



Dear Friends,

The Poor Clares of Montana have asked us, as their Advisory Board, to write you about recent events affecting their community, and to request your help. You may be aware that a crisis arose this past October, following discussions between the Sisters and the staff of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. We are writing to reassure you that those discussions have been replaced by a productive and hopeful dialogue, and that there is no longer any immediate risk that the Sisters will have to leave their monastery. There is, however, still a serious financial need, and your assistance is essential.

In 1999, a federation of existing Poor Clare monasteries entered into an agreement with Bishop Anthony Milone and the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, establishing the Poor Clares of Montana. Included in this agreement was the assurance that the Diocese would provide the land for a new monastery and cover the construction costs of the facility. As a result of this agreement, four Poor Clare sisters left their prior monasteries and arrived to begin a new community in Montana.

Within two years, as agreed, they began work planning and constructing their new monastery. At the time construction began on the monastery, the Sisters had on hand approximately \$555,000 to use for the construction of the monastery and retreat center. Total construction costs were estimated at \$2.5 million. At the Sisters' request, the Diocese advanced the remaining construction funds. By the time construction was complete, the Diocese had advanced approximately \$2.2 million.

Over the past seven years, the Diocese has expected repayment of these funds, with 7% interest. Through your generosity, the Sisters have made payments totaling approximately \$660,000. Unfortunately, the payments made by the Sisters have not been sufficient to pay all the interest charged by the diocese, and the total amount sought by the Diocese now exceeds \$2.35 million.

In October, the Diocese contacted the Poor Clares about the remaining sum, and pressed for payment. Some of you heard of these discussions and responded with financial support, expressions of concern and contacts with Bishop Warfel. Subsequently, Bishop Warfel and his staff met with the Sisters and a group of their advisors, and reassured the Sisters that the title to the monastery remains in the name of the Poor Clares, not the Diocese, and that there are no plans to relocate the Sisters. Further, the Bishop expressed his desire to work with the Sisters and their advisors to understand the nature of the obligation owed to the Diocese and to form a solid plan for addressing it in a way that is practical for the Sisters. The Sisters look forward to continuing positive discussion with the Bishop and his staff.

While the immediate crisis has passed, an urgent financial need remains.

We ask that you reflect and pray on this as you celebrate Christmas and make plans for the coming year. Do you have funds that you could contribute to the needs of the Poor Clares? Your significant year-end gift will go a long way toward helping the Sisters with their current serious need. Regular monthly gifts in the following year will also help them with their daily living expenses. We humbly request that you return the enclosed donation envelope with whatever you can contribute.

Sincerely,

Glenn Tremper  
Advisory Board Co-chairs

Fawn Waranauskas

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Return to: POOR CLARES OF MONTANA  
3020 18TH AVE. S  
GREAT FALLS, MT 59405-5167

Please pray for \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_

May God fill your life with peace!



# A Message from Bishop Warfel



My Sisters and Brothers in Eastern Montana,

This past year celebrated the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Poor Clares. As you likely are aware, Clare was a young and beautiful Italian noblewoman and a woman of great faith. When she heard St. Francis preach, her heart burned with a great desire to imitate what he was doing and emulate what he was about. Against her family's wishes, she made her vows before St. Francis, and the community of Poor Clares began. Now she and the women who joined her, living in poverty and trusting in the Lord's providence, could dedicate their lives totally to the Lord. Her vision for living has now been with us for eight centuries as it has been replicated by Poor Clare communities throughout the world.

What is most important about the life of Poor Clares today is their ongoing witness and prayer. In our contemporary world, people seem to have less awareness of an eternal and loving God who sent his Son to redeem us from sin and death. And people also seem to get caught up in materialism and consumerism, losing sight of what true treasure is. The Poor Clares provide an important service by the lives they lead. Trusting and witnessing to the reality of life totally dedicated to Christ, they remind us of what ultimately is important.

It is my prayer that they may continue to provide such witness of God's love in Christ to the people of Eastern Montana. As they regularly pray for the needs of all the residents of Montana, I ask that you would support them with your generosity.

Christmas blessing,

+Bishop Michael Warfel



## 800th Anniversary Celebration

On an August day so clear and bright that it practically sparkled, we welcomed about 160 guests to our anniversary celebration. 800 years ago, Clare of Assisi took the fateful step of leaving her life as a wealthy noblewoman and choosing to live totally for God in prayer and poverty. We know that joy was also a hallmark of the life she and her community lived, as that, too, has been passed down to the daughters of St. Clare, and shared with all who know them. There was joy in abundance as everyone present joined in the festive Mass and the picnic luncheon that followed, sharing good food, balloons, an ice sculpture surrounded with ice cream, and lots of laughter. Our warmest thanks to all who came and all who helped to make this event possible!

## Visit of Federation President

Every three years, we elect the leadership of our community for the next triennium. We belong to Holy Name Federation, which is made up of eleven monasteries, including two in mission countries and the one here in Great Falls. Sister Carolyn Forgette, OSC, president of our federation, was invited to come from her monastery in Travelers Rest, South Carolina to preside at our elections, and to simply spend some time with her sisters here in Montana. It was a delight to have Sister Carolyn with us, and we are pleased to tell you that Sister Jane is our abbess for the next three years.

## St. Francis and a Special Law

St. Francis had a special love for Christmas, because that was the day that Jesus first appeared among us as the greatest Gift of God's love. Francis wanted to share the overwhelming joy of that Gift with all of Creation. According to an ancient document, he said:

*If I ever have the opportunity to talk with the Emperor, I'll beg him, for the love of God and me, to enact a special law: No one is to capture or kill our sisters the larks, or do them any harm. Furthermore, all mayors and lords of castles and towns are required each year on Christmas Day to order their subjects to scatter wheat and other grain on the roads outside the walls so that our sisters the larks and other birds might have something to eat on so festive a day. And on Christmas Eve, out of reverence for the Son of God, whom on that night the Virgin Mary placed in a manger between the ox and the ass, anyone having an ox or an ass is to feed it a generous portion of choice fodder. And on Christmas Day the rich are to give the poor the finest food in abundance.*

## Tom Hartle, OFM to Speak Here During Lent

Father Tom Hartle, a priest of the Order of Friars Minor, will be in Great Falls in February, 2013. He is known as a speaker of great wisdom and humor, and has generously agreed to speak to our friends on Lenten topics. Watch for further information!

**LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK:**

**POOR CLARES OF MONTANA**

To all our dear friends, for whom we are deeply grateful, we wish the fullness of God's blessings.

May your days be filled with peace and the knowledge of God's constant love.

~ Your Poor Clare Sisters ~



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