**History of the Franciscan Spirituality Center**
**Compiled and written by Sister Mary Kathryn Fogarty, who served as FSC director from 1988 to 2000.**

According to the FSPA Leadership minutes, in November 1982, FSPA Leadership decided that an area of St. Rose Convent would be developed for a center where private retreats, workshops and education programs could take place. It was expected that the beginnings would be simple and the scope expanded as programs developed.

The years 1983 and 1984 were dedicated to planning and preparing. The first task was to relocate the FSPA Museum from this area of the building. Sisters Ruthanne Dayton and Georgiana Blum with the help of Viterbo students moved the museum to the Viterbo Fine Arts building for storage. Sister Margaret Wagner was commissioned with the task of the overall planning and remodeling. Sisters Mae Kaiser, Dorothy Brugmann and Francita Willenborg sewed up a storm making curtain and spreads. Maintenance men Cliff and Clarence sanded desks and remodeled St. Rose beds.

Sister Kathleen Kenkel set out to visit other centers in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. At one point, she and Sister Lucille Winnike met with Margaret Picka, SSND, to discuss how the School Sisters of Notre Dame from Mankato, MN, could help us begin a spiritual direction program. Sister Kathleen was also in discussion with others about the need for a space for extended contemplation and how the wooded spaces at Villa St. Joseph might be utilized for this purpose. (The hermitages were built in 1990.)

Sister Betty Daugherty, director of communications, designed a logo that is still in use today. Although over the years the logo has been tweaked a bit, the basic design remains.

In the summer of 1984, the sisters at large were invited to submit possible names for the center. The name selected was the Franciscan Spirituality Center. In October of 1984, Sister Pauline Wittry offered some programs on “Prayer Forms from the East and the West”; Father Mayer, part-time chaplain at St. Rose, presented a series on Scripture; and Sister Kathleen Adams offered “Dreams and Spirituality.” So it began.

In December 1984, Sister Kathleen was named the official director. The FSC Operating Board was established. Members were Sisters Lucille Winnike, Helen Esther Lueck, Rita Rathburn, Fran Ferder, Carita Carey and Pat Sheridan. Sister Maris was the Leadership liaison.

In February 1985, a variety of programs were offered: a ministry class with Fran Ferder; yoga with Sister Arlene and Laurian (both teachers at Viterbo); and Enneagram, to name a few.

Sister Kathleen invited many groups to consider the center for their meetings. To name a few of them that began coming in the early months: Marriage Encounter, priest support groups, Serra Club and deanery clergy meetings, Catholic, Methodist, St. Elias Orthodox, etc. congregations for staff meetings and renewals. Both hospitals began to use the space for meetings. Fred Kusch frequently brought personnel from Lutheran Hospital for days of education. There were also support groups meeting here, including Emotions Anonymous, Child Abuse Support and Alzheimer Support.

By summer 1985, Sister Ann Walters, CSA, joined the staff as a full-time retreat director and spiritual director. Sister Blanche Klein was hired as part-time spiritual director. In September, the Spiritual Direction Preparation Program began. Most of the participants were FSPA. Others that I remember were Father Larry Burger, Dick Behrens, Jane Jacobi from Stevens Point and a Brother Bede.

In September, Bishop John Paul was invited for a formal dedication of the Franciscan Spirituality Center followed by an open house for the public. The Dedication Proclamation probably took place in Grace Hall.

AND SO IT BEGAN!!