



JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LOVE

by Joseph Makley, OFS



Jan Parker, OFS, former National Minister; Louise Sandberg, OFS, 2022 JPIC Award Recipient; Joseph Makley, OFS, Co-Chair, JPIC Commission.

What follows is a brief interview with Louise Sandberg, our JPIC award recipient for 2022.

Louise is currently a counselor and the JPIC animator for Tau Cross Region (The Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk counties.) Her fraternity is Blessed Raymond Lull, in Hewlett, NY.

What inspired you to become a secular Franciscan?

St Francis has inspired me since I was a little girl and read a biography of his life. My friend, Deacon Bob Campbell invited me to come to Franciscans Living in Community (FLIC), originally Secular Experience of Living Franciscanism (SELF). I was the only non-professed person there!! I had never even been

to a fraternity gathering. Bill McVernon seemed to be in charge. He came up to me and reprimanded me for not having a Tau Cross! When he heard my story, he gave me one and told me not to tell anyone! He is long gone to heaven. But I found my home with like-minded, loving people. Carolyn Townes was one of them. I attended all her talks and felt her to be a beautiful kindred spirit. I was already a missionary to Ghana, West Africa. With a spiritual director, I had looked into: becoming a religious, getting married, or staying single, because I wanted to follow God's call, not my will. God seemed to be calling me to a Secular life.

So I started going with Bob to his fraternity gatherings and was professed May 7, 2004.

What keeps you going?

I read the mass readings every day. I keep reading until I am inspired. Then I live that scripture the best I can, with God's help. I often join my friends on Zoom for prayer, meditation, the Liturgy of the Hours, and fellowship.

I love people. I maintain my connection with my friends in Ghana, Uganda, Mexico, and locally, those I serve, who are women and children in need. I run support groups in English and Spanish, including a group for healing from childhood abuse. I am inspired by the resilience and love of those who are materially poor but rich in love, joy, peace, compassion, generosity, and gratitude. Every day is an adventure and an opportunity to listen with love, serve with humility, and surrender my will and ego living the Gospel.

Can you describe your work as a pediatric nurse?

I am a pediatric Home Care nurse for very vulnerable, fragile children. What they are unable to do, I do for them. I believe in empowering my patients, loving them, and letting them teach me how they want to be cared for. My last few patients I watched grow from young children to mature adolescents and young adults. I even went to college with one!

I do their physical care—washing them, dressing them, helping them move and breathe. They show me how valuable life is by loving their lives, never complaining about their disability, and overcoming every obstacle with their determination and God-given talents, with a little encouragement and support. I cannot say pick up your mat and walk, but I can position their hand on their joystick so they can drive their own motorized wheelchair.

How did you decide to become a JPIC animator?

I feel like Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation chose me!! I always respond to the cry of the poor with prayer and action. In 1990, when the Jesuits and their housekeeper were killed in El

Salvador, I protested at the office of my congressman against the millions of dollars we were sending in military aid to El Salvador. It was being used to kill the people. In my prayer, I saw my tax money was killing innocent people, and I was in a place to safely protest, risking only arrest, while they risked death, mutilation, and disappearance daily. I was arrested and tried with nine other Catholics from Pax Christi. Ray McGrath, our congressman, voted against that aid for the first time during our trial.

When a Ugandan told me about people dying from dirty water, I looked at my access to clean water every day, all day. I decided to help. I raised the money for a protected spring for a small village. I thought this would be my one big contribution. When I went there on mission with Secular Franciscan Stephen Smith, OFS, (tothenationsmissions.com) after meeting him at the 2016 Quinquennial, I was greeted with drumming and dancing, gifts and a presentation. Then as I was ready to leave, I was introduced to another desperate community with dirty water! So with the 2022 JPIC award, look what we did!! (See before and after photos.)



Old unsafe water source in Uganda village



New protected spring providing clean water