



Fall Newsletter 2013

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to share with you some very good news about the debt on our monastery, and to ask for your help in paying down our obligation.

Over the past year, our Advisory Board has worked closely with the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings in an effort to restructure our debt. We have reached an agreement with the Diocese which reduces the interest rate on our debt and sets our minimum debt payments at a level which is manageable for us. We are very grateful to Bishop Warfel, the Diocesan Finance Council, and the Diocesan Business Office for their willingness to work with us to resolve this matter in a positive way.

As part of the debt restructuring, the Diocese has provided us with an interest-free grace period, until January 1, 2014. Any debt pay downs made between now and the end of 2013 will be applied 100% to principal, and will reduce the balance on which interest will be assessed.

As of October 1, 2013, our debt balance is just under \$2.3 million. Can you help us reduce this balance before year end?

We ask that you prayerfully consider including the Poor Clares as part of your charitable giving. Your significant year-end gift will go a long way toward helping us reduce our debt. Regular monthly gifts during the upcoming year will also help with daily living expenses. We humbly request that you return the enclosed donation envelope with whatever you can contribute.

We also ask that you consider including us in your estate planning. Your gifts and bequests will help us meet our goal of paying off our debt as quickly as possible, so future generations of Poor Clare Sisters may minister to the people of Montana by holding them in prayer, unburdened by this financial obligation.

Know that we are most grateful for your generosity!

May I Help You?

A call has gone out to the parishes in Great Falls. A few months ago, we began searching for volunteers to answer our phone calls. Those who have begun helping are enjoying the peace and quiet that is inherent to the monastery. With few calls, there is time for prayer, reading or catching up on craftwork. Your help gives us the opportunity for uninterrupted work during those times. If you are able to give two hours a week, call us at 453-7891.



The Work of our hands

When we began planning the design for our monastery, we made it clear that we wanted it to be more than a home for the Poor Clares. We wanted to respond to the challenge of creating a welcoming atmosphere for all who come to our monastery. It is in this spirit that our ministry has evolved into that of hospitality. St. Clare wanted her sisters to work with their hands. Many communities of Poor Clares make altar breads or vestments. However, the work of our hands consists in preparing the spaces for guests, greeting visitors and giving tours of our chapel and retreat area, guiding visitors in praying the Liturgy of the Hours with us, and all the small details of making guests feel welcome. Also, as spiritual directors, we spend time with people to whom we minister.



Sister Catherine's Jubilee

Everyone likes celebrations and we had a great one at our monastery on Saturday, September 7th. On that day Sister Catherine Cook celebrated her 50th anniversary of profession as a Poor Clare. A celebration like this is cause for joy and it is a wonderful witness to God's people of God's fidelity and call. Her brother, Father Brian Cook, traveled from his parish in North Carolina to be with her as cele-

brant for the Eucharistic Liturgy in our chapel. Father Brian remarked during his homily that Catherine was his “big” sister, the oldest in their family, while he was the youngest. During the Liturgy Sister Catherine renewed her vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and enclosure. After the Mass all continued the celebration with refreshments in our gathering room which was beautifully prepared by one of our Secular Franciscans.



Another 50th Anniversary—in Bolivia

As this newsletter goes to print, Sister Catherine is visiting our Poor Clares in Coroico, Bolivia. They, too, are celebrating! This is the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of their monastery. A delegation of Poor Clares from the U.S. were sent there to celebrate with them. What a great way for Sister Catherine to continue her anniversary of Profession!

Praying for Vocations

As we continue to pray that women who are being called to Poor Clare life, specifically here in Montana, we are widening our presence by placing ads in Our Sunday Visitor newspaper. OSV has a large readership, so we hope that this ad will let women know about us. Do you know anyone who seems as though they should consider the possibility of a vocation to religious life? Have you encouraged her to explore, to inquire, to visit with us? Any vocation is a gift from God, yet we are happiest when we find our place. Only through searching do we know where that place is in God’s plan.



Did someone mention ‘hospitality’?

How many sisters does it take to fold bed sheets? (It depends how many guests have stayed in our retreat rooms!) During the month of October, our retreat area was well used. Some stayed because they wanted some retreat time—quiet away from the noise of everyday life. One visitor came to explore a call to religious life. Occasionally someone just needs a bed overnight between laps in their travels. Our Gathering Room also has had much activity recently; our Secular Franciscans gather monthly and each class from Great Falls Central High School had a day of retreat, using our facility.



Icon of Saint Clare

For the 800th Anniversary of St. Clare in 2012 a new icon of St. Clare was painted by Robert Lenz, OFM. Through the generosity of a benefactor, each of the sisters received a copy. (Thank you, Steve, we will treasure your gift always.) Here you see Sr. Mary Alice holding hers. The icon celebrates the mirror theme in Clare’s Letter to St. Agnes of Prague. *“Look into this mirror every day, {...} and continually examine your face in it.”* St. Clare asks us to look at the face of Christ, so that we will gradually be able to imitate His life and eventually see our own face in the face of Christ.



World Community for Christian Meditation

Is your life noisy and hectic? Are you hungering for some silence and solitude? We have two answers for your need. One would be to schedule some time in our visitors apartments to begin to fill that hunger. The other you can do anywhere without coming to the monastery, Christian Meditation. You could join a meditation group here once a week or begin your own group wherever you are. We already have one small group that meets at the monastery on Wednesday afternoons.

Meditation is an ancient form of contemplative prayer that seeks God in silence and stillness. It is rooted in the gospel and St. Paul, and was taught by the Fathers of the Desert. John Main OSB (1926-1982) rediscovered this prayer tradition that has drawn thousands around the world to daily meditation, and that silence and stillness that we all crave. Those who join this movement are part of the World Community for Christian Meditation.

On October 25th to the 27th, Sisters Jane and Judith Ann attended an “Essential Teaching Weekend” presented by Gene Bebeau of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). It was a valuable workshop that gave us the tools to teach others how to meditate. We will be teaching this form in the near future.



Thank you!

At this time, nearing Thanksgiving, we want you to know how grateful we are for your support and friendship. You are always in our prayer. God give you peace!

*Sisters Catherine, Maryalice,
Judith Ann and Jane*