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**We invite the Federations
Celebrating their Elective Assemblies
to send us the names of the elected Sisters
and their Monasteries,
so that we can publish them in our magazine
and in Acta Ordinis.
Thank you!**



Presentation

On the occasion of the Solemnity of Pentecost, the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, ofm, wrote a letter addressed also to us Poor Clare Sisters, offering us «a summarizing word that may help us to grasp the unity» of the “centenary of centenaries” which began in 2023 [and] culminates in 2026 with the celebration of the 800 years since the Transitus of St. Francis. «What remains for us of the life initiated with Francis and grew through so many brothers and sisters over time? [...] This life, embedded in the diverse cultures and histories where we are present, can receive forms and languages if we are open to recognizing it in others as well.»

Communion and Communication 67, which we present here, bears witness to some of these forms [and] speaks some of these ‘new’ languages.

As an editorial team, we chose to let ourselves be guided—in this and in the next two issues of *Communion and Communication* - by the words of Father St. Francis in the *Little Testament* or *Testament of Siena* (April-May 1226), a summary of the mandate he left us [as an] inheritance. The sisters of Szécsény, Hungary, offer us an overview of it. Here, you will find the homily of the Minister General during the commemoration of the *Little Testament*, held on March 8th in Siena (Italy).

The reflections and life-stories sent by the sisters from Lebanon, Panama, Madagascar, France, Croatia, and the United States center on Francis’s first instruction: “*Always love one another.*” As Br. Fábio Gomes, ofm writes in his letter, Francis’ instruction «resonates even more clearly as a prophecy of hope [...] in these difficult times, [...] because while a lack of love lies at the root of all personal, communal, and social ills, its presence represents the true cure for them.» Sr. Maria della Trinità, our sister now declared a Servant of God, gave this love a particular ‘form,’ about which Sr. Mariachiara Bosco, osc briefly outlines the journey of faith and holiness.

We also want to remember the fraternal love shown by two brothers who lived their personal *transitus* a few months ago: Br. Thomas Hartle, ofm, Religious Assistant of *Holy Name Fed-*



eration (USA) for several years, and Br. Herbert Schneider, ofm who, as General Delegate Pro Monialibus, accompanied many Communities and Federations for ten years and gave great impetus to this magazine of ours.

In the column "We Have Received," we welcome the presentation of two publications about *Audite poverelle* found in the *No-vaglie* codices (Sr. Monica Benedetta Umiker, osc) - almost as a seal to the recently concluded centenary - as well as an account of a "pilgrimage to the sources of the charism" (Sr. Maria Ramonita Sison, osc), and the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the canonization of St. Beatrice of Silva (Conceptionist Sisters).

The issue concludes with the results of several federal assemblies.

Do not close this page, however, before noting the theme of the next cTc 68: the second injunction of St. Francis in the *Testament of Siena*, v. 4: «Let them always love and observe our Lady Holy Poverty.»

To the sisters and brothers, to each and to all the communities, our thanks: together, we can continue to make a small, yet great contribution, so that communication strengthens communion and communion yields greater vitality to communication.

Happy reading!

PS: The Sisters in Roswell sent this correction regarding the article published in cTc 66, p.55: «We were just reading Issue 66 of cTc, and noticed something erroneous in the article written by our sisters in Japan. Sr. Juliana wrote that "When the community, increased by local vocations, reached six members, the Mother asked the Roswell monastery in the United States if they would be willing to send two novices to Japan, especially since the Roswell community currently had fifty!"

First, our community has never numbered fifty -- the most we have ever been is forty. Secondly (and more importantly), we have never sent any sisters to Japan. Mother Mary Pius of Kiryu would occasionally bring two of their sisters to visit us, in order to give them experience of Poor Clare life in a larger community. But we have never sent any of our sisters to Japan!»

Office Pro Monialibus

Letter of the Assistant General

Dear Sisters, dear Brothers,
May the Lord give you peace!

A few months ago, we began, together with the entire Franciscan Family, the celebrations for the eight-hundredth anniversary of St. Francis' death - or better, of his birth into the fullness of life in God - which took place on the afternoon of October 3, 1226.

Some months prior, namely between April and May of that final year of his life, Francis dictated a precious text known as the *Testament of Siena*, or the *Little Testament*,¹ from which we will draw the themes for this journal, starting with this edition.

As we know, the *Little Testament* was dictated by Francis at a very delicate moment for his physical health, when, finding himself in Siena to receive treatment for his eyes,² he suffered a severe gastric crisis, vomiting blood throughout the night. For this reason, his companions, sensing the imminence of his death, asked him to bless them and to convey his last will to them, specifically his spiritual testament.³

This text was transmitted to us by the *Assisi Compilation* and the *Mirror of Perfection*.⁴ It begins with a beautiful invocation of blessing upon all his friars, both those at that time and those who might join the Order in the future, perhaps indicating that everything he will tell us is possible only due to God's blessing - that is, through His invincible Love, which precedes us and accompanies us. Following that blessing are three "words" that expressed his last will.

Let us, therefore, reflect upon the first word and will of Francis for all of us, which invites us to reflect upon the gifts and the challenges of living in fraternal love:

"May they always love one another."

First of all, it is interesting to note that Francis, known as the saint of poverty par excellence, mentions the word of fraternal



love as his first will. Perhaps this is already an indication of the fact that, for him, poverty concerns not only our relationship with material goods but also our interpersonal relationships, which always asks dispossession (*sine proprio*) from each of us - a detachment from ourselves, in order truly to embody love of neighbor.

Furthermore, Francis seems to mention this word firstly due to a sense of total fidelity to and identification with the Lord Jesus, who entrusted to His disciples, as a last will, the commandment that He calls “His” and “new,” namely that of fraternal love: “I give you a new commandment: that you may love one another. As I have loved you, so you, too, must love one another.”⁵

In this sense, the version of the *Mirror of Perfection*, immediately following Francis’s first “word,” adds an expression by which he comes strongly to be identified with the person of Jesus: “as I have loved them and love them.”⁶

It is a matter of fraternal love, therefore, which has its origin in Jesus’ love for us, in the way He loves us, and without which, in reality, neither the Franciscan and Clarian fraternity nor the Christian community itself exists, because if “God is love,” then only “he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”⁷

“May they always love one another.”

This is why both the *Assisi Compilation* and the *Mirror of Perfection* add an “always” to Francis’s first “word,” because fraternal love is not an option for the Christian - and certainly not for Franciscan men and women. It is the supreme rule to be observed in every time and place, if we truly wish to belong to Christ (His commandment) and accept the newness of His proposal for life (the new commandment). Indeed, while love for God and neighbor, upon which Jesus insists greatly, had already been revealed to us in the Old Testament, it is only with Him that the reciprocity of love becomes the preeminent criterion of identification for His disciples - the most beautiful “garment” that must distinguish them, as He says immediately after entrusting His commandment to them: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”⁸



“May they always love one another.”

From here one understands why, in his writings, Francis uses other terms and expressions that denote the reciprocity of fraternal love more than the adverb “reciprocally,” present in the *Testament of Siena*, such as “mutually,” “among themselves,” “to one another,” “between them,” etc.⁹ Indeed, for Francis, always and everywhere is the time and place for fraternal attention and care.¹⁰

The same applies to Clare, who invites her sisters to love one another concretely with the charity of Christ,¹¹ confidently making their needs known to one another,¹² so that, above all else, they may “they may mutually preserve the unity of reciprocal charity, which is the bond of perfection.”¹³

“May they always love one another.”

Therefore, the preeminent gift of practicing the commandment of fraternal love is, especially for Chiara, unity - or better, Holy Unity. Together with Highest Poverty, they constitute the two pillars of her Form of Life. It is interesting to note here that we are talking about unity, expression of a profound inner experience wherein differences and conflicts are integrated “into a new, promising synthesis,”¹⁴ and not simply of uniformity which is tied more to outward forms. Other gifts, fruits of such unity, are certainly joy, peace, a sense of belonging, freedom, creativity, perseverance, and courage. Indeed, when reciprocal love is absent, we perceive the absence of all these things.

Thus, the great gift of Jesus’ commandment, which Francis re-proposes to us as his first word, represents a great challenge for us as well, for it asks for constant vigilance in the face of everything that goes against such love - that is, in the face of all those expressions of selfishness about which he had already warned us a few years earlier: “Let the friars beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, worldly cares and anxieties, as well as of detraction and murmuring.”¹⁵ To these temptations Clare adds “discord and division,”¹⁶ thereby expressing her particular sensitivity for unity within the community. In short, both Clare and Francis speak to us about the need to shun every form of selfishness, in order to truly love one another as Jesus loved us - that is, to the point of “laying down one’s life for one’s friends.”¹⁷



It is, therefore, a matter of preserving, as much as possible, that spiritual disposition of giving ourselves fully, for the love of God, to our brothers and sisters in all that we are and do, so that we may be recognized as true disciples of Jesus, as the early Christians were, according to the beautiful testimony of Tertullian: “See how they love one another, and are ready to lay down their lives for one another.”¹⁸

“May they always love one another.”

Sisters and brothers, we live in a world lacerated by conflicts and tensions. Old wars persist and new ones insinuate themselves, bringing suffering, insecurity, and despair to so many, especially to the new generations. At times we have the feeling that humanity, like Francis that night in Siena, is vomiting its own blood and sensing that its own twilight drawing near. It is precisely in a moment like this that the first “word” of Francis’s *Testament* resonates even more clearly as a prophecy of hope: “May they always love one another.”

Always! Even in these difficult times, even when not everything is clear to us, even when our strength fails us. For if the absence of love is the origin of all evils, personal, communal, and social, its presence represents their true cure. Indeed, as Pope Leo XIV already said during his very first appearance immediately following his election, even “today is the time for love.”

Through the witness of our fraternal life in community, may we be able to proclaim, just as the early Christian communities did, that “we believe in love,”¹⁹ and that many may also be able to believe in Him.

A fraternal embrace,

Br. Fábio Cesar Gomes, ofm
Assistant General Pro Monialibus
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¹ To distinguish it from the great *Testament*, probably dictated during the final week of the Poverello’s life.

² See *1Cel* 105, 1; *AC* 58, 1.



³ See AC 59, 3-4; 2MP 87, 11-12.

⁴ See AC 59,10-13; 2MP 87,15-18.

⁵ John 13:34.

⁶ 2MP 87, 17.

⁷ 1 John 4:16.

⁸ John 13:34.

⁹ See Uribe, Fernando. *Núcleos del carisma de San Francisco de Asís*, p. 308.

¹⁰ RnB 7, 15.

¹¹ TestCI 59.

¹² FLCI 8,15.

¹³ FLCI 10,7.

¹⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium* 230.

¹⁵ RB 10,7.

¹⁶ FLCI 10,6.

¹⁷ John 15:13.

¹⁸ *Apologetics* 39.

¹⁹ 1 John 4:16.

8th Centenary of the *Testament of Siena*

Homily of the Minister General

Siena, March 8, 2026

Brothers and Sisters, today we celebrate the third Sunday of Lent, immersed in the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. And we do so here in Siena, in memory of the *Little Testament* that St. Francis left us here. The encounter in the Gospel is not just a narrative, but a revelation of our search for meaning; Francis's *Testament* is a sign of the profound thirst of his soul. Let us discover, then, how only Christ can quench our thirst.

In the first reading from Exodus (17:3-7), the people in the desert murmur. Their defiance of Moses marks the starting point of a plea for salvation. God, in response, causes water to flow from the rock, prefiguring Christ, the living rock. This gesture reminds us how, in moments of weakness, we can find providence and salvation.

The second reading (*Rom* 5:1-2,5-8) proclaims: "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ." God's love is poured into our hearts by the Spirit, demonstrated by Christ's death for us sinners, and all of this is especially true for us in moments of fragility. It enlightens and encourages us to move from weakness (sin) to steadfast hope, an echo of God's generosity.

The Gospel (*Jn* 4:5-42) presents Jesus, "weary from the journey," at Jacob's well, asking the outcast Samaritan woman for a drink. From the dialogue emerges the living water that springs up to eternal life (v. 14), revealing the woman's truth (five husbands) and culminating in the messianic revelation: "It is I who speak to you" (v. 26). John uses the well as a place of revelation (cf. *Gen* 24), offering the water that never runs out; the woman is transformed into a witness, bringing many to faith.

This Word illuminates our Lent: like the Samaritan woman, we return each day to the "well" of our habits, thirsting for meaning, true relationships, and inner peace. In the parish and



Franciscan community of Siena, daily life - with its frailties in family, work, and relationships - is like the Israelite desert: murmurs of dissatisfaction, but Jesus becomes weak to listen to us, offering water that quenches our loneliness and hidden wounds. We are called to be a community of listening, care, and solidarity, just like Jesus.

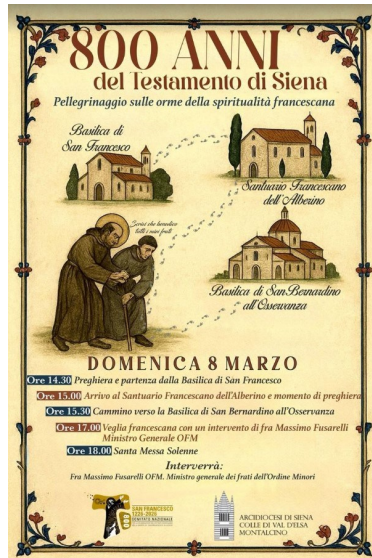
For the friars present, weary in service like Jesus at the well, the Word evokes their own vocation: to welcome others in their weakness, without judgment, to inspire conversion. The woman, recognized in the truth, leaves her jar and bears witness - thus the friars, in community life, quench their brothers' thirst with humble listening, transforming routine into an evangelical harvest (vv. 35-38).

Life illuminates the Word: our daily thirst (recognition, stable love) reveals how insufficient the water of the well is, pushing us to Christ who shares our toil.

The *Testament of Siena* in the Plot of the Word

Today, in Siena, we celebrate the eighth centenary of the *Testament of Siena* (April-May 1226), dictated right here by St. Francis, weak and sick, fearing death: "Let them always love one another, let them always love and observe our lady holy poverty, and let them always be faithful and submissive to the prelates and all the clerics of holy mother Church".

This *Testament* intertwines admirably with the liturgy: mutual love quenches thirst like living water, overcoming the Samaritan woman's isolation; beloved poverty renounces the "mirages" of power that deny weakness (like the weary Jesus), revealing God's strength





in the frail; obedience to the Church is Jesus' obedient listening to the woman, which awakens in her faith and testimony.

Francis, from his bed of pain, blesses the friars until the end of the world, modeling the community on the dialogue of the well: shared weakness generates peace (Rom 5:1) and eternal fruit. Francis, with his life and his words, teaches us that even in weakness we can bless. Let us live this blessing today: let us love one another, let us embrace the poverty of ourselves and of so many around us, a sign of Christ's poverty, let us remain faithful to listening in the living community of the Church, to be sources of living water for Siena and the world.

Brothers, let us allow Christ to tell us the truth about ourselves: his water will well up in us for eternal life. Amen.

Br. Massimo Fusarelli, ofm
Minister General





Francis of Assisi... Easter 1226...

Although our theme mainly concerns the first of Francis' three desires in the *Testament of Siena*, it seems important to me that we need to examine all three within their context. The background given in the *Testament of Siena* - in which it differs from the *Assisi Compilation* - tells us that Francis was not only gravely ill at that time but that he was also vomiting blood. In this account, are we simply dealing with information about a fact of Francis' health, albeit a distressing fact, but otherwise not of great importance? The context would seem to suggest something else... something which would explain why the text is so insistent on this point. Let us read the words of the text:

«One evening, because of his stomach illness, he needed to vomit and did so with such violence that he vomited blood and this went on all through the night until morning. When his companions saw him looking almost dead because of his weakness and the pain of his illness, they said to him in great distress and with tears: "What shall we do? Bless us and all your others brothers, at least leave us a reminder of your will so that, if the Lord does call you out of this world, your brothers will always have something to remember you by, so they can say: On his deathbed, our Father left these words to his sons and brothers." Then he said to them: "Call Brother Benedict of Prato to me." And when this brother had come to him, the blessed Francis said to him: "Write that I bless all my brothers, those who are in the Order now and those who will come, right up to the end of the world." Then Blessed Francis said to him: "Because of my weakness and the pain of my illness, I am not able to say much, but I want to tell them my will briefly in these three words: that as a sign and remembrance¹ of my benediction and my testament, that they always love one another, that they love and observe our Lady Holy Poverty and that they always show themselves to be faithful and submissive to the prelates and to all the clerics of our holy mother Church."²».

Our Father Francis, at that time, had borne the stigmata for almost two years, recalling in his own body the marks of Christ.



And this was how it came about that just a few months before his death in Siena, he lived and bore witness to a different way of giving his blood for his own and for the world. Through meditation on this text, I have come to see that Francis was one for whom to live his conformity in this event, was to live something with innumerable aspects. And his words express his identification with Christ.

With regard to the actual text, I would like to underline something highlighted by Jacques Dalarun, something which is particularly dear to me.³ His research shows that this story, which is present in a number of accounts offers a significant insight into the *Speculum Perfectionis minor*. In that account, and only there, in place of *as a sign and remembrance of my blessing and my testimony*, we find the expression *as a sign in memory of my blessing and of the mystery*. The term *mystery*, that is the sacrament of the Body and Blood, makes the whole event present in the way Francis saw it, and in a completely different context and lifts it up into the realm of liturgy, I would even say transforms it into liturgy.

Both in his words and in the situation in which the seraphic Father found himself, we see the actual figure of Christ. But what actually happened? According to a completely understandable testimony, Francis' brothers were terrified. Francis himself had the feeling while in Siena during April 1226, that perhaps these were his last hours on this earth and that his own *Transitus* had now come. He expressed his desires in a profoundly Christological manner, giving his life's blood and making his own the actual words of Christ.

We find this reference to Christ in several sources and the *Mirror of Perfection* connects it to the will of Francis concerning reciprocal love between the brethren: *as I have loved and still love them*.⁴ this is followed by two more wishes of Francis'. It is no surprise that both his words and his actions are clearly eucharistic: *As a sign in memory* - says Francis. *Do this is memory of me* - said Christ. Francis draws the mutual love between the brothers into his blessing and into the mystery. It is a *sign in memory of this*, showing that the brothers are fulfilling his will.



So we have before us a threefold will of Francis. To unpack it, I will turn to our mother St. Clare. We see that in the last line of her *Blessing* there is this triple wish: *Always be lovers of God, of your own souls and those of your sisters*⁵. In these three, which I call a little triad, lying at the heart of love, we need to pay attention to their order. First is the love of the Lord, second the love of ourselves and the third is the love of our sisters. The order is not coincidental. First we consider the love of the Lord - which means both the Lord's love of us and our love for Him - and consider these as the foundation of our love for each other and for the sisters. That is the foundation, because it is the Lord's love which purifies us and our capacity to love others. In receiving and responding to his love, we are made able to love ourselves in our pared down condition and to love our sisters in their fidelity and submission. At the same time, this triple love is nothing other than a formulation of our tree vows of chastity, poverty (*sine proprio*) and obedience.

In the light of all this, let us consider the three words and the will of Francis, where the first is the mutual love between the brothers, the second is respect for our lady Poverty and the third is submission to the prelates of the Church and to all priests. It is easy, in Francis, to see how these define the three vows, chastity, poverty (*sine proprio*) and obedience. Neither Francis nor Clare wanted anything else other than to live by these three vows but each of them found an expression which was personal and nuanced. We shall try to look at this in more detail.

Let us begin with Clare because she casts light on the words of Francis. The 'triad of Clare' - namely this threefold love - underlines that only the love of God enables us to love ourselves and each other, precisely in our exclusivity. This exclusivity does not mean that someone is excluded from love but only that the exclusive love of God enables us to love and to be loved by others. All love is from Him, through Him and in Him. Note that Clare puts love of ourselves in second place, but why does the love of others come before loving ourselves? Isn't that obvious? I suggest this explanation: the love of God passes through us to others, so to speak, because we can only love others with the love that we ourselves have received from God.



Love for ourselves can only come to be in the measure that the love of God finds a home in us. Our own vessel must be purified first. Only the love of God can bring this to pass, filling us and creating such purity and space within us that our love for others, in God's image, can be disinterested and free. Looking at Clare's text, we notice that her little triad is inserted into another, much bigger one of which it forms the first part. Each element of this bigger triad is introduced by the word *semper*, always.

Always be lovers of God, of your own souls and those of your sisters,

and always be careful to observe that which you have promised the Lord.

*May the Lord be with you always and may you be with him always.*⁶

The correspondence between the two wills, of Francis and Clare, quickly becomes apparent. Let us look at the parallels:

1. *...as a sign and reminder of my blessing and of the mystery, always⁷ be lovers one of another* (Francis) - *Always be lovers of God, of your souls and those of your sisters* (Clare). As we have already seen, for Clare the condition of love for each other is the love of the Lord and of ourselves. Clare offers a different hermeneutic of love, in this way highlighting the first wish of Francis.

2. *That you always love and observe our Lady holy Poverty* (Francis) - *Always be careful to observe what you have promised to the Lord* (Clare). We can always be safe and certain in the observance of the holy Poverty which we have promised to the Lord and to which Clare encourages her sisters.

3. *That we always be faithful and submissive to prelates and all the clergy of our holy mother the Church* (Francis) - *May the Lord be with you always and may you be with him always* (Clare). It is probably here that the parallels between the words of Francis and those of Clare are least obvious. I understand it like this: that which authenticates our personal and intimate relationship with God is the quality of that relationship experienced through His intermediaries.



If we look at the great triad, we see that the first thing is **to be** with the Lord through love (His for us and ours for Him): *Always be lovers of God* and finally **remain** in Him: *And may you always be with Him*. Be and remain or to be **is** to remain.

As I have already said, Francis puts brotherly love in the first place. For him, this was an obvious parallel with Christ: *As I have loved you, so you must love one another, as we read in the Gospel*.⁸ Clare does not quote the commandment of Christ but explains it in the triple exposition of love, showing us a spiritual journey towards an ever more authentic love. It seems to me that this triple understanding of love (for God, for ourselves and for others) perfectly throws light on the nature of gift and the qualities of her challenge to us.

We can take the words shared by our holy founders, Francis and Clare, as our starting point. In their respective *Testaments* they both set out that it was the Lord who gave them both brothers⁹ and sisters¹⁰. From this we can affirm that the Lord knows who to give to me and to whom I am to be given. And if it is the Lord who gives us to each other, then it only remains for us to learn and to receive from the Lord in our turn. On the other hand, this also indicates that fraternal love is only possible when it begins with God and we have tried to show above.

To love ourselves with a pure and disinterested love, our love must arise not from ourselves but from God. How often have we tried to find love starting with ourselves and to want to offer our own love? However, it is only in learning to love God just as *God loves us* that we begin to see how God's love is free, pure and simple. Our own love, as we have discovered so often, is marked by egocentricity, we love ourselves even in the other and even through the other. Our profoundly necessary it is that the love of God purifies us! Through the Lord and his love, we are able truly to love one another. The initiative is God's but in responding to his love, we are united within ourselves, which means that little by little we learn to see, to accept and to love ourselves in the truth of God himself. This acceptance can be at the end of a long journey but it is only in this way that we are united with our true selves, capable of finding the road of love for others.



Only when we see ourselves in God, and love and accept ourselves in God, since it is in his love that we are reconciled with ourselves and all that is within us, then our movement towards God can be set free from egoism. Then we must make a clear distinction and separation for ourselves between our egoistic self and the way in which we understand and accept and love in God. And this is loved put on a daily basis! For this reason, it is most important to Clare that our love for others does not take the third place and come before our love for ourselves. Starting from the word of St. Clare, we can say that love for our sisters rests on two pillars which are fidelity and submission. It is in our fidelity to God in the depths of our vocation, and in our submission to others, and here we touch the depths of how we are to love our sisters. Neither should be abandoned and neither replaced by anything else. It seems to me that one of our greatest challenges is one of renouncing that false altruism which pretends that we should love others more than ourselves! In that case, God cannot purify our hearts nor heal us of the ills arising from a self-love which masquerades as love of our neighbour. Everything begins in and through God and this is what makes authentic every movement within us, whether that be inwards (towards ourselves) or outwards (towards others).

For this reason I bend the knee before the Father from whom all fatherhood [all communion] in heaven or on earth, takes its name¹¹.

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¹ In what follows, I will use the formula: ...ut in signum memoriæ = as a sign and remembrance.

² *Compilatio Assisiensis* (CA) 59.

³ J. Dalarun, «Le mystère de Sienne. Un *logion* de François d'Assise», *Études franciscaines*, Nouvelle Série, 2, 2009, p. 227-257.



⁴ *MP* 87.

⁵ *BICI* 14.

⁶ *BICI* 14-16. For the translation, see J. Dalarun, A. Le Huërou (dir.), Claire d'Assise. Écrits, Vies, Documents, Paris, Éditions du Cerf ; Éditions Franciscaines, 2013, note 4, p. 191.

⁷ «always» doesn't appears in *MPm* 30.

⁸ Cf. *Jn* 13:1; 13:34; 15:12.17.

⁹ *Test* 14.

¹⁰ *TestsC* 25.

¹¹ *Eph* 3:14

«May they always love one another»...

...at Yarze, Libano

THE LIGHT OF ST. CLARE IN LEBANON - Four Years of Re-foundation

In this Jubilee year of 800yrs of the birth-to-heaven of our Father St. Francis, the Monastery of Yarze, Lebanon, is celebrating four years of its re-foundation. And so, it's with Francis-can joy that we share with you briefly our lived experience.

In the year 2021, while the Poor Clare Sisters of Mbarara, Uganda, were carrying out a Novena to St. Joseph asking him where they can go for a foundation, they received a letter from the Mother President of St. Damiano Federation in France, Sr. Elisabeth, asking for Sisters who could re-found the Monastery of Our Lady of Unity Yarze, Lebanon. The monastery risked to be closed, after more than 60yrs of existence, due to a very reduced number of Sisters.

In Mbarara, as a Monastery, we received this invitation as a real sign from heaven. After a few days of prayer and reflection, we humbly pronounced our 'Yes' joining it to that of Our Lady -



Our New Community at the re-foundation time



actually Rome had given the 25th of March that year as a deadline for the decision to close the Monastery of Yarze.

A year later, on the 22nd of April 2022, five of us arrived here in Yarze from Uganda, escorted by our Mother Abbess and another sister. We were welcomed with great joy by the six sisters of the community of Yarze with Sr. Elisabeth, the Mother President of San Damiano Federation, and there and then felt and formed one community of eleven Sisters! We were as well welcomed by His Grace Paul Abdel Sater, archbishop of the Maronite Diocese of Beirut, under whose vigilance is our community. We were also welcomed by Mgr. Cesar Essayan, the only Latin Bishop in Lebanon. It was an outburst of joy from all directions; from the sisters coming from Uganda for having the grace to rekindle brightly the flickering light of St. Clare in the heart of the Church of Lebanon; from the Sisters of Yarze community almost unable to believe that gone are the great worries of having their Monastery closed; and from the local Christian community, who hold the Monastery as an oasis in their desert-like situation of the unending crises in the country. For a few days, the Monastic silence had to give in to the shouts of joy and excitement, as the eleven Poor Clares from five countries, speaking three different languages, had to forge their way to a mutual fraternity. As things turned out, the language of Love had to take the lead meanwhile as we devised means to learn French - the community language, and later on Lebanese-Arabic - the local language.

One of the greatest points of strength of the Lebanese is their spirit of hospitality: it is almost automatic. One feels at home as soon as you land in the country. Even still in the plane, the first word you are likely to hear is "Can I help you?" And the following word would be, "Please, come and take a meal at home", and the person would not be joking, you need extra courage to refuse the offer. But for us being cloistered nuns and not able to go to their homes, this did not hinder their hospitality. For example: two parishes, at different occasions, organized a pilgrimage with long processions, singing and chanting and came to the Monastery to welcome the new sisters. These did not come with only the Statue or Icon of Our Lady for the procession, but also with some good Lebanese food stuffs, which



we enjoyed with them. Yet, this was just but a beginning. We were often surprised by a family, which would arrive with a whole meal well prepared and even still hot; another time it would be a certain army general, a given minister, a simple neighbor, a house maid, or any other person who came all loaded with as much as they are able to carry, bringing to the sisters in thanksgiving for the prayers answered or in supplication to God's intervention. Very rare would someone come to the Monastery to beg, it is instead to give, and for this reason the community has been depending much on the alms of these generous people from all around us. Of course, with the recurring misfortunes like Port explosion, Covid-19, economic, social and political crises, that have hit this beloved country of Lebanon, our people with their big hearts no longer have much to share. However, their good attitude remains, in Lebanon one feels like is living in one big family.

The Franciscan family is one of the best examples of the family-spirit of Lebanon. Right from our arrival, we were encouraged in our new mission when we saw the way the so many Franciscan communities are united to make one big Franciscan family. Here, Franciscan Conventuals, Franciscan Capuchins, Friars Minor, Poor Clares, Secular Franciscan Regular, Lay Franciscans, Young Franciscan, etc, form one body under the coordination of one person who has a committee to work with. For each big Franciscan feast, they join together in a given place, according to the program of the year, to have a



Solemnity of St. Clare with the Franciscan family
in garden of the Monastery



joint celebration. For example, for the Solemnity of St. Clare the celebration for the whole Franciscan family is always at our Monastery here in Yarze. The big advantage we have also is that our only Latin Bishop in the country, Mgr. Cesar Essayan, is himself a Franciscan conventual and he does not spare any efforts to encourage this blessed Franciscan body as a whole and also each family in particular. In addition, we are also lucky to have a number of chaplains - Franciscans, Jesuits, and Maronites, and they are really a great support to our community.

At the very beginning of the re-foundation, one of the biggest challenges was language, given that some of the new sisters did not know French - the community language. To solve this, the Federation San Damien, to which the community is affiliated, was gracious to send three sisters to France for two months to learn French, after which communication in the community became much easier. This enhanced the capability of adapting to each other, important as it is for a new community like ours, consisting of sisters of five nationalities (Lebanon, France, South Korea, the Philippines and Uganda). Not only was our culture a reason for need of adapting to each other, but even more the different initial formations we received in our different four communities of origin.

Nine months after our arrival, Sr. Marie du Christ Roi, who had been the superior of the community for nearly five years, up to our arrival, left to the Father after battling with cancer for fifteen years. Thus, the community remaining with only one Lebanese sister, Sr. Marina. A few months later, one of the sisters asked for a sabbatical year in her community of origin in the Philippines, after which she did not come back. Later on, Sr. Christina was also obliged to return to her community of origin, in Korea due to sickness, despite her strong desire to remain in Yarze. Unfortunately, a few months later, she too went to the Lord. It was barely a year later when another sister from the Philippines was called urgently to see her mother who was critically ill. Thank God, her mother got better, but then Sister could not come back because war broke out in Lebanon. Then, as we were making three years of the re-foundation, we also had to say goodbye to Sr. M. Anuarite back to Uganda, since she had originally come for but a short time of service, for which we are infinitely grateful.



Meanwhile our community in Uganda was so generous to give us two new sisters (Sr. M. Agnes and Sr. M. Anthony) since the number of our community was reducing dramatically. We are grateful also to different Monasteries who, from time to time, send us sisters for a longer or shorter time to give a boost to our community as we are always lacking in number. In 2023, it is Sr. Clare Madeleine from the community of Montbrison who gave us a boost of three months and her contribution continues bearing abundant fruit even up to date. Also, our Poor Clare Sisters of Malawi, Lilongwe, have been so good to us by lending us Sr. Miriam for six good months from October 2025 to May 2026; she has been such a gift to us. Actually, the number of our community members, which has reduced to seven, keeps anxiety at the back of our minds since the Dicastery for institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Rome, has warned us formerly that if our number does not increase to at least nine members, by means of getting vocations or new sisters from other Monasteries, our Monastery risks to be closed. We would like to take this opportunity to invite you our Poor Clare Sisters asking for volunteers of two or more sisters to come and join us, so that together we may ensure the indispensable mission of a praying presence in this part of the world.

The most recent departure is that of our dear Sr. Marina, our last Lebanese sister in the community for now, who has just gone to the Lord barely a month ago on the 13th of March 2026 at the age of 85yrs. Her abrupt death saddened us much, for though she had been with many health complications she was active in the community up to the very last day. Despite her advanced age her spirit was the most youthful in the community - full of jokes and all sorts of humor. Therefore, of the original community of Yarze that welcomed us, only one sister is still remaining: Sr. Benedicte, a French sister but who entered religious life.

War has become part and parcel of the story of any inhabitant of Lebanon. Last month in March, when our sister Marina called out for help in the middle of the night while struggling for her last breath, we saw that it was evident that we must rush her to the hospital; the very first thought that came to our mind was how we shall be able to reach the hospital under the unceasing bombings ranging all around our neighborhood. This



reminded us the story that she herself, Sr. Marina, used to tell us that on the day of her birth, 85 years ago, her parents pleaded to God to spare them from the bombings that were raging all around them in Beirut since they had just received an “angel” in the house. She also never ceased telling us how, already in the Monastery during the 15-year-long civil war, she always risked her life under heavy bombings in Beirut in order to do shopping for the community since she was the community’s driver. Often times she would come back to the Monastery with some of the parts of the car missing or even with a car that is in wretch after a bombing. One time a bomb blast just where she was standing cutting her neighbor into two pieces, and herself being spared. As she would tell us such and many other experiences, we used to listen to them like a horrifying film which one would not wish to re-watch, almost refusing to believe that it’s a true experience until our own turn came to experience the undesirable.

It all began in the month of July 2024, when we were all frightened by the planes of Israel which caused sound breakers over Beirut and other parts of Lebanon. The sound was very terrible. This went on for some time, and there was always a drone in the sky that moved night and day and its sound was not good to the ears. As if that was not enough, there followed the assassination of the leader of the Hezbollah on 29th September 2024, that most frightening evening opened up a terrible war between Israel and the Hezbollah. The bombings that followed on in Beirut and in some other parts of the country were just unbearable even to hear, it was day and night and for more than four days we could not sleep at all. Our Archbishop, His Excellence Paul Abdel Sater, Archbishop of the Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut, arranged that we go away for a week in the mountains, in order to take breath and rest. It was a good and refreshing time. Our hearts are full of gratitude to him for his fatherly watchful care towards us both spiritually and materially.

A few months later war ended thanks to the many countries who pleaded for a cease fire. And for this reason, in January 2025, the country was able to get a new President after two years of waiting. This brought a lot of positive change in the country and rekindled the hope of the people.



2025 Jubilee year was indeed a year for the Lebanese to Jubilate, not only did we get a new President but to the greatest of our Joy, we were blessed with the visit of the Holy Father, His Holiness Pope Leo XIV. This put the whole country in great excitement, for once Lebanon was on a focal point for something positive! Everyone regardless of faith, age or political position was excited for the coming of the Pope! It was a moment of great transformation in the country and it really bore abundant fruit. Despite the calm and the joyful experiences of 2025, the year 2026 has begun with yet another complicated war, but we hold our hopes beyond all hope for we firmly believe that, as the psalmist says, "Our help and the help of Lebanon is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth!" To him we entrust our Monastery, our whole country of Lebanon, and the whole world. Praying that the risen Lord who comes to his disciples with the greeting of peace, may give us all that peace which the world cannot give.

Praise and bless my Lord and give him thanks and serve him with great humility.

Your Poor Clare Sisters

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Our Present Community after four years of re-foundation



...in Panama

“A new commandment I give to you: as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (Jn 13:34)

“...in sign and memory of my blessing and my testament, let them always love one another.” (1 Test 3)

Our Father St. Francis, knowing he was gravely ill, dictated the *Testament of Siena*, at the request of his friars, between April and May 1226. This text highlights the foundation of Christian life: **“to love one another,”** as Jesus taught. At the beginning of his conversion, as well as at the end of his life, Francis turns to the Gospel, and it is surprising to note how this voice, though weakened by illness and penance, is capable of so effectively summarizing what he had experienced during his encounter with the Crucifix: **to love all**. And to love all, it is necessary to conform to the poverty and humility of the poor and crucified Christ: **to love, to preserve poverty, and to humbly obey the Holy Church**.

We are celebrating with the Franciscan Jubilee the 800th anniversary of the passing of our Seraphic Father, and in this context we also remember the precious and brief words of the *Testament of Siena*.

This Jubilee is and must be for us a living memory to encourage and renew our evangelical vocation. Therefore, we wish to share how, in our daily lives, we experience the commandment of love taught by Jesus to the point of self-sacrifice, passionately lived by Francis and expressed in his writings, particularly in the *Testament of Siena*. We also wish to testify that, for us, mutual charity is revealed when we offer our lives to others out of love and receive love through the faith of those who trust in our prayers. Prayer, in fact, is telling others, “I love you, I am with you, I suffer and rejoice with you... for this reason I raise to Heaven all that I feel and ask for every good thing for you, because God is happy to see that we love one another.” In our monastery, we are eight solemnly vowed sisters, six from El Salvador and two from Panama. Our experience of living this way of life together leads us to thank God every day for



the gift of fraternal life. It is not something magical, but rather taking seriously the path of the cross while awaiting the resurrection; it is living the Paschal Mystery of death and life daily. The hope of the joy of the resurrection allows us to face self-denial with fortitude. We feel the closeness of others: Poor Clare sisters, the poor, the faithful, relatives, benefactors, neighbors, men and women religious, priests, and bishops.

We have experienced this closeness on several occasions. Last year, for example, one of our sisters had a stroke. We didn't have the financial resources to undergo all the necessary tests, and we didn't have social security. Our friars of the *Our Lady of Guadalupe* Province helped us immediately, paying for our hospital stay and tests. We are still grateful for this demonstration of fraternal charity. We trusted in the Lord and in his love, rooted in the many people who reached out, offering what they could: prayers, financial support, food, medicine, hygiene products... Thus, we were able to move forward and see our sister heal. Only the love of God, manifested in the hearts of others, makes it possible to live joyfully in any difficulty, tribulation, or infirmity.

We also experienced the joy of having sisters, as we belong to the *Santa Clara de Asís* Federation of Central America, Puerto Rico, and Haiti. We felt closeness through prayer, fraternal love, and the sharing of the goods bestowed by the Lord. Our Federation comprises twelve monasteries and one foundation: two monasteries in Guatemala, one in El Salvador, two in Honduras, four in Nicaragua, one in Costa Rica, one in Panama, and one in Puerto Rico; and the foundation is in Haiti.

The federal experience is truly beautiful, as we share the joy of the assembly meetings and the online gatherings dedicated to ongoing formation and celebration. We have celebrated several feasts together, introducing all the sisters from each monastery and participating with songs and poems. These online gatherings are held primarily at Christmas and Easter. At the last Assembly, we agreed to celebrate the Triduum of Mother St. Clare together online.

Fraternal love, through prayer, allows us to unite ourselves in the suffering of all humanity, and especially in the suffering of our sisters in Nicaragua. In fact, the sisters were expelled from



two monasteries and forced to leave, accepting the expropriation as part of our experience of evangelical poverty. The other two monasteries are experiencing the same insecurity as the entire population.

Our sisters in Haiti are also facing dangers and insecurities. Let us pray and join together as an Order in the suffering of our sisters and all those we do not know, yet who are giving their lives every day through infirmity and poverty in various monasteries around the world.

“In praise of Christ and his servant, our Father St. Francis.”

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Mid-term Federal Assembly
“Santa Clara de Asís” Federation
Central America, Porto Rico and Haiti



...at Ihosy, Madagascar

Dear Mothers and Sisters,
Peace and joy!

We are very happy to share with you some news about our life as Poor Clares in Madagascar and also about life at our Monastery of St. Mary of the Angels in Ampandratokana, Ihosy.

First of all, thank you for inviting us to share a written account of our Communities via cTc: This helps us get to know one another better.

The Founding of the Poor Clares in Madagascar

“Always be lovers of God, of your souls and of the souls of your sisters and always be eager to observe what you have promised the Lord.” (*Blessing* of St. Clare)

The Order of the Poor Sisters of St. Clare in Madagascar was founded by four monasteries in France: Nice, Nantes, La Verdière, and Vals-le-Bains, in 1967.

1960: Bishop Claude Rolland and our OFM brothers requested the presence of the Order of the Poor Sisters of St. Clare in

his diocese. To answer this call, in 1967 the Abbess of the monastery in Nice came to inspect the site and make a decision. In 1969, six Sisters arrived in response to this call (Mother Jean Baptiste, Sr. Marie Claire, Sr. Marie de la Trinité, Sr. Marie Aimée, Sr. Marie Pierre, Sr. Marie Joseph): the foundation began, and the blessing took place on July 14, 1969... The sisters did everything in their power to ensure that the charism and spirituality of St. Francis and St. Clare would thrive in this new Malagasy land.





Thanks to their sacrifices, their love, their asceticism, and above all their trust in God alone, the community has grown. God has sent young people to follow in their footsteps. Over the course of these 57 years, there are now five monasteries and seventy sisters. We give thanks to our God, the Author of all grace, who calls us. “The greatest grace we have received is our vocation,” said St. Clare.

St. Mary of the Angels Monastery, Ampandratokana, Ihosy

The monastery was founded in Antsirabe (St. Clare Hermitage) in 2013. Eight sisters were sent to this new foundation in the south of the country, and the welcoming ceremony in the diocese took place on January 12, 2014.

Only 12% of the population is Christian. Most people participate in traditional religion or are atheists.

In the beginning, there were many trials: carrying buckets of water on our heads for all our needs; holding candles to light the night, birds singing through the night since we are in the forest, and small creatures entering the house...

Every day we pray the prayer of St. Francis before the Crucifix of St. Damian: “Lord, grant me a firm faith, a steadfast hope, and a perfect charity...”. God has answered our prayer. He gives us courage and strength; He watches over us every day. To this day, twelve years after our arrival in Ihosy, all the





founders are still here, and God has sent us many young women to embrace our Clarian life in our monastery in Ihosy. On April 4, 2022, we received the official letter from Rome regarding our canonical establishment. On 11 August 2022, on the Solemnity of St. Clare, we celebrated the grand Ceremony of Thanksgiving. Many of the faithful, priests, men and women religious, as well as the Franciscan Family, were present on this day of grace.

There are currently sixteen Sisters in our community. Our four aspirants are still pursuing their studies at secondary school. We would like to thank all our benefactors, who are helping us to establish this monastery: spiritually, materially, physically, and through the construction of the buildings.

In this year, as we celebrate the great jubilee marking the 800th anniversary of the birth into Heaven of our father St. Francis, we entrust our lives to Almighty God through his intercession and we ask to remain faithful to our vocation.

Thank you very much, and until our next meeting, united in prayer.

Sr. Marie Bernadette, osc

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...at Ronchamp, France

The Blessing of Internationality

In February 2014, an article entitled 'The Genesis of a New Monastery: from Besançon to Ronchamp (France)' appeared in issue 47 of cTc. In it, we outlined the aim: to ensure, in this renowned centre of contemporary sacred art (the Chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut, built in 1955 by Le Corbusier) and of a centuries-old Marian pilgrimage, a permanent presence of prayer and spiritual welcome, ideally within an international community. In this beautiful spot, atop a hill, we are celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of our monastery's establishment this year.

What is our life like today on this hill, situated in eastern France?

In 2021, in his Mission Statement, the Archbishop of the Diocese of Besançon, Mgr Bouilleret, confirmed our commitment to a fully contemplative and Franciscan way of life, which takes on a particular character in this 'peripheral' location. If we are guid-



Chapel Notre-Dame du Haut



ed by a constant prayer from the heart, following in the footsteps of St.Clare, we can also invite anyone who wishes to join us, or who happens to pass by, to take part in our daily liturgical services.

During the warmer months (from Easter to All Saints' Day), we are at Notre-Dame du Haut for Mass and Vespers. During the colder, quieter months, we pray in our chapel, which is very easy to access and always open. Many people are moved by this and enjoy joining us, or simply listening...

A spiritual retreat was essential for this place, and we welcome into our small guesthouse all those seeking inner peace. The encounters here are therefore very varied, in this space frequented by people of many nationalities and from diverse social backgrounds; some encounters are surprising and fascinating, whilst others are simple and quiet, all facilitated by our discreet service.

We experience the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts, and we give thanks to the Lord. Here are a few examples of comments taken from our guest book:

«These few days in your company have allowed me to find joy and the desire to continue on my journey, despite many unanswered questions. Accepting that mystery is part of every



Oratory



life's journey is a gift I have received here. Finally, the construction of this monastery by Renzo Piano, and the trials you have endured to bring it to fruition, will inspire me to forge a new path. Thank you for this fresh perspective that I take with me.»

«We would like to thank you for your hospitality and for the moments of prayer you shared with us. There is no doubt that we started the year in the best way !!! We will carry these two days in our hearts, and we hope they will be the beginning for a new life.»

«As an atheist, I felt right at home here with you, even during the services. This monastery reflects who you are: clear, open, bright, simple, vibrant, welcoming and generous. I am deeply grateful for what you do and for who you are.»

We are happy to collaborate, in our own small way, with everyone involved in the life of the hill, which is often frequented by architects and artists of all kinds (painters, writers, poets, musicians, photographers), some of whom have travelled from far



The entrance to the Oratory



afield. Are the arts not a key vehicle for a universal language? Does beauty not point towards transcendence?

Every year since 2017, a high-quality ecumenical and inter-faith day has been organised, with a theme developed jointly. Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians from the region take part. On this occasion, bonds of friendship and mutual respect are forged that endure long afterwards.

Praise and intercession play a significant role in our lives. Nor should we forget the many young and old people (from catechism classes, schools, chaplaincies, discussion groups, sharing sessions, prayer and moments of silence) who come to recharge their batteries for a few hours or a few days in this peaceful place... and the Sunday Masses in the summer, which often attract people from all over the world.

We sense that a spirit of peace blows over this hill, the peace of which Pope Leo speaks: «It is the peace of the Risen Christ, a peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. It comes from God, the God who loves us all unconditionally.» (8 May 2025)

In the wake of Pope Francis's Encyclical «Laudato si'», and in keeping with Franciscan spirituality, we are committed to practising an integral ecology, striving to live a life of 'joyful simplicity' within creation, which is so beautiful to contemplate as the seasons change.

In our community, there are currently seven of us sisters, from five different communities and representing four nationalities: French, Belgian, Hungarian, British... It isn't always easy to understand one another fully, but it is also a blessing in terms of complementarity and openness to different cultures...

What binds us together remains our shared vocation as Poor Clares and the unique culture of the Ronchamp community, which is still taking shape. It is true that, in order to fulfil our mission even more effectively, it would be beneficial for some sisters of other nationalities to join us. This is possible, and we have not lost hope. We would welcome them with joy, for a new stage of life with the Lord and his Church, for today's world.



Pope Francis's major works: «Evangelii Gaudium», «Fratelli tutti», «Vultum Dei quærere»... serve as a compass for us, both now and in the future.

With fraternal friendship and gratitude to cTc, and as we look forward with confidence to our thoroughly updated General Constitutions - on which we have worked as a community in response to the calls of our delegates... Our very best wishes to the International Commission and the Brothers who support it, in the service of all the Poor Clares throughout the world.

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Guest rooms in autumn



...at Split, Croatia

"Always love one another": the gifts and challenges of living in fraternal love

Dear sisters, I am writing to you from the convent of Poor Clares in Split, Croatia, a community that has been transmitting the spiritual heritage of St. Mother Clare since 1308. In this 67th issue of the journal *Communion and Communication* (cTc), I would like to share with you my reflections on the gifts and challenges of joining and living in community from my personal experience.

I don't think there is a more ideal place than a cloister for thorough personal edification in every area of the human being. It is a great gift that is gradually recognized, known and, finally, given the personal sincerity towards one's own being and soul, it should be immensely appreciated. Certainly, the cloister is one of the most demanding forms of life, but in essence it is so graceful because it allows us a much deeper insight into our inner self, unlike people in the world. The self-knowledge that





the Lord gives to the soul in its presence through silence is one of its riches.

When a young girl enters a convent, she often has high expectations and a very unrealistic picture of what life in a closed convent should look like and how nuns should behave. The initial enthusiasm and some of the moments of grace that we have experienced through our vocation can often lead us to pride, falsely presented as the virtue of zeal. However, when after a while the euphoria fades and the Lord hides the sense of His presence from us, it turns out that we are not so zealous – we lose the patience and kindness that we thought we possessed. These are all normal and necessary steps in the spiritual life that the more experienced sisters already know very well and that is why they tolerate the young sisters.

In my community, I have experienced a very high threshold of tolerance, patience, mercy and forgiveness. And that's what I started to adopt. The community in which each sister has her own authentic nature is always open to looking mercifully at someone's faults and failures. The sisters rather forgive even more serious mistakes than persist in condemnation and bitterness. Such acts lead each individual sister to a deeper examination of herself, to the recognition of God's manifested love through the sisters, and at the same time it manifests what kind of relationship we have with the Lord.

One of the more recent challenges of today is the hustle and bustle of the world, the noise that comes from that same hustle and bustle, the accessibility and speed of achieving what is desired in the world, the





rapid progress of technology, the Internet (which leads to addiction already in adolescence), the overcoming of materialism. The fruit of all this is dysfunctional families, a large increase in divorces, anxiety among young people, disrespect for authority and many other problems. Many vocations come from such families today. In Croatia, a small country where we are, we have been blessed with a large selection of spiritual retreats and Eucharistic adoration for young people; in many of our cities, perpetual adoration has been opened and young people are predominantly turned to God despite the challenges of our time. Priests really try to be accessible to young people, they look for ways to draw them to the Lord, they follow their steps in the modern world and they try to understand them.

Today's young people, including girls who are interested in monastic life, are much more open and liberal than previous generations when it comes to interpersonal behaviour and talking about many problems and some "taboo" topics. They do not hesitate to oppose and express their opinion, regardless of the age of the interlocutor party.



In Croatia, there are a lot of potential vocations among girls, mostly for monastic way of religious life, but many of them find it very difficult to respond. They are very indecisive and insecure and afraid to take risks. This is all due to today's way of living and numerous dysfunctional families.

Since they have not been brought up on the principle of "silence and suffering" and there is no "blind obedience", they have developed a very low threshold for enduring the suffering that comes through life, and also a lack of knowledge of the preciousness of healthy authority and obedience. The old



principles of upbringing were not ideal, but today's permissiveness has resulted in weak personalities who lose the will to fight for their vocation.

New young girls can give up easily when it is not as they imagine it should be or if some change is not achieved within the deadline that is thought it should be.

I think that in this field there is a need for deep, honest and thorough conversations on the part of formators and superiors, focusing on listening to one's inner self in assistance of a very experienced priest who, above all, understands very well the nature of monasticism. Sometimes it is difficult to find a common language between patriarchal and liberal upbringing, but an open attitude to conversation, the will to listen to each other and respect different opinions can bear great fruit.

Another important thing that young girls have learned today is honesty.

Today, young people do not ask for beautification of things, and neither do the girls who enter the cloister. I believe that some calls would have been preserved if some perhaps more problematic things had been said at the beginning. From the very beginning of our vocation, we need to be firm and honest with ourselves that we are not called to a comfortable life, but to penance and sacrifice for souls. No one forced us into the cloister, we responded to Jesus' call on our own, and He clearly says to each of us through the Gospel: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Very clear words... Therefore, young people should





be reminded of this very often and encouraged. If a young sister has an open attitude towards learning, I believe that she will begin to see the beauty of communion through the diversity of age limits, times and experiences that the community brings. Also, they will begin to recognize small gestures of love that are “tiny” in our eye, but in God's eye they are big and holy.

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...at Alexandria, VA, USA

The Gift of Charity in Weakness

“My little children, love one another.” This was the constant refrain of St. John the evangelist in his last years, as recounted to us by St. Jerome. Weakened by age and unable to preach at length, St. John still desired to bring people to Christ. His short sermon condensed God’s word to one message: love. If we love one another, St. John said, we do enough.

Centuries later the refrain of love was taken up by St. Francis, who grieved that Love himself was not loved. As he approached the end of his life, the *Poverello* left to his sons, and ultimately to all of us who follow him, the precious gift and example of charity.

Holy Father Francis, at the urging of Br. Elias, travelled to Rieti in 1225 to be treated by doctors for his eye condition which had made him intolerant of any light. The painful remedy of cauterization which was applied in Rieti brought no improvement, and Br. Elias asked St. Francis to seek the help of yet another doctor in the spring of 1226 (2 Cel 101).

After going to Siena, St. Francis became desperately ill and the brothers thought death was near for him. They begged their father for his blessing and his last will to them. Physical weakness and discomfort necessitated that his words be brief, but in simple words St. Francis encompassed the life of the lesser brothers. Primary to their gospel life was that the brothers “always love one another.” This would be a sign, St. Francis said, of their reception of his blessing. This would be the way to remember his testament to them, by loving one another (cf. The *Assisi Compilation* 59).

Out of love for his brothers, and at great sacrifice to himself, St. Francis was obedient to the needs of his brothers. He spoke a word of encouragement to them and gave them his blessing, loving and caring for them to the end of his strength. His gift of charity in weakness is a model for all of us, and one which his little plant and loyal disciple, our Mother St. Clare, followed. The



last twenty-eight years of her life were lived with illness, but she still served as a handmaid to her Sisters.

Our Mother St. Clare exhorted us in her blessing to love all the Sisters. She first lived this out in her own life. Sister Amata testified that St. Clare “loved the Sisters as herself” (*Process IV*). Even during the frailty of her final years, St. Clare showed compassion and love for those around her. It was two years before her death that Sister Benvenuta came to her in tears. Sister Benvenuta had lived with fistulas for twelve years, and now worn down by her suffering, she pleaded with her Mother for help. St. Clare got out of her bed, knelt, made the sign of the cross and prayed. Finally, she touched Sister Benvenuta’s wounds which were completely healed (*Process XI*).

Just over ten years ago our community accompanied our eldest Sister in her last illness which lasted nearly two years. Sr. Clare had already learned patience in the school of long suffering because she had lived with rheumatoid arthritis most of her adult life. Now she was confined mostly to the infirmary and using oxygen.

She experienced increasing limitations and feebleness, but her heart, which was giving out, was still able to give to us. Sr. Clare always greeted with a smile the Sister who came to assist her. She was grateful; thanking us with the promise of “Jesus prayers,” her way of saying she would recite the Holy Name of Jesus multiple times for us. She desired to know the intentions of those who had asked our community for prayers so that she could remember them in her own prayers. Sometimes she wrote short notes which she would send out of the infirmary by “special delivery” when a Sister might be going that way. Mother Abbess still recalls the notes she received from Sr. Clare for Mother’s Day and other festive days.

During her best time of day, when Sr. Clare felt strongest, she tried to have short visits with Sisters for their feast days. At one of these meetings the visiting Sister mentioned that she was wondering about what our experience of God the Father would be like in heaven. Sr. Clare responded that she thought it would be like two people talking and sharing about things that are deep and beautiful. It would be like the talk that they were



having right then in the infirmary. Sr. Clare said she believed that our community life was preparing us for our heavenly dialogue with God.

Even as Sr. Clare was drawing closer to that eternal dialogue, one of our Novitiate Sisters was preparing to make her Solemn Vows. Three days before Sr. Clare's death our young Sister was able to go to the infirmary and share the remembrance card which she had designed for her Solemn Profession Day. The two together looked at the front of the card. The large eyes from the face of Christ on the San Damiano crucifix pictured there looked back at them. The Bridegroom was calling each of them. In a few days Sr. Clare would take her last step in her earthly journey. Later in the month, our simply Professed Sister took her final step in profession.

With the extra strength that she had at certain times of the day, Sr. Clare enjoyed just being a sister with her Sisters. She was thoughtfully present to us, and she retained her sense of humor. She would laugh at those little "*fioretti*" moments that arise during the day. She proved that charity can be practiced at every moment despite our circumstances. Little poor ones can always find simple ways to show love. Perhaps charity exercised in weakness is an especially Franciscan gift?

"O Francis, the world has need of your heart!"

Pope St. John Paul II

Sr. Mary Chiara, pcc

Mary Mother of the Church Monastery, Alexandria, VA, USA
<https://poorclaresofalexandria.org>

The Servant of God, sr. Mary of the Trinity, osc



PATRIARCHATUS LATINUS - JERUSALEM

بطريركية القدس للاتين

EDICT

Decree N. 29 / 2024

PIERBATTISTA CARD. PIZZABALLA
LATIN PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

Cause

for Beatification and Canonization
of the Servant of God

MARY OF THE TRINITY (in the world: Louisa Jaques)
Professed Nun of the Poor Clares

On June 25, 1942, the Servant of God, Mary of the Trinity (in the world Louisa Jaques), professed nun of the Poor Clares, died at the age of 41 in Jerusalem. Born into a Protestant missionary family in South Africa and raised in Switzerland, she embraced the Catholic faith after a long journey. At the age of 25, in the heart of her youth, she experienced a profound existential and faith crisis, culminating in the night of her conversion: into her despair came light and an irresistible attraction to the cloister. Drawn by the mystery of the eucharist, she was baptized into the Catholic Church on March 19, 1928. After countless vocational attempts, Providence led her, at the age of 37 to the Poor Clares' Monastery in Jerusalem, where God was waiting for her to unite her more closely to the mystery of His Passover. In the travails, illness and sufferings of life, the Servant of God was driven to the search for truth and true love, overcoming evil with good, learning to listen to God's voice. Quietly, she gave herself unreservedly in prayer, adoration and fraternal charity, striving with all her strength for Christian unity, imploring the gift of peace. On December 8, 1941, she offered herself as a victim to Jesus in the Eucharist, and



a few months later she died peacefully, leaving behind a luminous witness of Christian life.

As her reputation for sanctity has been increasing over the years and as it has been formally requested that the Cause for Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God be initiated, in bringing this to the attention of the Ecclesial Community, we invite each and every one of the faithful communicate with us directly or through Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (Latin Patriarchate Road, P.O.B. 14152, Jerusalem 9114101 - chancellery@lpj.org) any information that could be favorable or contrary to the fame of holiness of the abovementioned Servant of God.

Furthermore, having to collect, according to the legal provisions, all the writings attributed to her, with the present Edict we order those persons who have such writings to consign to the said Tribunal, without delay, any writing whose author is the Servant of God, if it has not yet been consigned to the Postulation of the Cause. We remind you that the term “writing” does not just mean the printed works which have already been collected, but any manuscripts, diaries, letters and every other personal writing of the Servant of God. Those who wish to keep the original may present a duly certified copy.

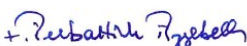
In conclusion, we decree that the present Edict will be displayed for two months on the entrance of the Co-Cathedral of the Most Holy Name of Jesus of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It will be published in the Diocesan Bulletin as well as on the website of the Latin Patriarchate, the Custody of the Holy Land that of the Poor Clares.

Given in Jerusalem, from the See of the Latin Patriarchate
November 29, 2024

Feast of All Saints of the Franciscan Order


Don Davide Meli
Cancelliere




†Pierbattista Card. Pizzaballa
Patriarca di Gerusalemme dei Latini



Cause for the beatification of the Servant of God Mary of the Trinity: a Light for our time

Since April 30, 2025, we have the joy of welcoming a new Servant of God among the Daughters of St. Clare: sr. Mary of the Trinity, Poor Clare of Jerusalem! On this date, in fact, the diocesan phase of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization, supported and introduced by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Pierbattista Card. Pizzaballa, was officially opened.

This canonical act marked the beginning of the official investigation into the life, virtues and reputation for sanctity of the Servant of God. On that occasion the vice-postulator Fr. Ulise Zarza, ofm, and the members of the Tribunal - Mons. Ilario Antoniazzi, Delegate of the Patriarch, Fr. Filippo Morlacchi, Promoter of Justice, and Marina Fischer, Notary - took an *“oath to faithfully fulfil their duties,”*¹ beginning in the following weeks the hearing sessions of the Witnesses, both those present in the Holy Land and those from other countries, including Italy, Switzerland, France, England, Austria, Brazil, Lithuania, Jordan, and South Africa. At the same time, the Historical Commission composed of Lic. rel. pol. Roberto Poretti, Sr. Mariachiara Bosco, osc, and Br. Eduardo Maseo Gutiérrez Jiménez, ofm, has been charged with *“researching and collecting all the writings of the Servant of God not yet published, as well as all and every historical document, both manuscript and printed, relating in any way to the cause.”*² This testimonial and documentary evidence constitutes the essential content of the Acts that will be sent to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints for the Roman phase of the Cause, together with the vote of the Theological Censors charged with *“examining”* the published and unpublished writings of the Servant of God and *“verifying that there is nothing contrary to faith and good morals.”*³



The relevance of her spirituality

Even though more than 80 years have passed since her death on June 25, 1942, interest in the life of Louisa Jaques/ Sister Mary of the Trinity and the impact of her testimony continues to grow. More and more people - especially lay people, but also men and women religious, priests, and bishops - attest to the interest and spread of her fame for sanctity in various countries. This is one of the reasons why the incessant request to open the cause for beatification has been heard, and the time was ripe to bring to light the fruits of research and testimonies gathered over the years.

Patriarch Pizzaballa expressed himself thus⁴: «Today the time has come to bring to light the life and example of a young cloistered nun, Mary of the Trinity, who lived *“without making a sound”* - as the nuns who lived with her testified. A few months after her death, my predecessor Luigi Barlassina wrote for the first edition of the Writings in 1943: “God does not ask anything truly extraordinary of Sr. Mary of the Trinity: nevertheless, He wanted from her a faithful correspondence to His holy inspirations, and the generosity of denying Him none of the small sacrifices that arise throughout the day.” Here is the call to holiness that the Lord asked of her: *“I wish that at your death it can be said: ‘She was a saint, she did very well in everything she did.’ This perfection in ordinary life is the holiness I ask of you. Nothing else. And in this work, you will have more than my help: it is I who will work it in you”*»⁵

Among the significant and timely traits of the Servant of God's spirituality, the Patriarch highlighted four⁶: the search for God, listening to the inner voice, the unity of the Church, and the vow of victimhood lived as an expression of Eucharistic life: «The most striking feature of Sr. Mary of the Trinity is that her life was not easy, it was not linear. This is why many feel close to her. She experienced the suffering of bereavement, illness, separation, and the disappointment of ideals and loves very early on. She also knew the night of despair that led her to exclaim, ‘God does not exist, and life is not worth living.’ It was precisely in her darkest hour that the breach opened that set her on her path. She allowed herself to be found by God. The



beauty of the new Servant of God lies first and foremost here: she is a young woman, a woman, who searched for the meaning of life, of love, of truth, even gropingly, in the dark, tirelessly.

Sr. Mary of the Trinity then reminds us of a fundamental truth: biblical faith is born from listening. Her journey of life and faith was accompanied by the Lord's wise teaching, leading the Servant of God to an ever deeper, freer, and more docile listening to His voice. This listening became for her a school of faith, prayer, fraternal charity, contemplation of the Word and the Eucharist, and the mystery hidden in every soul inhabited by God and called to a personal dialogue of love with Him.

The life of Sr. Mary of the Trinity, daughter and sister of Protestant pastors of the Calvinist Swiss Free Church, is undoubtedly also a light for the Church's path to unity: Her journey and decision to embrace the Catholic faith - attracted by the sacrament of the Eucharist - were painful, as she experienced the wound of division in her own flesh. This drove her to seek even more deeply the heart of unity and to find it with a distinctly post-conciliar spirit, understood as unity in charity and the founding reason for missionary activity. Her life is a living offering for the unity of the Church in prayer, adoration, and the smallest acts of fraternal charity.

Finally, perhaps the most difficult trait to understand: living the Eucharistic life that for her was sealed by the vow of victimhood, pronounced on December 8, 1941, a few months before her death in obedience to the interior voice. The heart of Sister Mary of the Trinity's spiritual experience is also the heart of her human experience. This vow of victimhood, in fact, as understood in her writings, means "living the Eucharistic life": *"I desire that your vow of victimhood purify your soul. I desire that your soul be sacrificed, in imitation of my Eucharistic life, in silence, in oblivion, in the gift of yourself in me, interceding without ceasing, welcoming every opportunity for expiation, in joy"* (Notes no. 638), and again: *"to work solely to spread my Spirit, my sweetness, my amiability that does not stop at evil, but conquers evil with good"* (Notes no. 366)».



Centenary of the “Night of Conversion”: conference and exhibition

Among the most significant events for the rediscovery of the figure of Mary of the Trinity this year is the centenary of the “Night of Conversion” (13-14 February 1926), a decisive moment in her life. On that night, at the height of a profound existential crisis, Louisa Jaques experienced a radical encounter with God, which marked the beginning of a new journey, which led her to embrace the Clarian vocation in the Holy City. On this occasion, on Saturday 14 February, a day of study and testimony was organised in Jerusalem - “*A Light in the Night*”⁷ - which was followed via live streaming by numerous people, thanks also to simultaneous translation into five languages, in addition to Italian. This conference, dedicated to the theological and spiritual interpretation of her experience, was also accompanied by an exhibition developed on 26 panels, aimed at making her human and mystical journey known through photos, writings and biographical texts⁸. These events not only had a commemorative value, but also offered an interpretative key to understanding his experience as a response to the anxieties of modern man.

The progress of the cause for beatification and the cultural and spiritual initiatives linked to the centenary of her conversion are bringing to light a figure of great depth. Sr. Mary of the Trinity presents herself today not only as a mystic of the past, but as a companion on the journey of the present, capable of speaking to the restless hearts of contemporary man and of indicating, with her life, a path of hope, truth, and love.

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¹ *Sanctorum Mater*. Education of Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, 2007. Art. 68 §2.

² *Idem*, Art. 87 §2.

³ *Idem*, Art. 64.



⁴ Address by His Beatitude Pierbattista Cardinal Pizzaballa for the First Session of the Diocesan Inquiry, Monastery of St. Claire, Jerusalem, April 30, 2025. This address was read by the Patriarchal Vicar, Msgr. William Shomali, on behalf of the Patriarch, who is in Rome for the Conclave.

⁵ Notes no. 599, in *Interior Dialogue*. Terra Santa Editions, Milan 2015.

⁶ Speech by His Beatitude Pierbattista Cardinal Pizzaballa, April 30, 2025.

⁷ The *Proceedings* of the Conference “*A Light in the Night*,” including all the speakers' presentations, will be published in the coming months by Edizioni Terra Santa of Milan. Recordings are available on the *Christian Media Center's* YouTube channel.

⁸ The exhibition “*I Lured You into the Night*” was created by the young people of the Compagnia dei Tipi Loschi di San Pier Giorgio Frassati in San Benedetto del Tronto (AP, Italy). It can be viewed (including translations) at: <https://sites.google.com/view/tihoattiratanellanotte/home-page>.



In memory of...

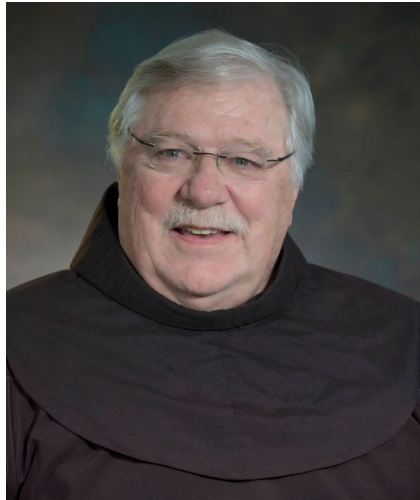
...Br. Thomas Hartle, ofm (1944 - 2026)

On February 5, 2026, Fr. Thomas Hartle, ofm passed away at the age of 81. During his 49 years as a friar, he was known as a compassionate retreat leader and pastor with a wonderful sense of humor and a deep sense of joy, both of which he brought to his over 20-year ministry as religious assistant to the Holy Name Federation of Poor Clares (USA).

Fr. Tom was born on Christmas Eve, 1944 in Clarion, Pennsylvania (USA). His large family included parents Urban and Bessie (née Myers) Hartle and six siblings. He grew up in Pennsylvania and was educated there, attending Shippenville School in Shippenville, Keystone Jointure School in Knox, Immaculate Conception High School in Clarion and Gannon College in Erie.

On May 20, 1971, he was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Erie. He then discerned a vocation to religious life as a Franciscan and was received into the Order of Friars Minor on June 25, 1975, professing first vows one year later. He made his solemn profession on July 21, 1979, and was assigned to serve at the St. Francis Retreat Center in Rye Beach, New Hampshire. He served in Rye Beach until 1990, when he was assigned to reside at St. Francis Friary Novitiate in Brookline, Massachusetts. There he continued to offer spiritual direction, retreats and workshops at many and various locales, and to serve to his Poor Clare sisters.

In 1989, Fr. Tom began his long and devoted service to the Order of St. Clare. He was appointed to serve the sisters of *Holy*





Name Federation as their religious assistant, but quickly his embrace reached beyond them to include sisters throughout the country. In 1994, Fr. Tom joined the team at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Andover, Massachusetts and in 1999, he generously answered his provincial minister's call to pastor St. Anthony Parish in Butler, New Jersey. Amidst his many pastoral responsibilities, Fr. Tom continued to visit his sisters, celebrating Masses for feast days and jubilees, leading retreats, and organizing special pilgrimages to Franciscan Italy. In 2008, he was again appointed religious assistant to Holy Name Federation, which he served tirelessly until his "retirement" in 2021. At the time of his death, visits to his sisters still populated his calendar.

Throughout a ministerial life that spanned more than five decades, Fr. Tom conducted numerous pilgrimages to Italy, helping both sisters and lay faithful to connect with their spiritual heritage. He was widely respected for leading retreats and days of recollection focused on Franciscan themes, sharing his wisdom and spiritual insights with all who sought guidance.





His deep understanding of Franciscan spirituality made him an invaluable guide to the religious community, in general, and countless communities of religious sisters throughout the United States.

In a video recorded a few years ago, Fr. Tom reflected on his life as a friar. He summarized his vocation in one word: love. "The Franciscan journey is an adventure in love," he said, "falling in love with God and opening yourself up and being receptive to God's love for you."

In his own way, Fr. Tom lived St. Clare's exhortation to St. Agnes of Prague:

*What you hold, may you always hold.
What you do, may you always do and never abandon.
But with swift pace, light step, and unswerving feet,
so that even your steps stir up no dust,
go forward securely, joyfully and swiftly, on the path of prudent
happiness,
believing nothing, agreeing with nothing
which would dissuade you from this resolution
or which would place a stumbling block for you on the way,
so that you may offer your vows to the Most High
in the pursuit of that perfection
to which the Spirit of the Lord has called you (2LAg 11b-14).*

Through the intercession of Saints Francis and Clare, may our brother rest in peace and on the day of the Lord, rise in glory.

Br. Russel Murray, ofm
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...Br. Herbert Schneider, ofm (1939 - 2026)

Lord, you show me the path of life; there is fullness of joy in your presence (from the Liturgy on the Day of Death)

On 11 March 2026 Fr. Dr. Herbert Schneider, ofm, reached the end of his life's journey; he lives now in the fullness of life. God Himself is now the reward for his work and life in the Franciscan Order and for the Poor Clares.

His life was marked to the very depths with the Franciscan Clarian spirituality.

In April 1991, Fr. Herbert was named Assistant for the Federation of German-speaking Poor Clares. As early as October of that year, he became the General Assistant for the Poor Clares in Rome and in 1997 was named Head of Office for Pro Monialibus.

He had the well-being of the Clares at heart. Through conferences and writing, Fr. Herbert sought to deepen the spirituality of St. Clare in the monasteries throughout the world.

Filled with a sense of responsibility, he always sought to visit the individual monasteries. He made every effort to preserve as many monasteries as possible and sought new ways to do so.

Even after his return from Rome, Fr. Herbert sought to continue helping the Poor Clares with his advice.

We thank Fr. Herbert for his tireless dedication and ask God to reward him for his work.

Kevelaer, 12 March 2026

Sr. M. Bernadette Bargel, osc
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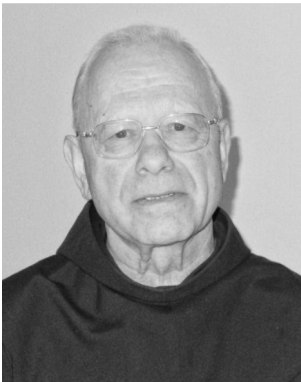


As a brother

My fondest memory of Br. Herbert is of him as a brother. He was a tireless friar, always on the go, both in thinking and in activity. From the first time he came to Cortona, and we planned how we could continue publishing the cTc - that's just how I experienced him.

St. Paul says: "The love of Christ compels us" (2 Cor 5:14). Br. Herbert too was driven by a "passion" for Christ, for the Church, for the Order and... for us sisters. During his term of office, I believe there were very few communities he did not visit personally, or sisters that he did not meet on his many journeys around the world. He travelled tirelessly, from one continent to another, switching between German, English, French, Spanish, and Italian, even resorting to a few words of Latin when necessary; all done with the goal of communicating with everyone he met. However much he travelled, he still managed to maintain both the contemplative dimension, in which he believed deeply, and the missionary dimension, as he reached out to the sisters.

Thank you, Br. Herbert, for the good you have sown among us, and for having fostered over the course of many years communion and communication among the "Poor Ladies" around the world.



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We received

Two publications on the *Audite poverelle* in the Novaglie manuscripts

The Poor Clares of Novaglie (VR), who are in the unique position of preserving two versions of the text of St. Francis's *Audite poverelle* for Clare and her sisters, chose to celebrate the 800th anniversary of these "words set to music" with an in-depth study and the complete publication of the three "Clarian" manuscripts in their archives. The project, which was initially modest in scope and focused solely on the 14th-century codex, had been entrusted to the care of Fr. Aleksander Horowski, ofmcap, who was also responsible for the selection of the collaborators, which included several Poor Clares. As the project progressed, from February 2024 until its publication, it gradually expanded, becoming so rich in content that it was compiled into two significant volumes, published a few months apart between 2025 and 2026 by the Historical Institute of the Capuchins in Rome. Heartfelt thanks to Mother Maria Rossi of Novaglie and her sisters, and to Fr. Horowski for embracing the ever-new possibilities that arose.

The first volume, **L'Audite poverelle otto secoli dopo. Il cantico di san Francesco d'Assisi e i codici del monastero di Novaglie** (Bibliotheca seraphico-capuccina, 117, Rome 2025, 519 pp., ill.), consists of three parts:

1) The introduction, in which Mother Maria di Gesù and Sr. M. Flavia Cavazzana recount the "rediscovery" of the *Audite poverelle* in the 1970s and the history of the manuscripts, is followed by the latter's essay on the history of the Venetian monasteries up to the Novaglie monastery, where the manuscripts were eventually gathered. In the second essay, Fr. Aleksander Horowski describes them, along with several "auxiliary" manuscripts, as part of a single network for transmitting Clare's Rule in the vernacular and other texts important to the monasteries, all of which are then presented in a table.



2) The second part contains the complete transcription of the three codices, which serve as “traveling companions” - to use an expression by Jacques Dalarun - of the two versions of the Audite poverelle.

3) The third part brings together several essays, including three by Fr. Horowski on legal texts - the unique one on the Legislation for the lay brothers of the Urbanist Poor Clares and the incomplete one on the Ordinances of the Poor Clares of Verona - and discusses the “legal dossier of the Poor Clares of the Observance.” Sr. Monica Benedetta Umiker, osc, presents the vernacular version of Clare’s *Rule*, which, in all Venetian-Lombard manuscripts, includes Pope Clement VI’s bull *Tenorem quarumdam* of 1343. The translator and the copyist are unknown, but in her *Excursus*, Cristina Campo demonstrates that the Poor Clares of Verona would certainly have been capable of carrying out such work. Milvia Bollati studies the two miniatures contained in the 14th-century codex, comparing them with the iconographic programs of other medieval manuscripts. Marco Guida presents “The Memory of Francis in Clare’s Writings”, while Felice Accrocca reinterprets the *Audite poverelle* in biographical sources, particularly the *Compilatio*, “the voice of the companions,” according to the Uppsala manuscript. Through their philological analysis, Antonio Montefusco and Alessia Luvisotto confirm the authenticity of the Audite and present a critical edition of the two surviving manuscripts. Finally, Sr. Chiara Grazia Centolanza, osc, offers a profound theological and spiritual interpretation of Francis’s song for Clare and her sisters, extending to the present day.

An overview by Fr. Horowski concludes this third section.

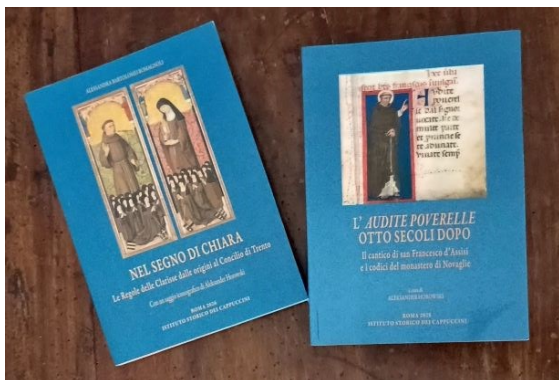
The third part was also intended to include an essay by Prof. Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli on the Rules of the Poor Clares; however, due to the richness of the exposition, it instead became a second volume titled *In the Footsteps of Clare: The Rules of the Poor Clares from their Origins to the Council of Trent*. (Rome 2026, pp. 435). In fourteen chapters, the author traces the history of religious life for women linked to Clare of Assisi in various ways from the early 13th century through the 16th century, covering the various rules and constitutions that governed it: from Cardinal Ugolino’s *forma vitae* (which also



underwent its own development) to the *Rules* of Innocent IV, Clare, Urban IV, and Isabella of France, to statutes and ordinances, up to the time of the Observances with the reform of Colette and the “rediscovery” of Clare’s *forma vitæ*. The exposition is clear, and the notes - which include references to past studies and the international bibliography - are comprehensive and precise. Almost as a crowning touch to Bartolomei Romagnoli’s exposition, Fr. Horowski rounds out the volume with a previously unpublished iconographic illustration on *The Poor Clares in certain “Seraphic Trees.”* What he said at the end of the first volume applies to both volumes: “We have reached the conclusion of this journey of study and research that has allowed us to open some windows onto the legislation, (I would add history), spirituality, and culture of the Poor Clares... but above all, it has brought us closer to their communal life and their values, cultivated over the centuries within the walls of the cloisters.”

Sr. Monica Benedetta Umiker, osc
Poor Clare Monastery S. Maria di Monteluce
in S. Erminio, Perugia, Italy
m.sermin@gmail.com

The work is available only in Italian, but its title would be translated as follows: *The Audite Poverelle Eight Centuries Later: The Cantic of St. Francis of Assisi and the Codices in the Monastery of Novaglie.*





We are Pilgrim People: Franciscan Study Pilgrimage Program - graced places, events and people

Pilgrimage is a cherished true connection not only with place, but with people resulting in a union of the heart. In the rhythm of the three-week Franciscan Study Pilgrimage Program, made possible by the gift of allowing me to participate from Langhorne Poor Clare community, Poor Clare Federation in USA, and the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, there were plenteous opportunities to nurture gifts of sisterly and fraternal loving concern. Throughout all the places, peoples and events, the Lord fills us with good things. The following are sharings of memorable signs of wonderful places, people, and events at the remarkably enriching Franciscan Study Pilgrimage Program (FSPP) 2024 & 2025.

It was my first time to go on pilgrimage on my own as a Poor Clare of Langhorne, PA, to this enduring city in 2024. My biological sister Maria Fe Sison Strong, dependable and a seasoned world traveler, was my co-pilgrim. We both looked forward to this special bonding time and planned to have lots of 'gelato'! On the arrival day September 8 in Rome, the tau cross, a visible sign of and commitment to St. Francis's spirituality of ongoing transformation of life, was given to each pilgrim. On September 11, Sister Death came seemingly too soon to lead my sister in her transition to be in the company of our Merciful Lord. My 2024 co-pilgrims offered consoling gifts of prayers and Mass. Even if some only briefly met Fe, they felt at ease with her. Confronted with the death of a loved one who has cared for me and seen me through many life-changing events left me in an uneasy fragile predicament of dealing with what cannot be fully described, explained and understood. Necessary travel arrangements were made for Fe to be brought back to Los Angeles for her wake and funeral. It was difficult to focus on the pilgrimage and eventually, I did not continue with the 2024 pilgrimage to be with my family, Fe's wide circle of friends, and co-workers.

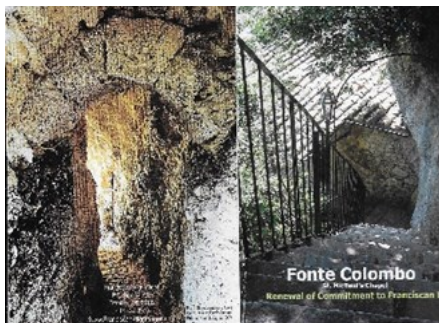


In 2025, the Jubilee Year of Hope, I had the marvelous, graced opportunity to once again join and this time to complete the FSPP pilgrimage from September 7 through October 1.

Crossing the Jubilee Doors of Hope, a milestone event symbolic of the wideness of God's mercy. We viewed the magnificent architecture of the three Basilicas with Holy Doors: St. Peter's - here Mass was celebrated by pilgrim leader Fr. Russel Murray, ofm and Religious Assistant for the Poor Clares of USA, near the tomb of St. Peter; St. John Lateran, the Mother Church of the Catholic faith - here St. Francis and his companions travelled to get the approval of their way of life from Pope Innocent III, who had a vision of the Church about to fall and being supported on the shoulders of St. Francis; St. Mary Major, the largest of the Marian shrines in Rome - here we prayed at Pope Francis simple burial site.

Wednesday General Audience of Pope Leo XIV. Pope Leo's reflection on the cry of Jesus on the cross is significant in challenging times: «Dear brothers and sisters, let us learn this too from the Lord Jesus: let us learn the cry of hope when the hour of extreme trial comes. Not to hurt, but to entrust ourselves. Not to shout at someone, but to open our hearts. If our cry is genuine, it can be the threshold of a new light, of a new birth.»

Rieti Valley is where St. Francis frequented to preach and pray. It is cruciform with Poggio Bustone, where St. Francis experienced solitude, forgiveness, peace and preaching to the North. Here he first used the famous greeting: *Buongiorno*,



buona gente (good morning, good people). Sr. Nancy greeted us with this same greeting during our bus rides. Another notable line is *Pax et Bonum* (Peace and All Good). La Foresta, where he also sought solitude, is known for the miracle of the restoration of the harvest of



grapes gained through trust in the Lord's mercy is east of Rieti. On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, we visited Fonte Colombo, meaning the fountain of the doves, west of the Rieti Valley. It is where St. Francis sought solitude and where the friars' Rule of Life was put together. Here, he had eye cauterization, the element of fire tamed through prayer. We made a renewal of our commitment to Franciscan gospel living at the Cave of St. Michael. Our three pilgrim leaders: Sr. Nancy, Fr. Russel, and Fr. Joe signed as witnesses. I rang the bell, symbolic of a call to community prayer, as we do in Langhorne Monastery, and as St. Francis did with his brothers in his time.

St. Bonaventure, a key Franciscan figure, sought God tirelessly according to the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. The Seraphic Doctor's prayer is evidence of love, which we should all desire: "...be Thou alone ever my hope,... my joy, my rest, my peace, my sweetness, my food, my refuge." We visited his birthplace and walked to Civita di Bagnoregio.

Greccio, with its beautiful, serene surroundings south of Rieti, is known as the "Franciscan Bethlehem" where St. Francis reenacted the manger scene. The wonderful Christmas creches on display at the International Nativity scene Museum give a sense of Christmas all year. Fr. Russel guided us through the sanctuary of the Presepe Grotto, and the ancient Friary. He also talked about John Duns Scotus's view on the Incarnation including Mother Mary has been redeemed and she is the vessel, and to be separated from Christ is disintegration whether in community, family or any other setting. We are all ultimately one in God's love.

The all-encompassing appeal of Assisi is splendid to behold early morning by day and night. There is a heartfelt connection to where the feet of Saints Francis and Clare along with their companions trod. At Rocca Maggiore we took turns praying the prayers for peace from varied religious traditions given by Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, and later at Ponte di Legno bridge, Collestrada, we paused and remembered areas of the world in turmoil, and we prayed the St. Francis Peace prayer. At Santa Maria Maggiore, we lined up to see the newly canonized St. Carlo Acutis, as did a steady stream of people. The *Canticle of Creatures* exhibit, and the Museum of Memory were engaging



feasts for the eyes and ears. Similarly, the five elements of nature from the Eastern view are: earth, wood, fire, water, air (or at times metal).

In Bastia, we sang and prayed as we held on to the stone reminiscent of the scene in the tavola of St. Clare's life where she clung to the altar which signified her belonging to the Church. A question worth musing is what or to whom does one cling? My co-pilgrim and traveller Sr. Mary Francis Revelian, a Poor Clare from Chesterfield, New Jersey and I renewed our vows at Mass with Fr. Joe as celebrant.

Portiuncula is a shining point of intersection of the lives and the deaths of St. Francis and St. Clare. "O Lord you are my portion and cup. It is you yourself who are my prize" comes to one's mind, heart, soul and spirit. This special place is where St. Francis received St. Clare and where she lived for four decades. In San Damiano, we prayed in the Chapel. St. Francis heard Christ speaking to him from the cross: «Go, Francis, repair my house which, as you see, is falling into ruin.» This is where St. Francis foretold that St. Clare and the Poor Ladies would live following in the footsteps of Christ.



At the Basilica of St. Clare, we visited the original San Damiano crucifix and prayed at the relic of St. Clare. The colors of the Cross of Benedetta, the Abbess after St. Clare, have rich meaningful symbols as explained by Fr. Joe, such as blue is for heaven, gold for eternity. Furthermore, the two Poor Clares from USA - I and Sr. Mary Francis Revelian - met with the serene and dedicated Poor Clares of the Protomonastero of Assisi. We tried to follow along the Morning Prayer in Italian as the Sisters chanted the psalms with their heart-stirring, angelic voices.



Evening prayer and Adoration with the Sisters at the Monastery of San Quirico was uplifting and special with the lyre musical stringed instrument. The lively reenactment of the leper story and St. Francis's conversion done by my co-pilgrims elevated both stories to more than just reading material.

The Caves of Monte Subiaso, Le Carceri, was where Francis and his companions prayed in solitude. He sought the counsel of Br. Sylvester and St. Clare regarding which path to take between preaching and contemplation. Personal time in prayerful solitude in the quietness of the Chapel was a spirit-stirring experience.

The St. Clare Departure walk with outstanding reflections by Sr. Nancy gave me a vivid connection with St. Clare. To have retraced the steps of St. Clare with my co-pilgrims was and will be a treasured memory.

During a visit to Cortona, we learned that St. Margaret was a good administrator who did a lot of good works and should not be confined to the image of her colored past. We were privileged to meet the joyful Poor Clares of Cortona at Mass, including Sr. Eleonora and Sr. Fortunata, 97-years young.

Mass at the tomb of St. Francis at the Basilica of St. Francis was beyond words deep experience. To have prayed and seen the spot where St. Francis received the stigmata in the chapel at La Verna made my heart exult in silent praise.

The 2025 pilgrims of FSPP with varied backgrounds were barely familiar with one another at the onset, but we became a mini community through the fun meals and table fellowship, group cooperation in Liturgy preparation, exercising patience and looking out for one another





during travel and other difficulties. After being away for a while on pilgrimage to travel, eat, pray, reflect, rest, one returns strengthened, renewed and thankful for comforts that have been taken for granted.

The seed of love is planted by our Lord, the Sower of Grace, on the holy ground of each person's heart. Let us share with others love and goodwill in our own place and time, as many times each day.

Buongiorno, buona gente (Good Morning, Good People).

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50th Anniversary of the canonization of St. Beatrice of Silva

For the Order of the Immaculate Conception, the year 2026 holds a singular resonance, as we celebrate two anniversaries related to our foundress, St. Beatrice of Silva: the centenary of her beatification and the fiftieth anniversary of her canonization. For this reason, the Apostolic Penitentiary has granted the Order a Jubilee Year - a special time of grace and salvation - to be observed in any of the conventual churches scattered throughout the world: Spain, Portugal, the Americas, India, and Equatorial Guinea. On one hand, the Federations - and each individual monastery - have organized various commemorative events. On the other, the *St. Beatrice of Silva* Confederation of Spain and Portugal has prepared two International Gatherings for the months of May and September. These will take place in two locations significant to the saint's life: Campo Maior (Portugal), where she was born; and Toledo - specifically at the Order's Motherhouse - where she lived, died, and is buried.

It may come as a surprise that Beatrice of Silva - a Portuguese noblewoman who spent a large part of her life in 15th-century Castile, and who consecrated her entire life to God and to honoring the Immaculate Conception of Mary by founding a religious family within the Church - took so long to be raised to the altars. Indeed, a long period of maturation has passed - a time that was severely tested and delayed for centuries, culminating in a moment long awaited by her spiritual daughters. It is as if the veil that covered Beatrice's beautiful face during her earthly existence continued to keep her veiled from the eyes of the world, as if she wished to leave us a message of silence - of passing unnoticed, always hidden and concealed with Christ the Redeemer in God - while keeping her gaze fixed upon Mary Immaculate; for that which is essential remains hidden from worldly eyes. As the *Positio* regarding her life and virtues aptly records, her reputation for sanctity was evident both during her lifetime - for a special light seemed to envelop her; her outward beauty reflected the transparency of a soul enamored of God,



radiating peace and purity - and at the moment of her death. Curiously, it was at this latter juncture that the sign of Transcendence, Light, was made manifest; for when the white veil that habitually covered her face was lifted to administer the Anointing of the Sick, she appeared enveloped in the fragrance of sanctity; her face shone resplendently, and upon her forehead, observers beheld a star, a celestial Marian sign. Likewise, the veneration accorded to her mortal remains - which were even, at one point, stolen by another religious family - bears witness to the profound reputation for sanctity she enjoyed. This reputation continued to spread, albeit without official ecclesiastical recognition. In 1634, Pope Urban VIII's prohibition against the public veneration of saints who had not been formally recognized by the Church - or who had not been venerated for at least one hundred years - presented an obstacle that the Order sought to resolve with dispatch. Consequently, they initiated a canonical process in Toledo (1636) to demonstrate that the veneration of Beatriz de Silva had, in fact, existed for well over a century. This was attested to by nuns of the Conceptionist, Dominican, and Comendadoras Orders, alongside various laypersons: they testified that Beatriz was truly a saint, endowed with every virtue to a heroic degree, and that - both during her life and after her death - she was believed to enjoy a singular favor in the eyes of God, prompting the faithful to invoke her intercession in times of illness and other tribulations. However, for reasons that remain unknown to us, this canonical process was never brought to completion. Nevertheless, Beatriz's reputation for sanctity continued to spread among the faithful - extending even to historians and painters, who began to depict the Immaculate Conception clad in white and blue. This imagery - inspired by the vision Beatriz experienced while confined within a chest during a moment of intense suffering - has since become the distinctive habit that identifies her spiritual daughters.

Two centuries passed in absolute "canonical silence" until, in the late 19th century, the Holy Spirit raised up an instrument who drove the resumption of the beatification process: Mother Teresa de Jesús Romero, a Conceptionist nun from Hinojosa del Duque (Córdoba). She fostered the spiritual and financial



union of all the Order's monasteries for this cause, thereby ensuring that, in 1910, the beatification process was resumed in Madrid - proceeding under the rubric of cultus immemorial (immemorial veneration) -and that, five years later, it was officially declared by public authority that devotion to Beatriz had indeed existed since time immemorial. With this milestone achieved, the process reached Rome, where the Sacred Congregation of Rites, having thoroughly examined the entire case, confirmed the ruling of the Toledo tribunal on July 27, 1926. The very next day, July 28, Pope Pius XI proclaimed her Beata (Blessed), recognizing that her sanctity had lingered like an invisible perfume within the heart of the Church. Once again, several years elapsed until - thanks to the petitions of many of the faithful - the Sacred Congregation decreed in 1950 that the Cause be formally reopened. Following the necessary procedural steps and the verification of two miracles attributed to her intercession in Mexico (one of which benefited a Conceptionist nun), the way was finally paved for Pope Paul VI to solemnly canonize her on October 3, 1976.

Her canonization was more than an historical recognition: it was a prophetic voice for our times, reminding us of the eternal value of the hidden life, purity of heart, and simple devotion to Mary Immaculate. Her message is clear: only those who hide themselves in God can shine with His Light. Her life of silence, humility, and Marian love continues to shine like a pure flame that ignites hearts and reminds the world that all darkness can turn into light when one places full trust in God.

We, the Conceptionists, proclaim our gratitude and praise to God for His work of mercy in our Mother, and for the triumph of the Risen Christ in her life. More than merely commemorating dates, this is about profoundly renewing our joy and thanksgiving for the holiness that the Church has recognized in the life and work of Beatrice; it is about renewing this maternal presence within our hearts and looking with hope upon this historical moment - one in which we are entrusted with the responsibility of bringing to life the spiritual experience she initiated: the remembrance and honor of the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the icon that continues to shape our identity as Conceptionists.



We conclude with an excerpt from the Pope's homily delivered on the day of her canonization: "This noble lady, who lived for so many years with her exquisitely beautiful face veiled, today allows us to contemplate her countenance - radiant with holiness and glory - and once again radiates upon us the ideal of spiritual beauty: the beauty of that grace which transfigures the humble human face... Let us admire, let us rejoice, and let us strive to ensure that the halo of this new saint - Beatrice, as she is named - may also cast its rays of heavenly beauty, the beauty of the Virgin, upon our society." (Paul VI)

Holy Mother Beatrice, pray for us!

Sr. Nuria Cano, oic

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News from the Office Pro Monialibus

Flemish Federation “H. Clara - H. Coleta”, Belgium

On the 27th of May 2025 the Flemish Federation 'H. Clara - H. Coleta' held their Federal Assembly and held elections for a new Federal Council and President.

We were very happy to have Fr. Theo Van Adrichem ofm (he is the Minister-Provincial of the Friars of the Netherlands and Flanders) lead this assembly and preside in the elections.

In a very pleasant sisterly atmosphere and with great unison, they were elected:

President:

Sr. Elisabeth Schonken, of the Poor Claires of St-Truiden.

Councillors:

Sr. Martine Van de Walle, of the Poor Claires of Oostende;

Sr. Greet Van Belleghem, of the Poor Claires of Stabroek.

Sr. Sabine Van der Weyden was asked (and agreed) to continue to be our Federations Secretary.



“Mary Immaculate” Federation, USA

“May We Always Love One Another”:

The Gift of Federation Deepens Sisterly Love

The triennial Federal Assembly of the Poor Clare Federation of Mary Immaculate in the United States of America was held October 8-15, 2025, in Los Altos Hills, California. Each of the twelve member monasteries was represented by its abbess and a delegate, and the desire of our Holy Father Francis that we should “love one another” truly found expression in our days together, with each capitular remarking at the end on how fully the spirit of sisterly love had been felt throughout the gathering.

One very special joy of the federation assembly is the sharing which occurs one-on-one among the capitulars before, after and in between sessions, and in every other possible free moment that can be found! These sharings, often taking place outdoor in the beauty of the Los Altos monastery garden, deepen our sisterly unity in our shared ideal, and enrich us with a greater knowledge of each federated community. The mutual support found in our federation helps us to strengthen that bond of love, through which the Light of Christ shines brightly to all the world.

Results of the 2025 Triennial Elections:

Federal President:

Mother Mary Angela
(Roswell, New Mexico)

1st Councilor:

Mother Mary Giovanna
(Belleville, Illinois)

2nd Councilor:

Sr. Miriam
(Kokomo, Indiana)

3rd Councilor:

Mother Marie Colette
(Los Altos Hills, California)





“Immaculate Conception” Federation of the Monasteries of the Order of the Immaculate Conception, Brazil

On 29 January 2026, we elected, for the next six years, the new Council of the Immaculate Conception Federation of the Monasteries of the Order of the Immaculate Conception in Brazil.

The Council was elected by the representatives of the eleven Monasteries present at the Federal Assembly of Elections 2026:

President: *Madre Beatriz Maria* (Fortaleza)

Vice President: *Sr. Lindinalva* (Salvador)

2nd Councillor: *Mother Eleusa Maria* (Jatã)

3rd Councillor: *Mother Aparecida* (São Paulo)

4th Councillor: *Sr. Francisca Beatriz* (Piratinanga)

We entrust these Sisters to your prayers so that they may go forward under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the protection of our Immaculate Mother.





“Mary Immaculate” Federation, Colombia

From 10 to 17 February 2026 there took place the XVII Ordinary Federal Assembly of the Poor Clares of Colombia. At this Assembly, the Federal Council was elected for the next six years, 2026-2032. We met at the Casa San Pablo of the Santa Fe Province in the city of Itagüí - Antioquia.

There were 62 sisters present at the Assembly, from 32 monasteries of the Federation. During the first days, we were given the reports from the Federal President, the Bursar and the Formation Team, which were welcomed by the Assembly with great acceptance and very positive appreciation.

We spent two days of formation accepting the projections, both personal and community. We carried out two days of training, which were both personal and community, and were aware of the need to continue accompanying those communities who have already taken these steps.

We welcomed the visit of the Father Provincial of Santa Fe de Colombia, Fr. Alirio Urbina Rodríguez, ofm, as well as that of the Visitor General for the Canonical Visitation of the Province, Fr. Sandro Roberto D’Acosta, ofm.





We lived this Assembly in a truly fraternal spirit, sharing the experiences of each monastery and recognising the difficulties and challenges which we shall have to meet in the next few years.

The Federal Council for those next six years is:

President:

Mother Leidy de Nuestra Señora del Rosario, osc.

Councillors:

Sr. María Fernanda de Jesús Misericordioso, osc;

Sr. Magda Constanza de la Pasión, osc;

Sr. Eunice del Niño Jesús, osc;

Sr. María Rosa del Paraíso, osc.

Federal Bursar:

Sr. María Hilda de San José, osc.

We sincerely thank all the Sisters and Brothers who contributed to *Communion and Communication 67*.

We remind you that **cTc 68** will be published in **December 2026**.

By **September 2026**, we are looking forward of receiving your testimonies, reflections, and stories of experiences...

Theme: “...that they always love and observe our lady, Holy Poverty” - the gifts and challenges of living in poverty
(cf. *Testament of Siena*).



- * The review is available at:
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Communion and Communication

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