

Franciscan Season of Giving

a word from Sr. Theresa

Between the feast days of St Clare and St Francis (August 11 and October 4), we ask for your support in raising funds to meet our obligations and dream about the future.

In this season of prayer, discernment, and reflecting on the gifts of community, we share some of the voices of the Franciscan Spiritual Center. Our aim is to name what happens in this community and how we perceive its value. We hope it engages you and motivates you to support us. We hope it encourages you to pay attention to what is sacred in your life.



Six years ago, I volunteered to be a hostess for the Franciscan Spiritual Direction Training Program. Often, I would hear laughter and music coming from their meeting room. I found myself being drawn to what was happening in the room. I wanted to plant a chair outside of their gathering and eavesdrop, but somehow that didn't seem right. So, instead, I just walked **really** slowly each time I passed by their room! 😊

Then Sr. Mary Jo and Eileen invited me to sit in on some of the guest speakers. I was hooked! There was a special spirit that was palpable. I wanted this!!! So much so, that I applied for the next cohort for the Training Program. I loved all that we learned, the deep sense of connectedness with my new friends and cohort. There was such a sense of bonding and community that, even years

later, my cohort still meets virtually each month.

One thing that I heard time and time again in our program was OUR PRESENCE is the best gift we can offer others.

I am thrilled to serve as a spiritual director at the Franciscan Spiritual Center. It makes my heart sing as I sit with others and hear their hearts' journeys. I have also discovered that being present comes in many forms. The training helped me find more ways to be present to others.

For the past couple of years, I have been able to take care of both of my parents. My congregation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, has missioned me to this ministry and to the work at the Franciscan Spiritual Center. I am truly grateful for my community's generosity.

Caregiving is not always easy, but it is a gift of time and love that I can offer at this time of my parents' lives. I never dreamed I would be able to walk this journey with my parents in their aging years. Not everyone is able to do this. I am one of the lucky ones! My dad struggled with a number of health issues, but dementia was his biggest cross. He was my rock - always loving, wise, and humorous! Dad had both a strong faith and a great love of family. Dad and Mom nurtured my faith, as well as my sense of humor (warped as it may be, at times!) My dad went to his eternal reward in October of 2023. He is greatly missed, but I treasure all the time I was able to be with him.

My mom is still with us, and each day I try to find a way to love her more, to make each moment happy for her! Sometimes, her memory is not what she would like, but she remembers the love she is shown every day. She remembers the popcorn and movie nights, the random ice cream evenings, story time before bed, and friends stopping by to visit. Oh, and her garden outside her front door. Mom loves to sit out there and bask in the beauty of both the garden, the bay, and the ocean. She can see the water and the forest from her home, and it does not escape her that God has made all of this possible for her. My family and I are able to allow her to age in place. She was born and raised at the coast, so she truly is at HOME!

I cannot tell you how many times she thanks us for being there with her. I know I will not always have her, but I am going to take this journey with her as long as I can. As Julian of Norwich says, "Do the next loving thing." I know that the best gift we can give my mom is to be with her and walk this road together. Sometimes we just sit and no words are spoken, but the love shared speaks volumes. For Mom, decisions are harder now. Words don't always come and health issues crop up. But she never has to battle alone. Her family is a comfort to her. When my mom takes her last breath, I will know that we did our best and that our loving presence with one another blessed all of us.

Thank you, Franciscan Spiritual Center, for touching my heart and calling me to

both ministries, Spiritual Direction and Caregiving. I am forever grateful!

Theresa

Spiritual Director

Click [HERE](#) to read the stories in the *Season of Franciscan Giving* series.
Email your own stories to cnaylor@francisspctr.com.

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