

Summer 2008

Learning to Fly

In *Engaging Aging*, a newsletter from the National Religious Retirement Office, Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI, in an article on "Spirituality and the Second Half of Life" speaks of detachment. He says, "... we need to detach ourselves from the need to possess, to achieve, and to be the center of attention.

"As we move forward in our journey to a smaller place, this idea of detaching ourselves from the need to possess" certainly is taking center focus in our lives. While continuing to assist in meeting the needs of people in our area, we are also in the process of "letting go" of "things". Joining a city-wide garage sale, we were able to share with others those things we no longer need. And in the fall, as you see by the announcement, we will go even further with an auction to sell furnishings, antiques, dishes and cutlery, tools and general hardware. This will include sacred items and other articles that have meant so much to us in the past, but with which we know we must part. At the same time we are relinquishing more and more of our real estate. This process of "letting go" is both a tiring experience and a freeing one. It gives us a more visual picture of the transformation taking place within our province and the possibilities for continuing our mission.

Presently, we are moving forward with our plans to build a new provincial house and ministry center on some of our remaining property. Though we no longer have sponsored ministries, such as a hospital or nursing homes, we commit ourselves to being a viable presence in the rural community. In preparation for our provincial chapter gatherings in September, our pre-chapter meetings and our yearly retreat will concentrate on ways we can be more authentic in living our Franciscan charism and our Evangelical way of life. We want to further develop our outreach ministries to empower the needy to provide and care for themselves and their families. This will include the tutoring of children, adult literacy, household budgeting, family guidance, counseling, mentoring, and the teaching of basic life skills. We do not expect to do this alone but in collaboration with others. We will continue to be active advocates for those in need, especially women and children and to companion persons grieving the loss of loved ones, the frail and sick, persons experiencing depression or mental distress, the lonely and those in care facilities.

Prayer has always been an essential part of our lives. We realize the value of prayer for others, and likewise the value in being the recipients of others' prayers. We want to be more intentional in this ministry and to continue to promote the Gospel through the daily witness of our trust in the providence of God, offering and accepting sacrifices and suffering.

P. Overton said, "When we walk to the edge of all the light we have and take that step into the darkness of the unknown, we must believe that one of two things will happen. There will be something solid for us to stand on, or we will be taught how to fly." In our process of detachment, of "letting go", we know that we have something solid to stand on, and we can only hope to fly!

----- by Sr. Kathleen Reichert, OSF.