**School Sisters of St. Francis**

**“For what does your heart long?”** This is a question that our God asks each of us every single day! God gently invites us to long for justice, for peace, and for love of God’s people in our midst. In this way, God calls us to missionary service in the ways that are most appropriate to our lives. Since our founding in 1874, the School Sisters of St. Francis (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) have longed for a world transformed by peace, justice, and love. Beginning with ministry in the United States, then expanding to Europe, Latin America, India and Africa, the School Sisters’ legacy of service lives on today in our sisters, associates, and faithful mission partners like you!

School Sisters of St. Francis serve internationally in a variety of ministries, particularly in the areas of education, health care, and social service. We are excited to share news of some of our missions with you, including:

**Assisi Special School, Bangalore, India.** Inspired by the words of one of our foundresses, Mother Alexia, to respond to the needs of the times, the sisters working in the poor villages of India saw a need to educate and care for the mentally and physically challenged children surrounding Bangalore. The vision to start Assisi Special School became clear after seeing a child restrained to a tree to keep him safe while his parents went out to find daily work. The sisters soon discovered that this one child was not the only special needs child who needed their care and with six children in 2009, Assisi Special School began. Since then, Assisi Special School has helped hundreds of children with intellectual, cognitive, and physical impairment to attend school, achieve greater independence and reach their potential. The children range from 6 to 17 years old, have varying degrees of neurological and physical disabilities and come from different cultures, rituals, and languages.

**Tanzania Mission, Songea, Africa.** In 2014, three sisters from our Assisi Province in South India traveled to Tanzania to begin the School Sisters of St. Francis’ presence in Africa. They made the arduous journey to Songea after accepting an invitation to teach at a parochial school. The sisters learned the local language, began teaching in the school, and provided pastoral service to the village families. Responding to the needs of this mission, our sisters dug a well to help provide clean water to the entire village. To keep our mission in Tanzania alive, several local young women have begun their studies to become School Sisters of St. Francis.

**Guadalupe Homes, Santa Apolonia, Guatemala.** Guadalupe Homes was founded in 1985 in response to the needs of victims of Guatemala’s 36-year civil war. In each home, sisters and volunteers care for the daily needs of orphaned and abandoned children. The children attend local schools for primary and secondary education, and also receive training in practical skills: carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring, agriculture, domestic arts, and computers.

**Asha Bhavan, Bangalore, India.** Asha Bhavan, translated as “House of Hope” in English, was founded in Bangalore, India by our sisters from St. Francis Province in North India. Our sisters operate Asha Bhavan to provide a loving home, nourishing food, medical services, and compassionate care to around 24 destitute mostly elder women who have been abandoned by their families. Many of these women are bedridden, mentally challenged, or extremely fragile in mind and spirit after having been abandoned. If not for the services provided by our sisters at Asha Bhavan, these women would be living, and dying, on the streets of India. Our sisters provide these women with help and hope, enabling them to regain not only their health, but also their sense of self-worth and self-respect.

**Oasis Franciscano Rieti, San Marcos, Guatemala.** The sisters from our Latin American Region founded Oasis Franciscano Rieti in San Marcos, Guatemala, as a response to the need for healing in the aftermath of the violence of the Guatemalan civil war. The sisters and staff at Rieti provide a place of safety and hope, especially for women and children of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Most families in San Marcos live in dire poverty and suffer from malnutrition. They have no access to medical care other than what they receive at Rieti. One way that our sisters are able to keep costs low for the people they serve is by cultivating the plants that are used for natural medicines in their own greenhouse and medicinal orchard. At Rieti, the focus is always on treating each person with dignity. Because of this, our sisters and Rieti staff enjoy a high level of trust among the local people. They know that they will receive psychological, physical, and spiritual healing through the loving and respectful treatment of the sisters and staff at Oasis Franciscano Rieti.

We ask for your support in the mission work of the School Sisters of St. Francis – both at home and internationally. First and most important – we ask for your prayers. If you have the ability to do so, please consider donating to the School Sisters of St. Francis for this year’s Missionary Cooperation Program. Your gift will make a forever difference to the people of God that our sisters serve. May God bless you!