



The Canticle

DECEMBER
2008
Volume 26 No. 2

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

Vocation

The theme of this issue of *The Canticle* is VOCA-TION. This word is based on the Latin “vocare” which means call. We are all called, or chosen, and our basic vocational document as a Christian is our baptismal certificate. Our baptism launches us on a journey which will form and challenge our call as we strive to live out the promises of the baptismal covenant. Although many of us were not baptized in a service using the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, we re-confirm our commitment whenever we attend a baptism or services with the re-affirmation of vows.

* I will continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.

* I will persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever I fall into sin, I will repent and return to the Lord.

* I will proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.

* I will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving my neighbor as myself.

* I will strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

During the summer we had three women attending our “Consider Your Call” week of discerning religious vocation, and two more visited in November. As part of these visits, we were called on to witness to our vocations as Franciscan Sisters.

Two more events in the past few months have kept us focused on vocations.

On July 3, Sr. Lynne made her Life Profession of Vows in the Community of St. Francis. The service took place at St. Aidan’s Church where Lynne is on the staff. Our Bishop Protector, Nedi Rivera, was there to receive her vows on behalf of the Church. Then on December 6, Lynne was ordained to the priesthood by The Rt. Rev. Marc Andrus, Bishop of California, at the General Ordinations at Grace Cathedral.



The Rt. Rev. Nedi Rivera receives the Life Vows of Sr. Lynne.

In the following pages of this newsletter you will find several reflections on vocation. Sr. Lynne reflects on her two vocations as Franciscan Sister and as priest. Sr. Cecilia looks back over

40 years of on-going formation of her vocation as a member of the Community of St. Francis. Sr. Maggie, First Professed about 16 months ago, offers the perspective of a more recent vocation to the Religious Life.

St. Francis, reflecting upon the gift of the Eucharist, said to his Brothers about their vocation: “Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that he who gives himself totally to you may receive you totally.” (*Letter to the Entire Order*)

Sr. Cecilia Reflects

1963...near London, England: a pleasant teaching job...good salary...a house ... independence... concerts...theater...travel...

August: short visit to the Sisters of the community of St. Francis in Somerset. What for? Just to give a helping hand to those poor, benighted souls shut away from real life, and then back home.

Two weeks later: a sudden, unexpected desire to be part of that group of dedicated, poor, joyful, normal women. What! Me? A nun?

A year of questions, prayers, more visits, conversations and finally IN.

October 1964: although somewhat unprepared for such a change of life-style, I entered with joy and excitement, firmly trusting that God had given me a Religious Vocation. God certainly calls in many different ways and there has to be a response — “no,” “yes,” “perhaps in a few years.”

A “yes” to God’s initial call is inevitably followed sooner or later by doubts — “I don’t think I have a vocation.” Sometimes the reasons for this uncertainty are clear and they have to be faced. Equally there may be no obvious reasons. My time of questioning was not precipitated by anything particular and I was encouraged to stay put. One of our Franciscan Brothers, worried by doubts, talked to the Mother of our Community who reminded him of the words of Jesus, “You have not chosen me; I have chosen you.” And in gratitude we respond with recommitment and faith.

In some ways Religious Vocation is an on-going process; we are called to new ways of service or ministry, to a deeper prayer life, a fuller use of our gifts and talents, to an appraisal of how we are living out our vows and assuredly to constant metanoia and penitence.

2008 San Francisco, California, USA: my life in community has brought opportunities and privileges beyond my imagining; it has been enriched through experiences good and bad, through

friendships and challenges. For so much, remembered and forgotten, I am deeply grateful; for faults, failings and mistakes, I am sorry; for the love of the Blessed Trinity in which I am enfolded, I give thanks and praise.

Although my initial call had little to do with Francis, my spirituality has been nurtured by the life, example and teaching of the “little poor man of Assisi” and my desire is to journey with him in his prayer: “My God, my All.”



Sr. Cecilia receives a blessing from Sr. Lynne in the plaza of Grace Cathedral following Lynne’s ordination to the priesthood.

God Speaks in My Heart

Maggie, CSF

As a teenager I thought I heard God telling me to try the religious life. Everyone said, Oh, no, that isn’t possible. No. Not you. I had obviously misunderstood God.

Over the years I heard God speak again, but I didn’t listen. I had a good job and a partner and a Buddhist meditation practice. The door was closed.

The partner died suddenly. The job died more slowly, but finally lost its meaning for me. The Buddhist practice remained, but opened wider until I saw that I could be both Christian and Buddhist at once.

And through that opening, God spoke to me again, and said, Now is the time. I said, But I'm too old. God said, You aren't listening to me; I *said*, now is the time. I said, Oh. God said, Get with it. You're wasting time.

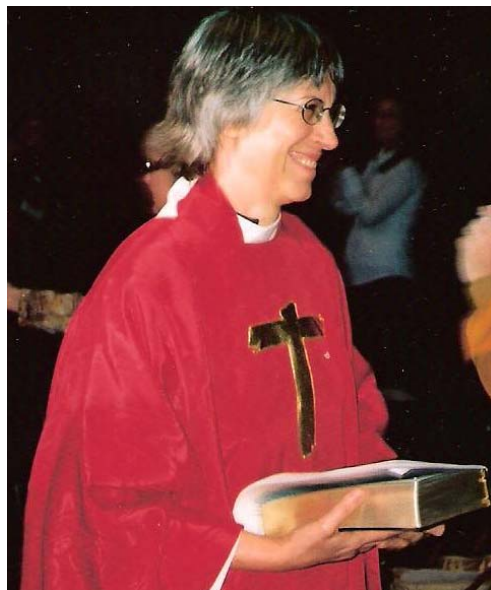
And so at the age of 57 I joined the Community of St. Francis. I was received as a postulant in Sr. Ruth's tiny apartment, with two huge dogs barking madly. I have never liked dogs. I said, God, this isn't a good sign. God said, What do you know about signs?

Nothing seemed to go right, and I wanted to leave. God kept saying, No. Sit. Stay. So I stayed. I became a novice and got used to wearing the brown habit in public. Got used to other people's comments, the friendly ones and the weird ones.

I thought I needed more silence and more prayer time than I was getting here. So I went and lived with the Clares for a while. They had silence, and cats, both of which were pluses, but I missed the soup kitchen where I worked, and the weekly anti-war vigil at the SF Federal building. I missed sermons, even the really boring ones.

So I said to God, what should I do? God said, It's up to you. Stay here and do without things, or go back and try to build something new. Try to be a contemplative in the midst of action. Oh yikes, I thought, but I came back.

The sisters said, it's time for you to make your vows. If you want to . . . I said to God, so do I want to? God said, what else do you want to do? I thought, well, when you put it that way . . . So I said Yes, and made my vows. Thinking all the time, I don't have the slightest idea what I'm doing or why I'm doing it, but that seems to be the point here. Do it, and see what comes next. God knows. And if I listen carefully, God speaks in my heart.



Sr. Lynne Reflects

It seems that this season of Advent waiting, watching, and living in darkness in hope of the light also expresses the process of discernment and mystery of vocation. You see, I believe every one of us has a vocation, and have learned over time that following your vocation is not always so simple.

Ten years ago I was working as an addiction counselor, volunteering at a hospice, praying the Offices, and meeting with a spiritual director. Yet I couldn't ignore the fact that I was experiencing a growing sense of yearning which I couldn't name or understand. Finally, in defeat, I surrendered my will and asked others for guidance, and something happened. I began to understand my longing was not just seeking God, but seeking God's will for me – my vocation. At the same time, I felt a bit like Moses saying, "How may I know? Give me a sign," and much to my dismay found that discernment doesn't work that way.

Seven years ago I came to the Community of St. Francis to test my vocation and continue discerning a call to ordination. Over these years I've learned the art of 'being' rather than 'doing', and to listen with the heart rather than think with intellect. As I move closer to my heart's desire I also experience the immense fear, awe, and wonder at approaching the Holy, or allowing the Holy to be birthed within me. My journey continued this summer with Life Vows in CSF and Ordination to the Priesthood on December 6th.

New CSF Banner made by Sr. Maggie.



Profession and Ordination of Sr. Lynne, CSF.



Upper Left to Lower Right: In July Lynne bids the prayers of her Sisters and Brothers at her Life Profession; Bishop Nedi Rivera gives the final blessing at Lynne's Life Profession (with SSF Associate The Rev. Diana Wheeler, deacon); the SSF Brothers lead the recessional after the Life Profession; and finally, Lynne and her presenters and vesters, including Sr. Cecilia and Sr. Jean, (with chasuble made by Jean) entering Grace Cathedral for the ordination service in December.



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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.