

# The Canticle

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Voice of  
The Community  
of St. Francis,  
Province of  
The Americas

## Milestones

On my week of retreat this past summer, I began what looks to be a very long-term project: creating a spiritual scrapbook. I began with the basic question “Who am I?” This question will take me from my birth through my childhood, my youth, my university career, and the 30 years of my Franciscan journey. Along the way I will dwell on many milestones—my birth, baptism, the birth of my brothers, the death of my mother, my confirmation, graduation from high school and college, my novicing and profession of vows in the Community of St. Francis... I only reached age nine, so I have a long way to go in my exploration of this question.

In addition to important events, my spiritual scrap book will allow me to recall the people and places that have shaped me. It will even give me a chance to tell the story of my ancestors, as I have been recovering it through my 10-year hobby of genealogical research. I have already come to realize that my genealogical hobby is really a spiritual quest for identity. As a rootless Air Force brat from a small nuclear family with very little information about family origins and who knew only one grandparent for a short time, I have come to have a great desire to root myself in a family and in a place.

*Deacon Jackie Cherry, Bishop Nedi Rivera, Dr. Bonita Palmer TSSF, and Sr. Maggie.*



During the past seven months, the Community of St. Francis in San Francisco has encountered several milestones on our journey. Sr. Maggie has recently made her Life Profession of Vows in CSF. Srs. Cecilia and Jean have celebrated significant birthdays. Sr. Ruth went on a vacation (a milestone in and of itself, given her 24/7 ministry with the Family Link). But this was a special vacation, one which put her in touch with her roots and with significant childhood memories.



*Sr. Ruth preaching at Maggie's Life Profession.*



*Sr. Maggie at her Life Profession.*

In June Sr. Jean completed her term as Minister of the American Province, CSF, and I was elected as the new Provincial Minister. It was truly a milestone for me as I had the privilege of presenting my first Sister for Life Profession at Maggie's Life Profession service.

*Pamela Clare, CSF*

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## Sr. Cecilia's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party

In May we celebrated Cecilia's 90th birthday with nephews and greatnieces and their families from England and Pennsylvania. The CSF Sisters gave special thanks for her many years of service to our Community as Minister General, Minister Provincial and Provincial Secretary of the American Province, Chapel Sister at St. Francis House and in the wider community around us in her work as organist and choir director at Holy Innocents Church and office assistant in the chaplain's office at St. Luke's Hospital, among many other things. She is still active in assisting in the office and chapel, helping with cooking and cleaning the house and in her ministry of intercessory prayer.



## ON BEING 90 YEARS OLD - according to the Psalms

*Cecilia, CSF*

*You, O God, created my inmost parts:  
you knit me together in my mother's womb*  
- ninety years ago.

*I have been young and now I am old*  
- can't believe I'm ninety!

*The span of our life is seventy years,  
perhaps in strength even eighty.*  
- but ninety? Wow!

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me, bless your holy name.*  
- for ninety years of life.

*I consider the days of old:  
I remember the years long past.*  
- much recalling of memories at ninety!

*O God, you know my foolishness,  
and my faults are not hidden from you.*  
- regrets and penitence for sins during ninety  
years.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all God's benefits.*  
- graces, love and joy throughout ninety years.

*My heart is pounding,  
and the brightness of my eyes is gone from me,*  
- only to be expected at ninety!

*I am like the deaf who do not hear,*  
- another limitation at ninety!

*Teach me to number (the rest of) my days  
that I may apply my heart to wisdom*  
- it's not too late at ninety.

*It is a good thing to give thanks to our God,  
and to sing praises to your name, O Most High.*  
- what more can I say at ninety!

## ...and Sr. Jean Turns 80...

Sr. Jean spent six weeks in the October-November visiting her home in Ipswich, Suffolk, England. Her visit culminated in the celebration in November of the 80th birthday she shares with her twin brother, Tom. They were born in 1930 at their grandparent's farm. Between them they weighed just 7 lbs, with Tom, the eldest by 10 minutes, taking up just over 4 of those lbs. At the time, little Jean was given half an hour to live at the most, so she feels she has done an extraordinarily good job to make it to 80, especially since the *Book of Common Prayer* she had as a young person ended the list of dates with the year 1974, and she had trouble conceiving of life after that date. (Which turns out to be the year she came to America.)

Jean points to her experience of being evacuated during WWII between 1940 and 1944 as the event which made the greatest impact on her life. It was during this traumatic childhood experience that God entered her life. Jean went on to become a Church Army Sister and then entered the Community of St. Francis. Her brother Tom became a ballroom dancer, and has run the Lait Dance Club in Ipswich for over 40 years. It was at the dance club that the extended family and friends gathered for the big birthday party. Jean was one of seven children, so there were three expanding generations of Laits at the party.



*Sr. Jean, at 79,  
reading the lesson at  
Sr. Maggie's Life  
Profession.*



## LIFE PROFESSION

On September 9, at the Church of St. John the Evangelist in San Francisco, Sr. Maggie made her Life Profession of Vows, witnessed by her Franciscan Brothers and Sisters of both the First and Third Orders, her friends, her co-workers at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality, and fellow parishioners at St. John's.

## HAMEFARIN with Sr. Ruth, CSF

Gorie, Bressay, Shetland Isles: I've known that address since early childhood. In the late 1700's my great great grandfather built the Gorie that stands today, though there was a dwelling place there long before the "new" house. Shetland men traditionally went whaling in the Antarctic. The journey back to Shetland included stops in Rio de Janeiro, with its high life and on to Liverpool and South Shields. The two English ports became home to many Shetland exiles. My great grandfather settled in Liverpool, where he passed down the stories of Shetland; the stories I grew up inheriting and identifying with.

My grandmother yearned to see Gorie and, when she was eighty and I was a pre-teen, my parents made her wish come true. As we disembarked in Lerwick, Shetland's capital, our relatives were there to meet us. My Uncle Tommy took my hand and said, "Welcome home!" Those simple words have had a profound effect on my spirituality. "Welcome home" are the words I long to hear after my death: God's "Welcome home" to that heavenly Jerusalem; the place I've never been before (as far as I



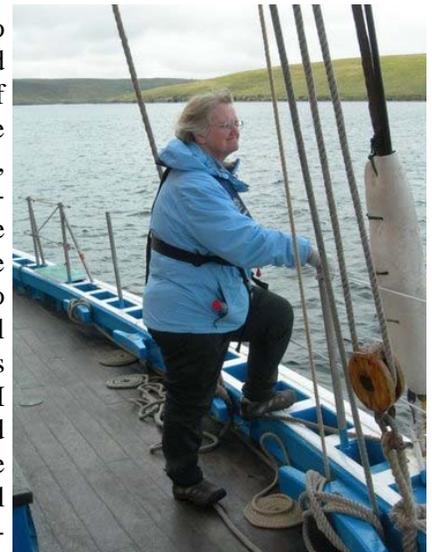
*The lighthouse (small building on top of the cliff in the center of the photo) in the Shetland Islands northeast of the Scottish mainland where Ruth and her family spent their vacation this past summer.*

know) but always belonged. My heritage as a child of God; the place where I most truly belong.

Gorie, and the island of Bressay, are my trysting place in prayer and meditation. In my mind's eye I travel there and rest in the peace and silence, listen or chat with God. Sometimes I even give God my advice!

Every twenty-five years the Shetland Islands host a "hamefarin," or homecoming, for people of Shetland origin and 2010 was the most recent hamefarin. My brother Steven, sister-in-law Jean and I planned for a couple of years for this exciting event. We booked accommodation in a lighthouse atop the remote, sheer cliffs of Eshaness, from where Jean's family hailed. The hamefarers gathered for an opening ceremony – "Welcome home!" There were those words again. Welcome home, come rest yourselves in the peace, the sense of belonging, the familiar cry of the sea birds, the roar of the sea and the music of the fiddle.

At the end of two weeks, Jean, Steve and I stood on the deck of the Hjaltland as we sailed out of Lerwick, past the Bressay lighthouse and into the open sea. We were homeward bound to ordinary life with all its work, friendships and daily routines. I was deeply refreshed and rested, happy to be home and so grateful for the spiritual renewal that "Welcome home!" means for me.



## Sr. Maggie on her LIFE PROFESSION

God speaks in my heart, I said. But when I was busy fretting about my life vows, God seemed to have taken a long vacation. I asked, and heard the question reverberate through the silence of eternity. Hello? God, are you home? Hello? What do I do now????

I sat down at the computer, wishing God had an e-mail address. Opened my e-mail, and there was a message from a friend in Dallas who sends e-mails seldom, but always to the point. And there was a poem by Walter Brueggemann that she wanted to share.

You are the God who is simple, direct and clear  
with us and for us.  
You have committed yourself to us.  
You have said *yes* to us in creation,  
*Yes* to us in our birth,  
*Yes* to us in our Baptism,  
*Yes* to us in our awakening this day.

But we are of another kind,  
more accustomed to “perhaps, maybe,  
we’ll see,”  
left in wonderment and ambiguity.

We live our lives not back to your *yes*,  
but out of our endless “perhaps.”

So we pray for your mercy this day that we may live  
*yes* back to You,

*Yes* with our time,  
*Yes* with our money,  
*Yes* with our sexuality,  
*Yes* with our strength and with our weakness,  
*Yes* to our neighbors,  
*Yes* and no longer “perhaps.”

In the name of your enfleshed *yes* to us,  
Even Jesus who is our *yes* into Your future. Amen

God speaks in many ways. What is there to say, but *Yes*.



*September  
9, 2010*

*Sr. Maggie  
making her  
Life Profes-  
sion of  
Vows to our  
Bishop  
Protector,  
The Rt. Rev.  
Nedi  
Rivera.*

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

Certificate of Baptism

The Profession in Life Vows

# Milestones

Church Divinity School  
of the Pacific

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH  
COMMENCEMENT

The Conferral  
of Holy Orders

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