

# Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare  
Saginaw, MI

## *Life Choices*

Recently I attended my nephew's wedding and found myself wondering, "How did this couple decide to marry and live their lives together when there are so many other possibilities open to them?" I also wondered, "How will their lives grow and change as a result of their decision?" As the feast of St. Clare approaches on August 11, it's a question we Poor Clare's ask ourselves as well; "How did we choose our life?" More importantly, we ask, "Why have we chosen to remain Poor Clares?"

The four of us in our Poor Clare community grew up in a Catholic culture in the 40s, 50s, and 60s, a culture that certainly influenced our choice of vocation. It was a time when big families centered their lives around school and parish life, and like many young girls we were sure by first grade that we wanted to be religious sisters. While the years shaped and changed many girls' initial fervor, for us the desire grew. Sr. Bernardone entered the monastery before finishing high school, Sr. Laurene entered during high school, and Sr. Dianne entered after a year in college. To become a religious sister used to be the only way Catholic women had to express their love of God by way of a devoted religious vocation. More recently, women have many more options such as becoming lay ministers, serving in Peace Corp or AmeriCorp. My experience was similar to that of women considering religious life today. I entered the monastery after finishing college and working for several years. With family sizes shrinking, there are fewer women looking into religious life, and when they do, they usually come having had a career, having experienced living independently, and having had more life experiences.

Whether we be lay or religious people it is not easy

for us to see how our lives are changing. Some of us stay with our original choices, others follow new paths. It happens that the four of us have chosen to remain Poor Clares. As we look back, we have come to realize what this life has given us. We cherish our life with each other in community. Some of us have lived over 50 years with each other creating a strong bond of intimacy. We share each other's gifts and foibles. We discover that the years take their toll, but our life together has opened our hearts to God's grace. Prayer becomes real through relationships; prayer helps us to plow through our natural resistance to change. As the years pass and each of us work through our own issues, we come to cherish each other more in our weakness than in our strengths. As odd as this may sound, in our vulnerability we share our deepest humanity.



A dedication to prayer and quiet in our community life helps us to trust God. We learn daily that God is working with us. As we look back we recognize that God helps us to understand each other and softens our hearts when we need to change. Just as we see that God cares for our emotional needs, we trust that God provides for our daily material needs as well. As Poor Clares, we surrender to God control over how and when we receive money. In the gifts we receive from others, we see the face of God in forms that we could never imagine.

When the four of us in our Poor Clare community made our vows so long ago, we had no idea of how our lives would grow and change. This brings me back to my nephew and his new wife. They can't know how their lives will develop as they grow and change. Our prayer for them is the same as it is for all of us: that we may receive the gift of God in our lives.

*continued on reverse*

We pray that God will bless us with faith, give us the grace to take time for silence in our relationships, and instill prayer in our hearts.

*Sr. Laura and the Sisters of St. Clare in Saginaw*

## Celebrating their years in ministry ...

Since our last newsletter, 16 religious women and men from the Saginaw Diocese celebrated their years in ministry. Among them was Sr. Laura who celebrated 25 years as a Poor Clare. She had the honor of leading the group with the processional cross for worship at a special Mass at St. Mary Cathedral.

Among the others honored were two celebrating their 60th jubilee, eight celebrating their 50th jubilee, and five celebrating 40 years of service.

In this newsletter, where we have been reflecting on how all of us choose our call and how our lives change as we live out our vocations, it is encouraging and moving to be reminded of the number of people whose long dedication to religious service inspires us all.



*Fr. John (40 years), Sr. Laura (25 years), Sr. Janet (50 years)*

## We invite you to visit our website and new video

Recently, with the help of our Franciscan brothers at St. Anthony's Press in Cincinnati, Ohio, we added a six-minute video interview to our website. As we mentioned in our opening newsletter article, the approaching feast of St. Clare on August 11 is an appropriate time for all of us to reflect on how we chose our life, and how we strive to live out our call. In our new video Srs. Dianne and Laura talk about our religious vocation and our early ministry in Saginaw. We also describe how we see ourselves and our community as companions in prayer to each other and to people who meet with us. We made the video to show our gratitude for you who have been our friends and companions over the years. We hope it is a reminder of how we all depend and learn from each other as we live out our different vocations.

With the ever expanding resource of the Internet, we have found an increasing number of people using our site to order our products, to find information on our life style, and to send us prayer requests.

*We welcome your prayer requests any time:*

<http://srsclare.com/prayer-request>

*We also invite you to visit our Sunday Journal at:*

<http://srsclare.com/practiceof-prayer/sunday-journal/>.



Website homepage ~ <http://srsclare.com>

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WE ARE PRAYING WITH AND FOR YOU.