

Community of Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal

Winter, 2012

"Let every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord!"

-Philippians 2:11

Dearest Friends,

In this *Year of Faith* I am reminded of an experience I had many years ago when I was involved in an international planning meeting for a Christian organization. The leadership was leaving the name of Christ out of the hymns, saying that "God would rather remain anonymous." I was shocked, feeling that nothing could be further from the truth! *Every one who acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father* (Matthew 10:32). Needless to say, I expressed my convictions and left soon after.

What our Lord really asks is for us to proclaim His name *from the housetops!* It is only in Him that we find the true life that we are longing for and that He so desperately desires to give us. We, Sisters, thank God for the opportunity to speak the truth we believe "in season and out of season." We believe Jesus came to earth, died on the cross and, in so doing, opened up the gates of heaven...for all! He indeed "showed us the way." Through acts of love, mercy and deep compassion we are invited to imitate Him, to be transformed and to lead others to do the same. What a gift!

And so, in this *Year of Faith* may we all proclaim Jesus with our lives!

With prayerful best wishes in this Holy Season!

Sr. Lucille and All Your Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal



From crossing over the threshold of the convent to professing final vows takes a minimum of seven years in our community. This lengthy process is the wisdom of the Church. The Consecrated Life is the most radical way to follow Jesus Christ (so said Blessed John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*). This "radical way" is not for everyone. It is only for those who are called, those who are chosen, and those who freely choose it. Sr. Guadalupe is pictured here renewing her vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the hands of Sr. Lucille Cutrone, Community Servant. September 12th was a joyous day as 9 of our Temporary Professed sisters renewed their vows.



There is not a person on earth without the love of a mother. In His dying words from the cross, Jesus gave us His Mother as our own knowing that a mother is exactly what we need. Our Mother Mary directs her children toward Jesus, toward prayer, and guides us to heaven. Sr. Cecilia is pictured here teaching three little ones how to pray the Rosary at our convent in Leeds, England.



"Jesus, I love you" were the last words of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha. Teaching the world to love Jesus is exactly what the Saints do. Teaching the world to love Jesus is exactly what we want to do! How grateful we are for the "cloud of witnesses" who have gone before us and show us the way! Sr. Ann Kateri (center) had the great blessing of making a pilgrimage to Rome for the canonization of her patroness. Sr. Kateri, S.O.L.T., Sr. Maria Kateri S.V. and little baby Kateri pose for a picture in St. Peter's square under the banner of their newly canonized patroness.



Jocelynn Heck was received as a candidate in our community with great joy and celebration on November 1, 2012 (All Saints Day). How does one go from living a "normal life" to entering a convent? Such a serious decision

requires a person to search out the will of God and this process is commonly called "discernment". These three simple questions summarize the quest: Does God want me to do this? Do I want to do this? And, can I do this? How does one get the answers to these questions? Prayer is the answer. Jocelynn is pictured here with Sr. Agnes who will be guiding her through her first years of formation.

After Candidacy (plain clothes) comes Postulancy (grey jumper and white blouse) and next comes Novitiate (the habit and veil at last!) and to celebrate the new beginnings we have a tradition of inviting the parents of the newly invested novices to come and stay with us in the convent for a weekend. This gives parents a chance to get a real "hands-on" feel for their daughter's new life and it gives the sisters the chance to meet the beloved parents of our new sisters! Sr. Gemma Maria is pictured here with her mother as they serve with joy at the Father Solanus Kitchen. "Parents' Weekend" has become a highlight of our year!

"Where are you, God?!"

I had just graduated with a Bachelor's degree, majoring in Finance, and was now working as a Financial Analyst at one of the premiere Hotel/Casinos in Las Vegas, my hometown. I thought I had everything - then why did I feel so empty inside? Living the "American dream" did not bring the deep happiness I had expected. I was disillusioned - "Is this all there is to life?"

November 12th, 1995, grappling with these questions, I was driving down the freeway on my lunch break. Overwhelmed with my frustrations, I cried out in the car, "Where are you, God?!" Looking for some consolation, I pulled off at McDonald's, ordered a Big Mac Value Meal and sat at a corner table with tear-stained cheeks feeling sorry for myself. But then suddenly I was not alone. An old and unkempt homeless man approached me and asked for some of my french fries. I overcame my repulsion and gave him some, but was relieved when he walked away. I finished my meal but still had some fries leftover. I was tempted to just throw them out, but I finally decided to offer them to the old man. As I was walking towards him I heard his voice: "I knew you'd come back." He was sitting alone and facing away from me so I stopped in my tracks, startled - who is he talking to? He turned around and looked me right in the eye and said with a clear and steady voice: "I knew you'd come back. You're a very blessed young woman." With that I felt a rush of joy; I hurriedly gave him my fries and ran out. My head was spinning and my mind racing. What just happened?! Then suddenly like a lightning bolt it hit me. Just ten minutes earlier I had cried out, "Where are you, God?!" I certainly had not meant that as a prayer, but God took it as one and promptly answered it. Yes, God heard the cry of my heart and through this homeless man He was speaking to me loud and clear: God had not left me; I had left him. And He had been eagerly waiting for my return.

From that moment I made a decision to put God back in the center of my life. I went to Confession after many years, returned to Sunday Mass, prayed and read my Bible daily, and began to serve the poor. And in this active personal relationship with Jesus Christ in His Catholic Church I found at last the deep peace and joy that I had been searching for...life made sense and had meaning now...and this was only the beginning!

I will always be grateful to my "McDonald's Angel" - that homeless man who was Jesus to me when I was in distress. One extraordinary encounter in the midst of very ordinary circumstances ignited my Faith and my life was changed forever. How good God is!

- Sr. Francis Teresa O'Donnell, CFR



How does a young woman become a sister? By loving "formation"- not so much by training or coaching, education or instruction; while naturally all of these are a part of it. Formation is about a person submitting herself whole and entire into the hands of God like soft pliable clay in the hands of a potter. God alone is the "Formator" but of course He makes use of His willing instruments and that's where novice directresses come in! Sr. Agnes (our Novice Directress and God's faithful instrument) is pictured here with our novices.



"The Door of Faith is always open to us." So begins Our Holy Father's letter announcing the Year of Faith (Oct. 11, 2012 - Nov. 24, 2013) Being a catechist is like standing at the "Door of Faith" and holding it open for another; and that is just what Sr. Elizabeth (and our other sisters involved in youth ministry) do with gratitude and joy! Sr. Elizabeth is pictured here with two little "students" of the Faith.

Prayer changes things. Prayer accompanied with sacrifice and suffering knows no bounds. Every Tuesday we cross the street to Bainbridge Nursing Home and pray the Rosary with our "regulars" who gather to pray for family and friends and for the world. Imagine the power-house of prayer a nursing home is! Sr. Veronica is pictured here with one of our friends.



God is good and true and beautiful and one. Everything in creation bears the fingerprints of the Divine Artist. Here Sr. Francesca is pictured gathering flowers for the chapel.



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