



## St. Clare and the City of Assisi

Early in the 13th century, St. Clare began her life of poverty and prayer with her community of sisters at San Damiano, a small monastery attached to an ancient little church. Set on a hillside below the town, the sisters could see Assisi not far above them, and fields and farms below them for miles. This provided the sisters with solitude and silence for prayer, and an abundance of natural beauty.

However, this location made them vulnerable to any who might want to do them harm. In 1244, Emperor Frederick II was ravaging the valley of Spoleto, and San Damiano stood between his army, which included many Saracens, and the town of Assisi. As the marauders were scaling the walls of the cloister, Clare faced them at the door, with the Holy Eucharist in a precious ivory box. She prayed, "Lord, I beg you, defend these your servants whom I am not able to defend at this time." Suddenly a voice was heard, "I will always protect you." Then Clare said, "My Lord, please



protect this city which for your love sustains us." And the Lord responded, "It will suffer afflictions, but will be defended by my protection." With that, the invaders fled in terror.

On another occasion, the imperial army was besieging Assisi, determined to take possession of it. Clare called her sisters around her, and said, "Every day, we receive many good things from that city. It would be terrible if we did not help it, as we now can. Go to Our Lord, and with all your heart beg for the liberation of the city." The sisters prayed with all their hearts that the city might be delivered, and by morning the entire army was gone.

St. Clare was known for these and many other miracles. We make no claim to share in the power of her holiness, but our caring prayer for all those who support us in any way never ceases. It is a grace and a privilege to live here in Montana, and in Great Falls, and our gratitude never ends.



**Please join us...**

For the Eucharistic Celebration

In honor of our foundress, Saint Clare of Assisi

Friday, August 11 at 6:00 p.m.

Light refreshments to follow



## Future Religious Vocations

Last year, four sisters in our monastery shared their vocation stories in our newsletter. As we read each other's stories, we could see some striking similarities. Each one had in her life some contact with women religious that awakened a desire to learn more about them. They had taught us in school or catechism classes, where we met them and were impressed with their lifestyle, and were attracted to it. Our families were practicing Catholics and we were raised as such. Becoming a priest or sister was recognized by our families as an option to consider as we grew to adulthood.

We have been asking ourselves how we can find more ways of reaching out to young people to awaken an awareness of our life dedicated to God. Since we are an "enclosed" community, we need to live that life wholeheartedly. However, we do go out to Church for Mass at times when no priest is able to come here. We also respond to invitations

from schools when we are invited, so that students can see our life as an option. Better still, we have had teachers ask to bring their classes to the monastery to learn some of what goes on in our life. Teachers of older students have occasionally brought them to help with washing windows, gardening, or collecting tumbleweeds. These are all good opportunities to get acquainted with us and our life of prayer.

How can you help as parents or grandparents? You who have been supporting and encouraging us since our arrival here almost eighteen years ago can help to assure the future of religious in our diocese by encouraging the young people in your family to consider the option of religious life, possibly as Poor Clares, and by praying with us for more vocations. You can also come to visit us and bring your family along. Give us a call!

## Our Annual Retreat

Every year, each one of us takes time away from the community to make a weeklong retreat. Actually, this is the custom for many religious. Someone might ask, "Why do you make a retreat when you already pray all day?" All of us occasionally need to step back for the purpose of regrouping. We can get occupied with everyday schedules, distractions and demands which diminish the quality of our life and our prayer. A retreat frees us to spend time in quiet reflection, reviewing the previous year and looking ahead to the coming one.

The silence, the stillness, the time before the Blessed Sacrament is a chance to become re-centered in one's life. Our guest area is usually where we take time for retreat. However, because this is the year of my Golden Jubilee, I made my retreat at a Franciscan retreat center. I prayed in gratitude for the way that God has led me through the years. I will continue to pray in gratitude throughout this entire year in hope that the experience of this summer's retreat will stay with me until I have another opportunity for retreat.

—Sister Jane



**The soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself... a faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne.**



—St. Clare

# Growing Up with the Rosary

Recently I found Relevant Radio on the internet and downloaded their Rosary app. I began to use the app during my early morning prayer time. It seems to me I have fewer distractions than when I pray the rosary alone. It reminds me of my school days when my mother and I would pray the rosary while we did the dishes after supper. It was on the radio at just the right time.

My mother's devotion to the Blessed Mother has had a big impact on my life. Mom showed me how to honor Mary with the rosary. In high school I was working after school and often walked to work. I decided that I would pray the rosary while I walked. However, I couldn't remember the order of the mysteries so I had to ponder Mary's life and the life of Jesus to get them right. I particularly remember trying to figure out which came first, the crowning with thorns or the scourging at the pillar. I finally decided that even the Romans couldn't be so cruel as to scourge Jesus after he had the crown

because the whip would get caught in the crown and be too brutal.

With so much war, violence and unrest in the world, it seems to me that it would be a good time to begin praying the Family Rosary. We can make an impact on the pain in our world by praying the rosary in our families. During May and October we used to pray the rosary as a family. It was a special time for me. We each had our own "big" rosaries that were kept on the lamp when they were not in use. Some of them were glow-in-the-dark so when the lights were out we would see them glow. We were encouraged to pray the rosary if we couldn't get to sleep, so I had a small rosary under my pillow. Mom assured us that the angels would finish the rosary if we fell asleep before finishing it! Perhaps the family rosary would draw our young girls to consider religious life as it did me.

—Sister Judith Ann



We continue to be most grateful for your assistance in meeting our bills, and, even more, your concern for the welfare of our two sisters from Tanzania. They are adjusting well, and we hope to have them as a part of our community for many years. Legal bills related to their immigration process are more than we could manage without your help. May God richly bless and reward you!

Return to: MONASTERY OF ST. CLARE 3020 18TH AVE. S GREAT FALLS, MT 59405-5167	Sisters, please pray for		
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# Sisters Helping Sisters

As you know, Our Sisters Mary Pia and Mary Francis came to us from a Poor Clare monastery in Mwanza, Tanzania. The Tanzanian people depend on the rainy season to provide the necessary moisture for their crops for the entire year. Last year, the rainy season never came. We had received reports from the sisters there, telling us that they were having difficulty providing food for their community. With no rain, there were no crops, and no crops meant that the prices for available food rose dramatically. Then we learned that the sisters were hungry! They can see Lake Victoria from the monastery compound, so we had assumed that water was available. But it happens that they had no way to bring the water from the lake to their property. What they were in such need of for the present and the future was an irrigation system, but they were unable to raise more than a part of the funds they needed. We told them we wanted to help, and it was eventually determined exactly how much money would be needed for the system, and how much they had been able to raise.

Because of your generosity to us over the past year, we were able to send the sisters the additional money to fund their irrigation system. They are so very grateful for your generosity, which made it possible for us to share with them. Now they will be able to provide for their own community, even into the future, and they will be able to help their neighbors as well. Now, in addition to us, you have a whole community of Poor Clares in Mwanza praying for you!



## A Final Word...

As we begin our short sharing with you, it is good to thank God because we have finished a year with our sisters here in Great Falls, Montana.

The sisters have made us feel comfortable with them in various activities of the community. On July 5, they surprised us with a marvelous one-year anniversary celebration. Each of us was given a beautiful card with a picture of a tree on it, symbolizing each of us. We have been planted in our new home to grow and bloom forever!

We were treated to Tanzanian-style meals, and we had a special time of sharing at supper.

The two of us told of our excitement at being here, and how happy we are to be in a community that has shown us such welcoming hospitality, prayerfulness and goodness.

This year has been an unusual one for us because we have experienced many things that are new. Climate, culture, traditions, food and language—in all these our community has been a real help and support. That is why you are able to hear us speaking loudly that

**WE FEEL AT HOME** here in Montana!

—Sister Mary Pia and Sister Mary Francis