**Interview with Sr. Jude Fitzpatrick, CHM**

**Our Lady of the Prairie**

April 1, 2022

**Question #1**: Tell us about the Prairie. What are your general impressions?

* My main involvement was years ago.
* It has a special place in my heart.
* It was very much impacted by Covid but it gave the Prairie an opportunity to connect with people in new ways.
* The need for the Prairie is greater than ever.
* Perfect setting for us as a community to claim that we care for the earth.
* It allows us to practice what we preach.

**Question #2**: What are the strengths of the Prairie?

* The place itself. It is the perfect setting.
* The place draws people there (not a guru).
* Improvements to the place have been made.
* The purpose and need for the Center.
* The grounds and the property itself are very special.
* People who go there for the first time can feel the spirit of the place.
* People can stop in and feel the presence of this place.
* Sr. Margaret and her staff have expanded the program opportunities.

**Question #3:** What are the weaknesses of the Prairie?

* Loss of Sr. Margaret is leaving a large hole.
* Likelihood of a Humility sister filling that role is close to zero.
* Lack of space (although that is less important at this point).
* They rely heavily upon the CHM community

**Question #4:** How would you improve upon these weaknesses?

* Find a most capable director.

**Question #5**: Anything they should stop doing?

* N/A

**Question #6:** What do you see as the opportunities to grow the Prairie?

* Weekend retreat opportunities.
* Expanding program opportunities to people of other faith traditions.

**Question #7:** What do you see as the greatest obstacles to growing the Prairie?

* Aging of the community -fewer and older.
* It will be difficult for us to not be involved in deciding the future of this place.
* To make the experience accessible and affordable to people.
* To find the funding to pay for a professional staff.
* How do we address the need for a just salary without pricing ourselves out of the market?
* The place will always rely upon the Humility community for support.

**Question #8:** What do you suggest as strategies moving forward?

* We need to find a way to ensure the legacy of the Prairie beyond out community’s ability to be so directly involved going forward.
* If we end up selling the place, we should celebrate the life and mourn the loss.
* Find the most capable director we can and make a financial commitment to sustain the operation for a certain amount of time (cannot be year to year, but maybe five years or so).
* We have to be willing to put all options on the table and be realistic, including looking at other options for a sponsor of the Prairie at some point.

**Question #9:** What else would you like to share about the Prairie. Anything else?

* Consider asking the New Melleray community to help us financially support the Prairie.