

Franciscan Spiritual Center

Renew one's spirit | See with new eyes

Learn and connect | Find peace, quiet, and rest



October 2026

Just to be is a blessing.

Just to live is holy!

How many transitions have you been through this last year? Life is full of changes that invite an internal reset, a new way of being, personal transformation - some major and others small.

Maybe you were uprooted from a home you loved with gardens. Maybe you moved to a new residence that took time to settle into. You may have taken on a new role with its invitation to awaken long forgotten skills. These are invitations I know.

In 2000, I retired from teaching after 30 years. It was time but I dearly missed the daily interaction with young students.

Then, in 2022, I left parish music direction and choir coordination. I missed planning for the liturgies and the direct interaction with the choir. Today, I remain a member of the choir.

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Since 2002, I've been with the Franciscan Spiritual Center in some capacity or another - as bookkeeper, front desk greeter, Taizé director, and now Lectio Divina facilitator. I love this place. I cherish the staff I work with here as well as the praying community that comes together on Mondays. All are special people.

Recently I've been recognizing the call to embrace elderhood. I'm sure many of you are in that same place. I've been reading Joyce Rupp's book, *The Years of Ripening*. It has given me the chance to reflect on my own journey of becoming an elder. Rupp's naming of elder issues can be a reflection that could help anyone. All of us are aging.

For me this is my take on "getting up there in years." Elderhood is a transition that creeps up on us. We all go through it. It is a call to a new way of being.

We've been taught from an early age to "get going," be productive, don't waste time doing nothing. As we age our bodies tell us to slow down. Our limbs begin moving slower. The energy to keep producing isn't there. We need more rest. No more "should-haves" or "gottas"!

Our lives have value in and of themselves. There is no need to prove anything to anyone. We all know this in our heads. To experience it and have our hearts accept it is different, though. This is real!

I want to accept the invitation of doing less and being more. I am learning the truths of "just to be is a blessing," time to feed the soul, and to pay attention to my inner life. I am now able to savor the time to be still and to gaze in wonderment at the "Christ soaked universe" (as Richard Rohr calls Creation). This is a time to strengthen relationships and recognize that each moment is holy! I believe this is something that we all have known all of our lives, but this is the time to embrace it.

At the Franciscan Spiritual Center, the staff and program facilitators offers many opportunities to help be-ing become rooted in one's soul. There is spiritual direction (both individual and group), which helps directees recognize how God is working in daily life. There are opportunities for prayer in community—meditation, Taizé, Lectio Divina, day retreats, and praying through writing and collage. Or you may take a walk and be bathed in the beauty of the Marylhurst campus!

I invite you to check out the Franciscan Spiritual Center website, <https://www.francisspctr.com/>. Read about the many offerings and see what invitation the Divine Spirit is holding for you.

Thank you for the many ways you support the mission of the FSC.

May the lord bless you and always give you peace,

Celeste Clavel

September 2025

In the past year, my role on staff at the Franciscan Spiritual Center has changed. After many years acting as the ministry's bookkeeper I gave that role over in October 2024. But I longed to continue to be present, to be of service, and to be in the community of others. I became the front desk keeper on Mondays. I came in for our weekly faith sharing and prayer as a staff, a laughter-filled lunch with all staff

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present and some regular beloved guests, and afterward I was the welcoming face at the front reception desk.

Now a new role is arising. The Franciscan Spiritual Center will begin to offer a monthly opportunity for shared prayer and reflection in the form of Lectio Divina—divine or sacred reading. We will do this in a group and I will facilitate it. Its purpose is to nourish the gift of contemplation and deepen our relationship with the Divine.

I receive much encouragement when I sit with Scripture and allow it to nourish me. I often begin by reading a passage from Scripture and seek out different translations of the same text. If I am with others, I get to hear the same passage read by different voices. I pay attention to words, phrases, or images that “sparkle” a response in my heart. (That is Lectio.)

I recently read Luke 10:38-42 where Martha and Mary welcome Jesus to their home. Martha is about hospitality and service, while Mary sits and visits with Jesus. I see the scene—Martha scurrying about, Mary sitting comfortably with Jesus - both women about making Jesus feel at home.

Then I (or we in a group) sit in meditation. During this time of silence, I might dwell more deeply on the scene, repeating a word or phrase from the reading, consider how it applies to my life, ask for guidance, offer gratitude. Or I might even express my concern over the words Jesus uses, “Mary has chosen the better part.” I may even draw something or write down my thoughts. (Meditatio.)

And, in response, we pray. During this time I may engage in conversation with the Divine, sharing my thoughts, feelings, or questions I may have. “Jesus, sometimes I am Martha, busy about hospitality to others, fulfilling their needs. After all, You did commission us to be your hands and feet. And sometimes I am Mary, sitting and listening to your every word. Don’t I need to be both? What say you, Jesus? Why did you use the words ‘better part?’ It almost seems like you dismissed Martha and the work she was doing.” (Oratio.)

And then we rest in God’s presence. Quieting my mind, I spend time simply being in the Divine’s presence, receptive of grace and Divine Love, not analyzing or planning. Just resting in God without words or thoughts. Just resting. (Contemplatio.)

Sometimes I have something I want to share with another. Sometimes I simply trust that by bathing myself in the movements of divine reading, it will tend to me without my knowing how.

You are always welcome at the Franciscan Center,

Sister Celeste Clavel

September 2024

Something I appreciate about the community that is the Franciscan Spiritual Center is how there are many ways we pray together and encourage one another in spiritual growth. I suppose this happens when diversely gifted people gather.

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At this moment in my life, I've noticed that solitary prayer flows for me when I am in a garden. The seeds, the tiny ecosystems, the vegetables, and yard work open me up into a kind of prayer. Communal prayer, I've noticed, flows in me most naturally when music is present. Music prompts and answers my heart's prayers. I love that music and song are best made in community.

Contemplative First Fridays (hosted at the FSC) have become a community with whom I pray. I've been privileged to lead Taizé prayer, along with Hoa Nguyen and My Phuong Vo, for many years at the Franciscan Center. We started on Lake Road; then moved to Milwaukie. During the pandemic, we managed to gather pray-ers online. Now we make our home on the Marylhurst campus, and many new musicians and friends have joined us.

It blesses me to watch how other people's prayer lives are nourished like mine is. It gives me joy to see how people contribute to the gatherings. Val Hornburg, Tom Welch, and Laura Spurrell facilitate a Labyrinth walk. Nichole Carruba, Linda Smith, and a team of regulars cook and serve up a Simple Supper. A growing number of musicians (including Ann, David, Ed, and Julia) have joined with their gifts. As a Portland-based community, we seem to have caught the spirit of the original Taizé (tau zay') community who gathered during a dark time in history to pray for peace.

This October the First Friday (Oct 4) falls on the Feast of St Francis, so our Simple Supper will be a feast day gathering! And the Thursday night before (Oct 3) marks the Transitus of St Francis. We are planning for a gathering of song, dramatic story telling, prayer, and community to mark the passing of Francis through death.

For my entire adult life, I have been a Franciscan Sister, and have attended many Transitus services. But, if I am being candid, it took me a full lifetime to begin to understand what the Transitus is about. This year I lost two brothers. Both suffered illness and decline before they passed. My heart broke in the goodbyes with each of them. I suspect my heart will never restore to the easy place it was before their deaths. I was given the gift of time to offer comfort and companionship in their passings. Transitus, I think, is an opportunity for experiential learning.

Francis honored Sister Death saying, "Praise be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death from whom no one escapes." His transition through death was observed with love and a longing for Christ. We are invited to follow his lead. This is not an easy thing to do, but I think it is of great value. I know no other way to learn to do this difficult thing except in community.

With gratitude,

Sr Celeste Clavel

September 2023

My relationship with the Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia began in the fourth grade at St. Charles grade school in Spokane. By high school I was spending time with the sisters on weekends creating bulletin boards. In my senior year, Sister Emma Holdener (whom many of you know) started a high school girls' choir. I got to play the organ. It was a wonderful privilege. The seeds of ministry, which would later emerge in me, were planted then I believe. After graduating from Marycliff High School in

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Spokane, I joined in the novitiate in Portland along with seven other young women. We lived on Palatine Hill Road, a beautiful place to begin religious life. Later that year, we welcomed five postulants from Ireland. Some called us a wild postulant group as we were always looking for fun. All thirteen of us made it to profession on August 11, 1963. I would go on to teach elementary school in California, Washington, and Oregon. I carried with me a love of music and enjoyed the fun of school musicals.

In 1987 my own brother (Brother Didacus, OFM) and I went on pilgrimage to Assisi with other Franciscan sisters and priests. We gathered in the places where St. Francis and St. Clare had lived and walked. The Franciscan tradition was being revived at this time and the spirit of Francis awakened within me. I became acquainted with Franciscan scholars such as Fr. Joe Chinnici, Brother Bill Short, Sister Ilia Delio, and others of the Franciscan tradition. By 1999, when I retired from teaching, I received another opportunity to deepen my relationship with Francis and Clare. I took part in the "Franciscan Challenge," a six week program sponsored by the Irish Franciscan Province. So, off to Rome I went! The blessings of these weeks poured my way! The days were filled with even more deepening of the Franciscan spirit through classes and daily visits to places that mattered to our tradition. Since then, I have had the opportunity to travel with three pilgrimages sponsored by the Franciscan Spiritual Center. Such abundance! Each was rich in blessings.

For many of the last several years after my first retirement, I was the director of music at Ascension parish in Portland. When I started there, it was a Franciscan parish and my brother was on staff. It was wonderful to work with the friars in a Franciscan atmosphere. Through music, I could "preach" the Franciscan tradition by the music choices we sang and by small blurbs on the worship aids. In 2002, the Franciscan Center moved to Lake Road and they needed a bookkeeper. I said to myself, "Self, you can do that! I know how to balance a checkbook." (I didn't anticipate the learning curve that would soon be upon me.) Surprisingly, I was hired. Then, I found my niche to musically spread God's extravagant love through Taizé. With a faithful team, Hoa Nguyen and My Phuong Vo, we began Taizé services once a month at the Franciscan Center. The Taizé pray-ers crowded into the little chapel in Milwaukie each first Friday. During the pandemic we "met" on Zoom. Now on the campus of beautiful Marylhurst Commons we continue to meet on the first Friday of each month. This summer we met outdoors (and the birds accompanied us!) The number of participants has grown and our group of musicians expanded. The First Friday evenings at the Franciscan Center have become a contemplative experience by adding a labyrinth walk and a simple supper. It has become three hours of community gathering to pray with their hearts and voices and feet. All are welcome!

The Franciscan Center serves a diverse population and offers many opportunities to deepen a relationship with our Divine Maker. St. Francis spent his lifetime with the questions, "Who are you, God? And who am I?" This is what we explore at the Center through spiritual direction, prayer opportunities, classes, and programs. I invite you to join in our mission of peace, presence, and community by giving of your treasure during the Season of Franciscan Giving.

Pace e Bene!

Sr Celeste Clavel