

# Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare  
Saginaw, MI

## *Pope Francis*

When I saw the headline, "POPE RETIRES," I found it hard to think about a Pope retiring. Isn't the term of a Pope a life-long position? Nevertheless, soon it was announced that a new Pope had been elected. Cardinal Bergoglio is now Pope and has chosen the name Francis.

For those of us who are in our order of Poor Clares, "Francis" is a special name indeed. Our founder, St. Clare of Assisi, was a very good friend of St. Francis of Assisi. St. Francis founded an Order of men, while St. Clare began an Order of praying women known as "Poor Clares." We, in Saginaw, also use the name "Sisters of St. Clare."

Of course, we are delighted that our new pope took the name "Francis." It occurred to us that remembering the background of our beloved St. Francis might give us insight into the new Pope's leadership and approach to the world.

St. Francis of Assisi is remembered as being a gentle, humble, and poor man of Assisi. But that is not how his life began. As the son of a wealthy merchant, Francis had not experienced suffering, nor had his eyes been opened to the poverty around him. However, around 1205 Francis went off to fight in a battle between Assisi and the neighboring town of Perugia. During the battle he was captured

and imprisoned. In prison he became very ill, probably with pneumonia. His experience as a prisoner made him realize what it was like to be poor and helpless.

After his war experience, he saw that the life of Jesus revealed God's love for the poor and needy. As a result, he abandoned his wealthy life and chose to be among the poor in Assisi. In the **Testament of St. Francis**, we have Francis' description of his experience.

*"The Lord gave to me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance; for when I was in sin it seemed to me very bitter to see lepers, and the Lord Himself led me amongst them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, that which had seemed to me bitter was changed for me into sweetness of body and soul."*

In his description of his experience, Francis says that he is called to do "penance." In our time a "penitent" or one who does "penance," is someone who deprives himself or herself of something in order to show sorrow or repentance for sin. However, in the time of Francis, to do "penance," or to become a "penitent" meant to engage **in active actions of charity towards the poor who were seen as the body of Christ**. As he says in his statement above, as a result of his work with the poor he experienced a "sweetness" of body and soul.

*continued on reverse*

Like St. Francis, St. Clare found her “sweetness” or joy towards the body of Christ in the community through acts of charity toward others. While St. Francis worked among the poor and lepers, St. Clare worked giving acts of charity toward her sisters in community.

As I read about our new Pope Francis, I see him, like St. Francis and St. Clare before him, taking special interest and care for the poor. I also see his great humility. For example, in his first action as Pope, he asked us, the people, to pray for him! He bowed his head and allowed a time of silence to receive the prayer of the

people, the body of Christ. Usually the prayers come down to us. However, he received our prayers for him.

Many of us are experiencing sweetness of body and soul as our new Pope Francis breaks down barriers with acts of charity towards the poor.

We are told that after he was elected Pope Francis, a cardinal said to him, “don’t forget the poor.” From what we have seen so far, I don’t think there is any danger of Pope Francis forgetting the poor.

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## Coming Soon

Soon you will receive our fall brochure that highlights our Christmas cards. Please keep our cards in mind when you are ordering your greeting cards this season. We have four designs for the holiday season: *Mary*, *The Miracle has just begun!*, *In the beginning*, and the *Joy Wreath*.

(To see the cards visit our website listed below). As with all our cards, we seek to express the wonder and awe of the season with



original designs, elegant calligraphy, and deeply spiritual messages.

Our fall brochure also features our popular **Fragrant Blessing Oil**, as well as our **Sympathy**, **Pet Sympathy**, and **Clinging Cross** that offer support and prayers for those you care about.

We appreciate your donations and your orders for our cards and gifts. They help support our mission as *Companions in Prayer*.

To make an order see:

<http://srsclare.com/order-form>

You may also pay by credit card through Pay Pal.

**Sisters of St. Clare**

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*Please remember us in your charitable giving.*

*You are not alone*  
WE ARE PRAYING WITH AND FOR YOU.