

YOUR HELP - THANK YOU

Many people have asked how they can help. First, we ask for your prayers. Please be assured of our prayers for you as we begin the Lenten season.

We invite you to send us your prayer intentions in the enclosed envelope. Many people - including anonymous donors - have also partnered financially in our ministries. We appreciate your continued generosity. Your gifts make a difference in our lives and the lives of those we serve. Please consider remembering the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Clare (Florida), Inc. (our legal name) in your Wills.

We have been advised that there are ways of giving that may be beneficial to our donors. Please visit our website for more information – www.sistersofstclare.org.php



MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU!

Sisters of St. Clare, Florida Region / 11235 Apache Place / Largo, FL 33774 / (727) 593-8195 / www.sistersofstclare.org



Good News

A SPECIAL TIME FOR US

The Lenten Season – particularly Palm Sunday – is especially important to Sisters of St. Clare. During the Lenten season of 1212, St. Clare heard St. Francis preach in the church of San Giorgio at Assisi. His message inspired her and she begged Francis to help her that she too might live "after the manner of the holy Gospel" and to lead a life of Gospel poverty, a way of life that is still followed today by the Sisters of St. Clare.

On Palm Sunday, Clare attended high Mass in Assisi. When the others approached the altar-rail to receive a palm frond, she remained in her place as if rapt in a dream. Everyone watched as the bishop descended from the sanctuary and placed the palm in Clare's hand. That was the last time the world beheld St. Clare. Responding to St. Francis' invitation, that night Clare met Francis and his disciples at the humble chapel of the Porziuncula where Francis cut off Clare's hair and gave her a rough tunic and a thick veil to wear. From that moment on, Clare dedicated her life to the service of Christ.



"St. Peter's Tears" by Sr. Lila Dempsey.

Porziuncula

Dear Friends

PLEASE JOIN US

Please join us for Vespers - Evening Prayer - each Sunday during Lent at 5:00 p.m. at our Mission House, 11235 Apache Place in Largo. Please call us at (727) 593-8195 if you need directions.

~Sisters of St. Clare, Florida Region

Almost 800 Lenten seasons later, we commemorate those historical events that gave rise to our Order. In addition, we observe other devotions recommended by the Church and the Gospel: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. Grounded in prayer and contemplation, the Sisters of St. Clare also find much inspiration in praying the Stations of the Cross and we encourage everyone to do the same. What matters most in the Stations of the Cross is to follow Christ in his passion and to see ourselves mirrored in him. To face life's dark side in ourselves and in our world, we need the hope Jesus offers in his passion. By accompanying him on the Way of the Cross, we gain His courageous patience and learn to trust in God who delivers us from evil.

One sister's profile:

NOW YOU ARE ONE OF US...

Although raised in Clearwater, Sister Christa Rowe's calling to the Sisters of St. Clare has taken her many places in Florida and beyond. In Florida, Sr. Christa has ministered to the sick and homebound or directed the Religious Educations programs of St. Lawrence Parish, Tampa; St. Joseph's Parish, St Petersburg; and Our Lady Queen of Peace, New Port Richey. She worked with the Adult Education program at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Holiday, where she also served as Directress of Formation for the Sisters of St. Clare of the Florida Region, and she worked with the Black Catholic Ministries for the Diocese of St. Petersburg.



Outside of Florida, Sr. Christa has ministered in Ireland, Wales and San Diego, California. From 2000 through 2006, Sister served with the Ministry of Caring in Wilmington, Delaware where her ministries included evangelization and pastoral care among the poor, the homeless and those suffering from AIDS. Since September, 2006, she has served as the Administrator of Sacred Heart Housing for senior citizens in Wilmington.



Asked about her calling to become a Sister, Sr. Christa explains that her life as a Sister of St. Clare is "a perfect fit" because Sisters of St. Clare are "firmly connected to prayer and contemplation...we are Eucharistic centered...we are community-based...we are welcoming and place great importance on hospitality. We care deeply for each person as an individual.



Sr. Christa tells about the time she was in formation in Dublin during Thanksgiving. Because she was homesick for family, friends and this very American holiday, the Sisters invited her to make the traditional Thanksgiving turkey dinner at the convent. It was difficult to find many of the usual Thanksgiving items such as cranberry sauce and pumpkin in Ireland at that time. Therefore, while Sr. Christa and another American Sister shopped and cooked, the other Sisters set the table and decorated the dining room. Sister Christa was moved to tears when she brought the meal into the dining room and saw that the European Sisters had sewn bits of red, white and blue cloth into the "Stars and Stripes," decorating the entire room with the American colors. From this and other events too numerous to count, she knows that wherever in the world her assignments with the Sisters of St. Clare may take her, she will be "at home."

Sister Christa adds that as time goes by her life with the Sisters feels more and more like the life in a family. She quotes the blessing and commission given to her on the day she made her final vows by Sr. Helen Conway as Abbess General: "Now, you are one of us, sharing all things in common."

The Eucharist

CENTRAL TO THE SISTERS OF ST. CLARE and THE ST. PETERSBURG DIOCESE

As those of you in the St. Petersburg Diocese may know, Bishop Lynch introduced his wonderful Pastoral Letter, "Living Eucharist: Gathered, Nourished, Sent" in November to mark the beginning of a Diocesan wide, multi-year process with the goal of fostering a deeper experience and understanding of the Eucharist. Bishop Lynch asks parishes, families, and individuals to commit to a renewal process so that, through catechesis, dialogue, and faith sharing, we, as the Church, will:

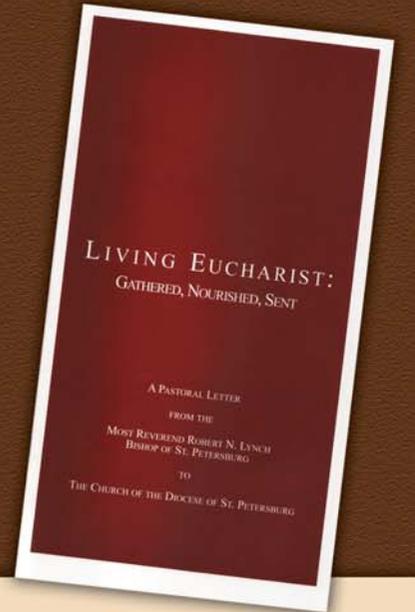


- Strengthen the bonds among the people of God as we share faith
- Enrich communal prayer and reflection on the Word of God
- Enhance participation and celebration of Eucharist
- Develop a greater consciousness of what it means to be the Body of Christ
- Send the Church forth to act in justice and mercy

The commitment of the Sisters of St. Clare to the "Living Eucharist" initiative is reflected in our prayers and ministries and flows naturally from our Charism. As followers of St. Francis and St. Clare, we embrace the Eucharist as the center of our lives and the source of our spirituality and community. Each Sister spends time each day praying before the Eucharist that is in repose in each of our convents.

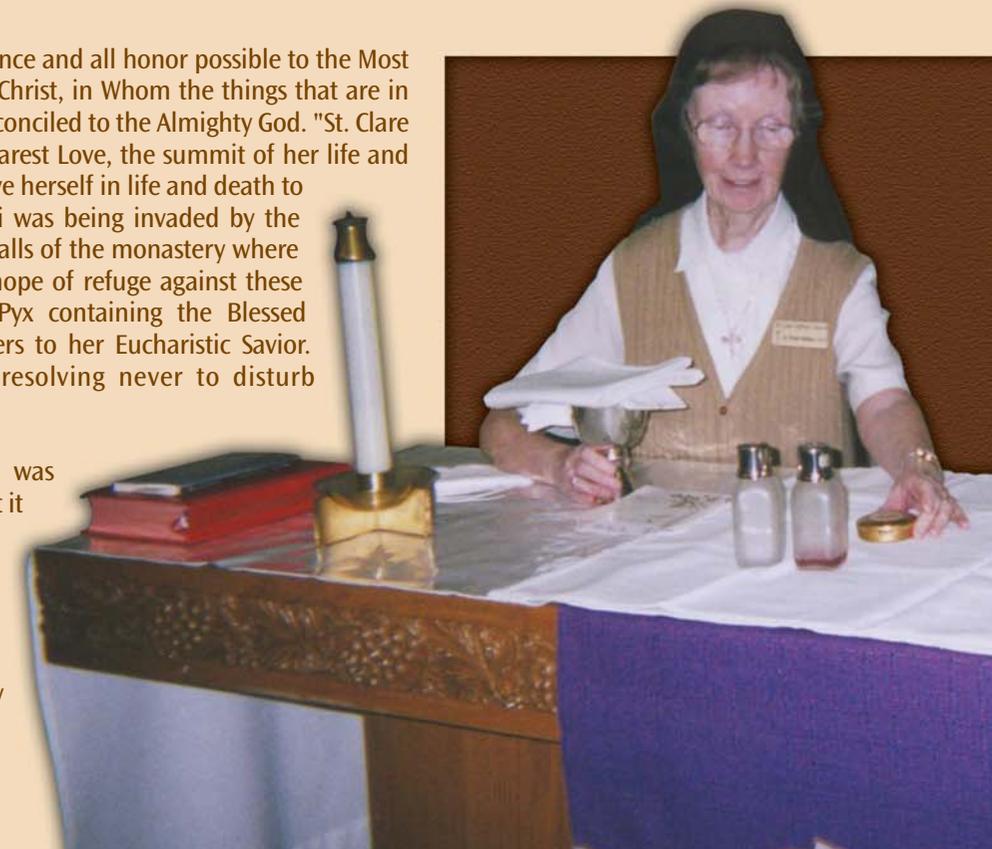
St. Francis teaches us "to show all reverence and all honor possible to the Most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom the things that are in heaven and on earth are pacified and reconciled to the Almighty God. "St. Clare looked to the Eucharistic Lord as her dearest Love, the summit of her life and the strength through which she could give herself in life and death to God. On one occasion, the city of Assisi was being invaded by the Saracens who even began to scale the walls of the monastery where Clare and her Sisters lived. As her last hope of refuge against these evil men, Clare held up the Sacred Pylax containing the Blessed Sacrament and uttered confident prayers to her Eucharistic Savior. Immediately the Saracens retreated, resolving never to disturb Clare and her sisters again.

The spirituality of Francis and Clare was focused on the Person of Jesus Christ, but it was not the "Gospel story" Jesus to whom they were devoted. Rather, they surrendered their lives to this same Jesus who LIVES ever-present in the Blessed Sacrament. This is the Jesus who is present to us today in the very same way.



Above: Bishop Lynch's Pastoral Letter, "Living Eucharist: Gathered, Nourished, Sent"

Below: Sr. Bridget prepares the altar for Eucharist



In Memoriam

Several of our friends passed away recently, pictured from left to right:

Lee Crooks, Mission House Office Manager – October 24
Joseph Cryan, Our Friend – ??
Bob Malone, Our Friend – November 12

Mary McLoughlin, Sr. Madeleine's Sister – December 9
Wanda Filzek, Wanneda Harris's Mother – December 16

Please keep them and their families in your prayers.