

The Canticle

December 2012
Volume 30 No. 2

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

VOCATION

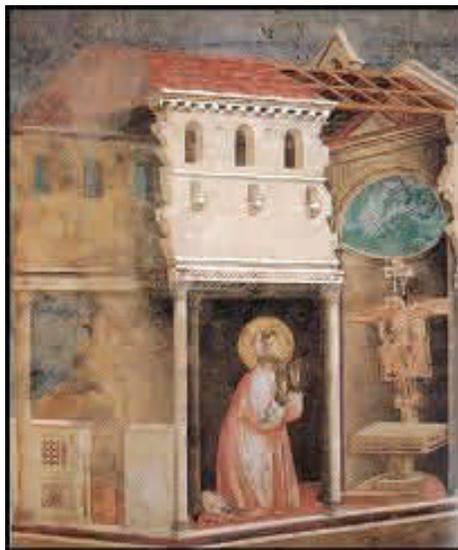
Our English word “vocation” comes from the Latin “vocare” which means *call*.

Francis heard the call of God. The Byzantine crucifix in the tumbled down chapel of San Damiano in the Assisi countryside spoke to Francis when he was at prayer: “Francis, see! My church is falling down. Rebuild my church!” It was only after rebuilding San Damiano and several other rural churches that Francis came to understand God’s call was bigger — rebuild the Church, the Body of Christ, the People of God.

Francis heard the call of God. He met the leper on the roadway and, suddenly knowing him as a beloved child of God, not only gave him alms, but embraced him as a brother. From that day he cared for the poor and sick, especially the lepers.

Francis heard the call of God Francis heard the scriptural instructions Jesus gave to the disciples as he sent them out to preach and teach and heal: “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment, give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food.” This scripture passage from Matthew’s Gospel gave Francis his marching orders. “This is what I want to do with all my heart,” he cried.

Francis heard the call of God. After leaving his family behind and going off (naked) in glorious freedom to become God’s Troubadour, Francis heard the call of God when other men and women came to him and said, “We want to live like you do!” He unexpectedly found himself creating the three Franciscan Orders: First Order Friars, Second Order Clares, and Third Order secular brothers and sisters.



Francis praying before the San Damiano cross. See back cover for a photo of the cross.

The CSF Vocation....

Like Francis,
We hear God’s call to us in our heart.
We hear God’s call to us in the people we meet.
We hear God’s call to us in scripture.
We hear God’s call to us in community.

At the heart of the Franciscan vocation are passion and compassion.. There is a passionate desire to love and adore God. And, as Jesus taught us, love of God is inextricably linked to love of neighbor. As Franciscans we work at practicing inclusive love and are moved with compassion, especially for the poor, the sick, the marginalized and all in physical or spiritual need. Our passion also leads us to advocate for a just world where the needs of the most vulnerable among us are met.

We live this life of passion and compassion with the support of our Sisters in community and under the commitment of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. As the Life Professed Community says to the newly Life Professed Sister:

As you have bound yourself to us for life,
So we bind ourselves to you for life
to strengthen and support you
in our common vocation.

This we do, confident in the mercy and grace of God.

Pamela Clare, CSF

Grant, O God,
that as your servant Francis
carried the love and peace of Christ
into the hearts of all who knew him;
so may we who seek to follow his example
shed abroad that same love and peace
in the minds of all and in the dark places of the earth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Personal reflections on vocation by our two senior sisters.

Sr. Cecilia will be celebrating the 43rd anniversary of her Life Profession in CSF on January 1. Sr. Jean will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of her Life Profession in June 2013.

Vocation is “finding a purpose for being in the world which is related to the purposes of God.” (Walter Brueggemann)

MY VOCATION

Sr. Jean, CSF

On the eve of my Life Profession in the Community of St. Francis, I was pondering the various God moments in my life. The frightened little girl lying on a cot bed in a large school hall having just arrived in a place of safety during World War II, praying, “Lord Jesus, you take care of us.” As a young teen making my Baptismal Promise, when I became a Member of Christ, the Child of God, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. Saying “Yes” to a call to full time Christian service within the Church. Linking them all to the vows I was to make the next day, June 6, 1973, I wrote this poem:

Yes, Lord, I accept your call
of total commitment,
my being and my all.
The yes of yesterday
shines brighter than the
yes, with ifs and buts
I’ve strewn along life’s way
That first Yes
is one with the Yes of tomorrow.
As I bind myself in order to be free,
free of myself, free with myself,
for others’ joys and sorrows.
My Lord, My God,
My being and my All.
Accept my Yes —
I ask for nothing more,
but simply come before You
and adore.

That was then — what of now?

I continue to say “Yes”, because my vocation is ongoing, it is like a journey from the known to the unknown, taking the rough with the smooth, the pain when God seems far away, the joy when I experience the nearness of God in prayer, in the people I meet, in the everyday things of life. I seek to serve my God through the life I live, the words I speak, and the prayers I breathe.

*Our call is found where our “deep gladness”
and the “world’s deep hunger” meet.
(Frederick Buechner)*

CALL AND RESPONSE

Sr. Cecilia, CSF

The prophet Isaiah — caught up in a wonderful vision of the glory of God — seraphs singing — incense swirling — confession — absolution — the voice — “whom shall I send and who will go for us?” — Isaiah’s response, “Here am I: send me.”

*** What if ...”Here am I, but send someone else.”**

The boy Samuel, Eli’s assistant — lying down in the temple — three times a voice calls, “Samuel, Samuel” — runs to Eli — “Yes, what do you need?” — Eli’s perception and instruction — God is calling the lad — again the voice, “Samuel, Samuel”: — his response, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

*** What if?”Whatever you want, I’m too young.”**

The angel Gabriel comes to the Virgin Mary — “Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you” — perplexity — fear — questions — “You will bear a son to be called Jesus.” — Mary’s response, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord: let it be according to your word.”

*** What if?”No! I could not face the gossip.”**

Peter, Andrew, James and John — Jesus calls them — “Follow me” — immediately leave nets, boats — go to Jesus.

*** What if?”We can’t give up our livelihoods.”**

“Here I am Lord: it is I, Lord: I have heard you calling in the night. If you lead me, I will follow, I will hold your people in my heart.” (Dan Schutte)



Newly Life Professed Sr. Jean in 1974 shortly after arriving in San Francisco. She worked with the Meals on Wheels program with its director Dorrwin Jones (right).



Sr. Cecilia in 1974 shortly before leading the group of founding sisters to begin CSF life in the United States.

VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Sr. Pamela Clare, CSF

I have been involved with vocational discernment in CSF as a member of the Formation Team since 1984. I have also served several years on the Diocese of California’s Commission on Ministry with responsibility for helping choose and nurture mostly clerical vocations for the church. My time in this work has led me to believe that everyone has a vocation—or vocations—since they tend to be multiple over a lifetime. When someone comes before the COM with the notion that they have been called by God to be ordained, our mutual task of discernment is to test that call. It is not a matter of “Yes” or “No”, but rather to WHAT God is calling a person.

From a spiritual perspective, it is God’s Voice that is calling. “The voice of vocation is the Voice of God. A divine source of wisdom, mysteriously both beyond and within ourselves, guides us to the path of our true calling and summons us to our destiny. Following the Voice ultimately requires that we let go of our own will or wishes in order to submit or surrender to the will of a power greater than our own ego—potentially at considerable personal cost.” (Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice Is Calling*)

“Authentic vocational discernment...seeks a proper balance between inward listening *to* our hearts and outward, socially engaged listening *with* our hearts to the realities of the world in which we live.” (John Neafsey) This dialogue between the inward and the outward listening is exemplified in the life of Francis, as described in the introductory essay.

Some years ago a woman asked me what my career goals were as a Franciscan. At the time I was stymied for an answer, but upon reflection, I would say, along with Parker Palmer, that vocation is not about *goals* but about *gift*. Vocation is about what we *do*, certainly, but it is more than just our career; it is who we *are*. “Vocation is a gradual revelation —of me to myself by God...It is who we are, trying to happen.” (Evelyn and

In 1984 Sr. Pamela Clare was the first American Life Professed in CSF. Check the CSF website for Pamela Clare’s reflection on her call: www.communitystfrancis.org. Click on “What is the Religious Life?” Then “Called by a Prayer.”



The vocation of a religious living in a covenanted residential community under the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience is to:

- bear witness to God within and beyond all things and to the coming of God’s reign;
- be signs of the total commitment to which God calls us all;
- show forth the true value of human relationships by a commitment to love their sisters and brothers and their neighbor;
- be communities of worship;
- give themselves to the loving service of God within a disciplined common life;
- stand alongside the powerless, the poor, and the marginalized in prayer and through ministry.

(Adapted from *CAROA: A Handbook of Guidelines*)

James Whitehead, *New Visions of Adult Christian Maturing*)

For those who are interested in exploring the religious life, we offer a summer weeklong discernment program “Consider Your Call.” We also welcome all who are interested in entering into conversation about the Religious Life and the Franciscan charism and encourage those who are discerning to make individual visits to explore their call.

Thank you for your generous donations in support of our life and ministry. An envelope is included in this newsletter for your convenience. Merry Christmas!

Out and About with CSF

- **Lynne** was chaplain at three summer camps for children in the Diocese of California in June and July.
- **Pamela Clare** attended a cello retreat in June at St. Mary's Retreat House in Santa Barbara.
- **Lynne and Pamela Clare** represented the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church in Indianapolis in July
- **Jean** attended the TSSF Chapter at Little Portion Friary in New York in October.
- **Jean** was the featured speaker at the Diocese of California Altar Guild meeting in October.



Denora & Lynne at camp.



Pamela Clare with Sr. Eleanor Grace, Community of the Transfiguration, at General Convention.



- **Jean and Maggie** had preaching engagements for the Sunday after St. Francis Day, while Pamela Clare led the children of Holy Innocents Church, San Francisco, in a rousing rendition of *The Canticle of the Instruments*, written by Sr. Cecilia — complete with drum, bells, maracas, harmonica, and other instruments.

- **Pamela Clare** joined TSSF member The Rev. Gary Ost in presenting a workshop of The Communion of the Saints at the annual conference of The Earth Medicine Alliance.
- **Lynne** spent three weeks in late Nov. to early Dec. in Antigua, Guatemala, doing an intensive study of Spanish.
- **Maggie and Pamela Clare** facilitated the week retreat "Silent Days for Advent" at the Bishop's Ranch the second week of Advent.

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Check us out —
Community of St. Francis American Province.

VOCATION

The Canticle

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The Canticle
is the newsletter of the
Community of St.
Francis, a religious
order for women in the
Franciscan tradition in
the Episcopal Church.