

# Franciscan Season of Giving

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## a word from Sr. Mary Jo...

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Together, we are entering a season of prayer and thanksgiving.

We share with you the voices of our Franciscan community as an invitation to recognize what is sacred in your life.

We also invite your partnership through financial support.

With your gifts, we can reach our \$30,000 goal and continue this work into the year ahead.



This summer I was able to mark 30 years of celebrating God's Extravagant Love through the Franciscan Hermitage Experience. In 1996 the first Hermitage Experience was a small group on Palatine Hill. Over the years we found space in various other beautiful retreat spaces and camps. And in 2025 I joined 41 retreatants for a day of celebration. I joined by Zoom and relied on my co-facilitators (Connie Isgro, Terry Capiello, and Michelle Kroll) as never before.

When I began this ministry endeavor in 1994 it was as part of my Master's

Thesis in Applied Theology. My heart quickened as I studied and researched my project delving into Franciscan resources. My head enjoyed the studies, but it was my heart that responded with excitement as I knew I was called to do this. And with the support of many it flourished for years. I desired with all my heart to facilitate an experience that would give all of the participants (who we called hermits) an opportunity to rest in the luxury of being loved extravagantly by their God whose only desire is to be with them. Each hermit's solitude in her or his "little hut" was honored and protected, meals were abundantly and carefully prepared, and prayer together was integral to all we did. We danced in creation, reflected on the lives of Francis and Clare, pondered their legacy, and explored how to walk in our world today as Franciscan peacemakers.

What was foundational to this experience? In addition to time to be away and time to refocus as we do in all retreats, we intentionally include a centering in relationship, which is the cornerstone of the Franciscan movement (relationship with God, with all of creation, and with oneself).

June marked the last hermitage experience that I will personally facilitate. I have moved south of Portland to Mt Angel and into an Assisted Living facility where I can receive support in managing some medical challenges and which allows me to keep as independent as I am able. My ministry at the Franciscan Spiritual Center has and will need to change, becoming more limited, but not disappearing.

Relationship still remains the cornerstone of my Franciscan life whether I am sharing a meal with other people here in Mt Angel, visiting with friends, or engaging in my own personal and communal prayer with the Benedictines who live here. My heart beats with the heart of Francis and Clare – their statues grace a table outside my room.

I am still a part of the Franciscan Spiritual Center. It cannot be otherwise for me. I will be who I am called to be: spiritual director, relational person. New opportunities will be revealed. All possible because you, our donors, keep us viable and alive. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your financial support. Thank you for your Franciscan hearts. We are one.

We are all pilgrims together on the journey.

We are not in a hurry.

We are not in control.

We walk in faith and trust.

We greet everyone with peace.

And we bring back only what God gives us.

With gratitude,

# Mary Jo Chaves

Spiritual Director

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To make a charitable donation to the Franciscan Spiritual Center:  
Mail a check payable to FSC, PO Box 144, Marylhurst, OR 97036  
or  
use our online portal.

**Give**

To share your own word of reflection, thanksgiving, or prayer:  
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