



## *Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate*

As Good Friday came to a close, our sister, Kay Francis Berger, reached out for the hand of Sister Death. As her dear friend, Sr. Joan Clare Wisner, predicted days before, Kay's journey home to God would not be completed until, united with Christ in the mystery of his sufferings and death, she could join her Beloved in an embodied proclamation of the words: "It is finished."

Born on September 4, 1933, Kathyne Francis Berger made her way into the world and into the arms of her loving parents, Marie (Ruppel) and Robert Berger. Growing up in Northwestern Indiana, in the company of her brothers, Robert and Richard, and her sister, "Londie" (Mary Rolanda), young Kay was an energetic, curious and creative child. Attentive to the wonders of creation, she was drawn into the mysteries of the handiwork of God from an early age. She took delight in all that Nature had to offer, marveling at the uniqueness she found in every creature and every created thing, great and small. As an imaginative student at St. Francis High School in Mishawaka, Indiana, she began making the Franciscan charism her own.

Following in the footsteps of the Sisters who were her teachers and sources of inspiration for her religious life, Kay entered the Postulancy of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration in the Fall of 1950. The following year, on August 12, 1951, she was received into the Novitiate and given the name Sister Mary Columban. On August 12, 1953, she professed her vows as a Franciscan Sister. In the years of ministry that followed, Sr. Columban was simultaneously a teacher in grade schools and high schools as well as a student herself. In the course of her undergraduate studies at St. Francis College in Fort Wayne, Indiana, her interest in art and art history was intensified. In her pursuit of artistic excellence, she went on to complete a Master of Fine Arts degree at the Catholic University of America, along with post-graduate studies in Art and Art History at the University of Notre Dame.

# *Alleluia!*



*Sister Kay Francis Berger, OSF*

In the early 1970s, after more than twenty years of teaching children and adolescents, Sr. Kay Francis had a profound sense that her vocation was evolving. Conscious of the God-given artistic abilities she had received, she discerned that she was being called to devote herself single-heartedly to participate in God's mission as a Franciscan artist. With gratitude and affection for the Mishawaka Franciscan community that had formed her, she recognized that her rare and uncommon gifts needed to be stewarded in another congregational context if they were to flourish for the good of the Church, the Franciscan family and her own soul. She knew that the "fire burning within her heart" could no longer be contained. Guided by the Spirit, Sr. Kay Francis entered into a period of uncharted exploration and discovery. In the process, she came to know the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, a community endeavoring to come to terms with the evolving vocations of some its own Sisters and artists. In 1974 she began the canonical process of transferring congregations and on May 16, 1976, she officially transferred her vows to the Joliet Franciscans.

In September of 1976, Sr. Kay Francis became an "Artist in Residence" at St. Francis Convent. With each passing year, her artistry took on new dimensions and new audiences. Her studio, fondly known as "The Canticle," was a constant hub of unlimited creativity where she strove to find "new means of spreading the Gospel through her art." Developing her special interest in Franciscan-themed art, through drawing, painting and sculpture, she discovered countless ways of giving expression to the Franciscan charism. She deeply

*Continued on back*

## *Sister Kay Francis Berger, OSF*

*September 4, 1933—April 14, 2017*

understood the power of image as insight. As a consequence of her commissioned artwork, illustrations, exhibits and presentations at celebratory events of the Franciscan family, her images of Jesus, Mary, Francis and Clare are frequently found and immediately identified wherever and whenever Franciscans gather. Her numerous awards and recognitions attest to the value and importance of the vocation and mission she embraced with contagious joy, untiring enthusiasm and gracious humility. Lovingly honored as the *artist laureate* of the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Sr. Kay

Francis has been and will continue to be recognized internationally as an artist for the worldwide Franciscan family.

Like clay in the hands of the Potter, our Sister Kay Francis Berger held fast to the conviction that we – individually and collectively – are God’s work of art. With deep gratitude for her life among us, let us give thanks to God as we now return to Him the gift of this most precious work of art. With confidence and joy in the mystery of the Resurrection, let us sing as Kay Francis would have us do – Alleluia, Alleluia!

---

<i>Born:</i>	September 4, 1933
<i>Parents:</i>	Robert H. Berger and Marie Magdalen (Ruppel) Berger
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 8, 1950
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 12, 1951
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1953
<i>Transfer of Final Vows:</i>	May 16, 1976
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	April 14, 2017

---

### **Ministry History**

1975-1976	Teacher: Art, St. Francis Academy, Joliet, Illinois
1976-1993	Artist: Motherhouse, Joliet
1993-2016	Artist: The Canticle Art Studio, Guardian Angel Home, Joliet
2016-2017	Community Service

---

<i>Wake:</i>	Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 2:00-6:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Prayer Service:</i>	Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 4:45 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Mass of Christian Burial:</i>	Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 7:00 p.m., Our Lady of Angels, Joliet
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	By her parents, Robert H. and Marie Magdalen (Ruppel) Berger, and her sister, Mary Rolanda Fisher
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her two brothers, Robert and Richard Berger, and nieces and nephews

*Rest in Peace, Sister Kay Francis!*