



The Canticle

DECEMBER 2007
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Voice of
The Community
of St. Francis,
Province of
the Americas

NEWNESS ENTERS IN

The season of Advent anticipates the secular January 1st to usher us into a liturgical New Year. This new year comes as the world around us in northern California is slowly making its way into winter. It is hard to believe that it is December 1st and the weather is 63 degrees, clear and sunny. In most other areas of the northern hemisphere this is a time of dying. As the year dies, so does nature — it dies, or rather in many cases, goes to sleep. Although many of the plants in our garden go into some version of this winter sleep, we have to force our roses to stop blooming. This year we had a Thanksgiving blooming Easter lily, as well as several pink hyacinths and one yellow ranunculus. Although we have a few dead leaves scattering our sidewalks, we don't get the stark reminders of the winter dying characteristic of most of the rest of the country. In fact, the "golden hills" of California (which summer visitors see as dead and brown) become emerald green during the winter when we have our rains for the year.

This death of the winter ends with the new birth of spring, which is marked liturgically with the celebration of the Lord's resurrection at Easter. Again our liturgical year offers us the opportunity to celebrate ritually this newness. We get at least these two chances every year to ponder the gift of newness that God brings into our lives.

Advent at St. Francis House begins with Evensong the night preceding the First Sunday of Advent. At the beginning of this service we have a ritual lighting of the first candle in the Advent Wreath.



Sr. Maggie and I are especially busy with "Advent things" at this time because we will be coordinating the "Advent Silent Days at the Ranch," an annual weeklong silent retreat offered by the Bishop's Ranch, our diocesan retreat and conference center in the Sonoma Valley. This year the Society of St. Francis has taken on the coordination of this retreat, and Maggie and I will be the first ones to engage in this new ministry. For many years the retreat was coordinated by Janet Boeth Jones, one of our SSF Associates.

There are other reports of recent "newness" in our lives in the articles in this newsletter: a newly Professed Sister, a new Bishop Protector for CSF, a new pet. As is often the case, much of this newness came only after death and loss. In the last issue of *The Canticle* we reported with great sadness the sudden death in an auto accident of our beloved Bishop Protector, The Rt. Rev. James Kelsey of Northern Michigan. After our time of mourning, we had to move on in life and at an extraordinary Chapter in November, we elected the Rt. Rev. Bavi "Nedi" Rivera as our new Bishop Protector. The new pet also came only after the death of Sr. Ruth's beloved St. Bernard, Magnus.

And so, we wish you a blessed Advent pilgrimage through the darkness and death of winter toward the dawning of the day when the Sun of Righteousness will come again and God's Emmanuel

will dwell within our hearts and within our communities anew at the Christmas festival.

Pamela Clare, CSF

A New Companion Animal

Sr. Ruth, CSF

“The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Taken away last December was my beloved St Bernard, Magnus, at the age of eight. Sister Death came gently and quickly for the big guy. “Enough!” I said. “I can’t go through such profound loss again.” Within a month I was aching for the delight and refreshment of a companion animal and searching online shelters for the right mutt. Morag’s face appeared on the screen; she was 3 1/2 weeks old so I had some waiting to do and some grieving to work on.



Ruth with her new puppy, Morag, at 2 months



The joy of creation is more tangible with Morag. Every day begins anew without grudges and in trustfulness. She loves to play with children and other dogs; to be petted and to meet new guests at Family Link; to sniff flowers and to eat her meals.

Often the late Br. Paul, SSF used to share with me one of his favorite prayers, “Oh God, give me by grace what you give to a dog by nature, to be loving and true to my master.” Morag reminds me that it is the whole creation that waits with eager longing. The wolf cannot lie down with the lamb, led by a little child, unless we are all part of that wondrous journey into God, who cares even for the little fallen sparrow. Sister Morag is a blessing, a gift and a joy. The Lord has given again; blessed be the name of the Lord.

Morag at 11 months and 100 lbs. fulfilling the prophecy of her name: Morag meaning “great” in Gaelic.

COMMUNITY NEWS



Sr. Jean and Roger at Martin de Porres with some of the Thanksgiving pies.

In July Sr. Lynne returned to San Francisco after spending the academic year at Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford, England. She has spent the past few months settling back into life at St. Francis House and tackling her final year at CDSP (Church Divinity School of the Pacific).

Sr. Jean and her team of six helpers (including Sr. Maggie) made 89 home-made pies -- a new record -- for the Thanksgiving dinner at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality.



Sr. Helen Julian enjoying a leisurely breakfast at St. Francis House during her sabbatical time in San Francisco this Fall. Helen Julian is the Minister Provincial of CSF European Province. She normally resides at Compton Durville, the CSF retreat house in Somerset, southern England.

First Profession of Sr. Maggie, CSF

On July 28, 2007, we celebrated the feast of St. Mary and St. Martha of Bethany, and Sr. Maggie made her First Profession of Vows in the Community of St. Francis, having been elected to Profession at our annual Chapter in May. The Eucharist was celebrated at Maggie's parish church, St. John the Evangelist.

Maggie made public profession of the traditional vows of the Religious Life and at that moment became the newest Professed Sister in CSF. Before that she had been a novice. The novitiate is a time of initial formation in the Religious Life and the Franciscan charism. Maggie received her habit when she was "clothed" as a novice. However, her white rope had only a single knot in it: a knot symbolizing her promise to live by the Rule of Life of the Community.

Now as a Professed Sister she wears the rope with three knots, symbolizing the three vows: poverty, chastity and obedience.



Sr. Jean, Minister Provincial, ties the new 3-knotted rope around Sr. Maggie. We vowed Franciscans literally wear our commitment around our waists!



Sr. Maggie officially signs the Act of Profession after making her vows.



The vow of poverty points us in the direction of poverty of spirit. It means simplicity of life, joyous dependence on God, and generous sharing of God's gifts. This kind of voluntary poverty requires us to make a commitment to responsible stewardship and to the struggle for a just economic order in society.

The vow of chastity is a witness to our human longing which only God can satisfy. It commits us to strive for transcendence of the self for the sake of others. Life in Christian community requires us to live fully the journey of loving companionship with our brothers and sisters and a "willingness to be met" (in the words of author Barbara Fiand).

The vow of obedience commits us to fidelity to God's will and to trust in the communal discernment and decision-making of the community.

When Maggie made her vows, it wasn't so much that she became a Professed Sister but rather that she began a new chapter in her life. It was less a matter of accomplishing something than of freely choosing to make a commitment to the journey, the process of continual conversion mediated by the grace of God.

New Bishop Protector

On November 7, 2007, The Rt. Rev. Bavi “Nedi” Rivera was elected as the new Bishop Protector of the Community of St. Francis, Province of the Americas. Nedi is the Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia. For many years she was a priest in the Diocese of California. She is an SSF Associate so we are especially happy to find a new way to intertwine our lives.

In this photo she is wearing the Franciscan Tau pectoral cross given to her at her ordination by the Brothers and Sisters of the Society of St. Francis.



IS GOD CALLING YOU TO NEWNESS?

Are you or anyone you know thinking about a call to the Religious Life?

Consider Your Call ... Learn about the Religious Life

Spend a week sharing our life of prayer, study and work in the city of San Francisco

June 25 - July 1, 2008. Get details on our web site: communitystfrancis.org

T *Newness enters in*

The Canticle

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