

The Canticle

December 2023
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Voice of
The Community
of St. Francis,
Province of
The Americas

Give My Heart

**“Take my gifts and let me love you,
God who first of all loved me...
now because your love has touched me,
I have love to give away...
Take whatever I can offer –
gifts that I have yet to find,
Skills that I am slow to sharpen,
talents of the hand and mind,
Things made beautiful for others
in the place where I must be:
Take my gifts and let me love you,
God who first of all loved me.”**

Shirley Erena Murray excerpt from “Take My
Gifts” from *In Every Corner Sing*.

I have been thinking about the giving and receiving of gifts ever since Thanksgiving when I usually start preparing the December issue of *The Canticle*. I sang this song by the well-known New Zealand hymn writer Shirley Erena Murray as a solo anthem at church for the Sunday closest to Thanksgiving — a hymn that speaks of our gifts for God and for others; gifts that she implies come from God’s pre-existing love for us.

**“Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely,
love divine; love was born at Christmas: star and
angels gave the sign.”** (Christina Rossetti *The HYMNAL 1982 #84*).

Gifts come to mind when we think of Christmas, of course. Not only the gifts under our Christmas tree, but most notably, the gift God gives us--the Christ Child, the Incarnate Son of God. Christina Rossetti also focuses on the gift of love we receive from God. In another of her well-loved Christmas



hymns, she suggests that the appropriate response to the gift of God’s love is the gift of our heart’s love.

“What can I give him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a wise man, I would do my part; yet what I can I give him, give my heart.” (Christina Rossetti “In the Bleak Mid-Winter” *The HYMNAL 1982 #112*).

Then for Epiphany on January 6 we had the arrival of the Magi (aka The Three Kings). **“We three kings of Orient are bearing gifts we traverse afar...”** (*THE HYMNAL 1982 #128*).

According to tradition, the Magi brought the gifts of gold (symbolic of Jesus’ kingship), frankincense (symbolic of Jesus’ divinity), and myrrh (symbolic of Jesus’ death for our salvation).

Jesus gives us many gifts. Prominent among them are a lived experience of the Way of Love, a spiritual path which leads to a transformed relationship with God and with one another.

Jesus gave us the gift of the assurance of God's all-inclusive love, compassion, forgiveness, and friendship.

In return, let us give our hearts!

Pamela Clare, CSF

2023 in PICTURES



In September the international meeting of the SSF & CSF First Order Chapters and the Third Order Interprovincial Chapter met together just north of London, England, for two weeks. Meeting one another and sharing study and discussion time on topics related to our Franciscan roots was very inspiring. We also went on a field trip which included a visit to a local mosque whose Imam is very involved in inter-faith dialogue. We were not forewarned of this visit; hence the eclectic head gear for the women, including Pamela Clare's blouse (at left).

One of the most interesting topics we discussed was the early relations between the Franciscans and the Camaldolese, a contemplative monastic order with Benedictine roots which was founded 150 years before Francis. The Franciscan way of life which focused on prayer, community and mission resembles the Camaldolese. The hermitage at Camaldoli was one of Francis' favorite places. Likewise, New Camaldoli at Big Sur, CA, is a favorite retreat venue for CSF Sisters.



Photo credit Christ Church, Sei Ko Kai, San Francisco

The Franciscan Brothers and Sisters were invited to form the chaplaincy team at the December Electing Convention for the Diocese of California. The team was tasked with providing continuous prayer support and several short meditation/prayer experiences prior to each ballot for the election for the next Bishop of California. Team members from Left: Ambrose Cristobal SSF, Pamela Clare CSF, and Desmond Alban SSF. The brilliant white fuzz of hair behind Desmond's right ear is all that can be seen of Jean CSF who was the fourth member of the team.



Sr. Jean is dwarfed by a Redwood tree in Muir Woods. Jean and Pamela Clare went on a short vacation together in October which included visits to Muir Woods, Tomales Bay, and Point Reyes National Seashore, all located a few miles north of San Francisco. Our city is blessed with easy access to spectacular and diverse natural beauty. Well, maybe not all that easy in terms of access. Pamela Clare was learning new skills for pushing a transfer chair (wheel chair with smaller wheels). We had several near misses when Pamela almost dumped Jean out onto the trail, but God protected Jean from Pamela’s inexperience. The so-called “wheelchair accessible” part of the trail at Muir Woods wasn’t really quite accessible due to a need for trail maintenance, the presence of unexpected low barriers and occasionally side sloping stretches of trail, not to mention a lot of mud along the edges which couldn’t be avoided when encountering oncoming walkers. It was very eye-opening to experience what wheelchair-bound folks have to contend with all the time. We still have work to do as a society to make our public places more truly accessible for all.



Tomales Bay, which is a long skinny bay, was created when water rushed into a depression made along the San Andreas fault. This is at low tide with an egret fishing in the center.

Pamela Clare continued her work with the Care Through Touch Institute, providing massage and compassionate presence with people who are poor, unhoused, hungry, and lonely. In May the U.S. Surgeon General warned about a growing health crisis, an epidemic of isolation with people starving for meaningful connections. The devastating effects of loneliness and isolation are responsible for deaths comparable to smoking every day. Pamela Clare (second from Left) with other CTI practitioners and a loyal client at a Care Community gathering.



The Canticle

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The Canticle
is the newsletter of the
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Francis, a religious
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Give My



Heart

COMPANIONS IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

The 2024 schedule for our Ten-Day Intensive Residential Program in Franciscan Spirituality: Holy Week (March 22—31)
Summer (July 12—21)
Francistide (Sept. 27—Oct. 6)

Please get in touch if you are interested in sharing the life of the Sisters and learning and practicing the Franciscan Way.



study

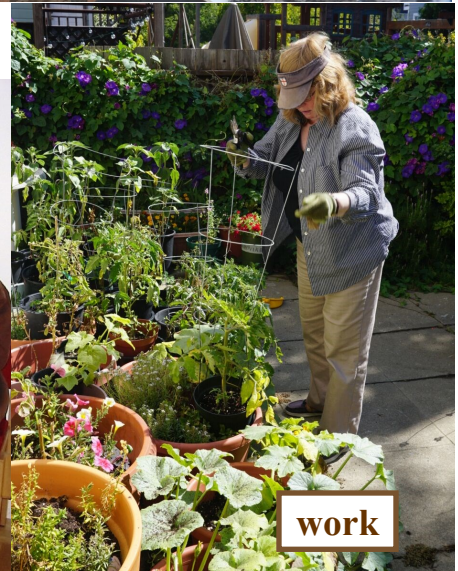
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