

Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare
Saginaw, MI

Summer Solstice

This past June 20 the news reminded me that this would be the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. I remember it well because as I look back on that day, I consider it one of the longest and most encouraging days of my life.

It started early with the funeral mass of a 101 year old sister in our diocese. As we celebrated her life it felt as though the passing of an era was revealed before us. That evening, we attended a meeting of the Serra Club, a group whose mission is to foster and affirm vocations to the priesthood and vowed religious life. They also foster marriage and households, and form communities of discipleship through the Catholic Church.

This Serra evening gathering was filled with friends who support vocations in the diocese. I felt as though I were attending a family reunion, my family of faith. There were the youthful fresh faces of seminarians preparing to be priests, and the many lay people there to support them in their education. In addition, there were three of the four groups of religious sisters who belong to our diocese. Of the four religious groups in the diocese, two have new members who are interested in joining. Our community and one other do not have new women applying to join. Sister Dianne and I were seated at a table alongside one community that had four eager young women adjusting to their new role as sisters.

It is easy to question ourselves at times like these and ask, "What are our roles now?" "Are we still carrying out our vocations as we age and are able to do less work than previously?"

However, as I looked around the room, I sensed this family feeling of both lay people and religious, both young people and older retired members. I had a new certainty that we all have different gifts, and the work that Sister Dianne and I are now doing is of value. We have been gathering our history and creative projects from our 27 years in Saginaw. For example, I have over 25 years of greeting card designs in files on my computer. Dianne

has collected and saved our parish photo books and our photos and videos that we have made. We produced one tracing the life of our oldest Sister Bernie (99 years old) as well as our account of preparing for each other's death, which we called, "Walking each other home." These file records are in the process of being stored at the Archives of U.S. Catholic History at Notre Dame University.

Of all the files that we have, our personal files containing the letters from people asking for our prayers for their loved ones are the most precious to us. We feel the trust these people have placed in us to pray with them in both their joys and sufferings is a very rich and humbling experience. They often send us photos of themselves and their family. We like to receive these photos. They enable us to be more emotionally engaged when we pray. We believe of all the prayers prayed, God especially hears the prayers of our hearts with tenderness and compassion.

The majority of our prayer requests come from parents concerned about their children, and about their own financial stability.

Sometimes we don't hear how their situation turns out, but other times, after the family crisis has passed, they will



send us notes and photos. These are our treasures that we keep in our photo book and will always keep private.

We also keep photos of our own sisters over the years. These photos show us as young and eager as the young seminarians at the Serra Club meeting. I am inspired to pray for them and the challenges they will face in their future.

I have been blessed in this family of faith in Saginaw. I believe the seminarians and new sisters will be blessed as well. That is the joy of a family reunion – to appreciate blessings showered upon us over the long scope of time.

Someday our small Poor Clare community history will be filed away at Notre Dame, our closets of memories will be redistributed, and our house will ready for a new chapter to begin. However we will always keep our photo books with us. We know that the future will find us in the quiet steadiness of winter with new life always arriving.

Coming Soon

Advent web calendar

In the midst of summer holidays and heat, it may seem odd to be thinking about Advent and Christmas. However, because many people, both young and old, have told us that last year's Advent Calendar was a very special way for them to prepare for Christmas, we are presenting a new calendar for this year's holiday season that will appear on our website in November. This year our special focus will be on Mary who is the Mother of the Lord. She is the perfect disciple who listened and carried out God's plan. Coming in December at: <http://srsclare.com/practice-of-prayer/advent-2017>

These memories of love carry us daily, especially as I look over the Serra Club's Annual family reunion celebrating all our vocations and our gift of faith together. We look forward to many more occasions to pray in gratitude for the precious gift of life. We also hope to have many more celebrations to share the love and joy we hold in our hearts for our friends in this Saginaw diocese.

And that was how the longest day of this recent June Solstice beginning in a funeral and ending at the Serra Club encouraged me as we move ahead in our vocations.

(We are interested in your thoughts. Let us know at: <http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>)

Sr. Laura and Sisters

Published (Published (2017, August) at GLOBAL SISTERS REPORT: A project of National Catholic Reporter. Retrieved from <http://globalsistersreport.org/authors/laura-hammel>

New video:



In this video Sister Dianne and Sister Laura talk about the changes in their community with the move of two of their sisters to assisted living. They talk about how they are preparing for death in their community: <http://srsclare.com/>

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