

A Place of Prayer

Since the construction of our chapel began more than a year ago I have visited the site not once, but twice a day. Often after the workmen have left for the day, I go over to just stand in the chapel space, absorbing the beauty and majesty of it. The excitement of seeing the building growing out of plans that were just pieces of paper draws me and all my sisters to check it out daily. It is true that we have a temporary chapel in our library, where we pray the Liturgy of the Hours daily along with private prayer. Yet, dedicated as we are to a life of prayer, the chapel is the very heart of our life and the structure should witness to that.

The Minister General of the Franciscan Order, Father John Vaughn, challenged us in the preface of the latest revision of our Constitution to share our life of prayer with others. We do share it by praying daily for those who send us their petitions. Yet, he is asking us for more than this; he is asking us to invite people to pray with us and for our monastery to be a center for prayer.

This is why it is so exciting to watch the chapel grow into a majestic structure, worthy of its function as a place of prayer, not only for us, but also for others. Our chapel building aptly expresses what Father Vaughn asks of us. Not only does it contain the chapel itself, but there are also rooms for small groups to gather to hear about prayer, for people to come to learn how to pray.

As the building nears completion, we want to invite people to come and share this place of prayer with us. It is only with the help of benefactors that it has been built, so it is a tribute to the people of Montana. It is indeed a place that invites prayer, a place that inspires an attitude of quiet and peace.

St. Francis of Assisi, as he moved around the countryside preaching the Gospel to everyone he met, often prayed this prayer and encouraged his followers to say it:

We adore you, here and in all your churches throughout the world and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Francis had the greatest reverence for churches and chapels. It began with the little abandoned chapel of San Damiano in Assisi; kneeling before the crucifix there one day he heard the voice of Jesus asking him to “rebuild my church”. Taking the words literally, he began to rebuild this very church which later became the home of St. Clare and the first Poor Clares. The San Damiano crucifix remained there so that Clare and her sisters “gazed upon it, considered it, and contemplated it...,” daily.

Our chapel has a replica of this crucifix suspended from the beams over the altar. Our repetition of Francis’ and Clare’s prayer is joined to that of Franciscans throughout the world today. It is a prayer that unites us with all the members of the Body of Christ. We look forward to sharing that prayer with you in our chapel.

Sister Maryalice Pierce