sisters, Josepha Thoenig and Rosa Wahl, to join her. The four women began their postulancy as a fledgling community under the direction of Father Fessler. He entrusted them to the care of Mother Caroline, the founder of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in America. They were soon joined by Sophia Fessler, Father Fessler's sister.

On November 9, 1869, the foundation day of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, they were received into the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and received their religious names: Sr. Maria Coletta, Sr. Mary Hyacintha, Sr. Maria Ga-



briela, Sr. Mary Seraphica, and Sr. Mary Odeli (the first superior). One of the sisters returned to her Precious Blood community but they were soon joined by three other novices.

In 1873, the cornerstone of their Motherhouse was laid at Silver Lake, the present Motherhouse, and Teresa Gramlich (Sr. Gabriela) became the first elected superior. Things changed dramatically in 1875 with the arrival of 27 Poor School Sisters of St. Francis from Germany, who were fleeing religious persecution. The two communities were amalgamated together with natural tensions between the American and German sisters. When the Motherhouse caught fire in 1881 and destroyed many belongings, it providentially heralded a new beginning together.

The thriving community worked in education, healthcare and care for the elderly and moved into ministries beyond the Wisconsin border. In 1900, they were given as spiritual fathers the Order of Friars Minor Conventual with whom they became affiliated. Today, they live the apostolate life in the loving community spirit of their foundresses, built on faith in a loving God, joyful acceptance of poverty, love for the Church, and selfless dedication to the service of others.