

We Invite You

TO PARTNER WITH OUR MINISTRIES

Since the arrival of the Sisters in Florida in 1966, your gifts of prayers, time, talent and financial support have made a difference in the mission and the lives of the Sisters. For all of this, the Sisters are deeply grateful! Friends have found ingenious ways to financially support our mission. For example, one couple about to be married invited their guests to contribute to our ministries in lieu of giving wedding gifts. Another dear friend placed her CD "in trust" for us so that it will transfer to us after she passes away. Our Friends have been not only generous but also creative in the ways they give! Even so, our volunteers have described for us some of the more "typical" ways to partner with us in our ministries which provide the greatest tax advantages:

- ✠ Tax-advantaged IRA Charitable Rollover: This technique may satisfy minimum distribution requirements and is available only through December 31, 2007.
- ✠ A Gift of Stock: You may wish to take advantage of the many tax incentives associated with a gift of securities or appreciated property.
- ✠ Wills and Bequests: A charitable bequest may reduce estate taxes while enabling you to make a gift to the Sisters that might not otherwise be possible during your lifetime.
- ✠ Deferred Gifts: Many gift instruments such as Charitable Remainder Trusts and Charitable Annuity. Trusts are available through which you can support our ministries while also providing yourself with lifetime income.
- ✠ Cash gifts: All cash gifts are fully deductible.

For more information or to start planning for one of these gift options, please visit our website at www.sistersofstclare.org/gift.php, call us at the Office of Mission Advancement (727) 593 – 8195, or email us at info@sistersofstclare.org.



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



Dear Friends,

We had a wonderful celebration of the feast of St. Clare! The Mass was celebrated at St. Patrick's Church in Largo by Fr. Ailbe O'Murchu as the main celebrant and Fr. Paul Pecchie and Fr. Prakash, the pastor and associate pastor of St. Patrick's concelebrating with him. Fr. Ailbe preached a wonderful homily about St. Clare and the Eucharist. The music, provided for us by music director Paulette King, cantor Sharon Coogan and cellist Sr. Kathleen Luger, was inspiring! All of us were so happy to see our faithful Associates and friends from all the parishes where the Sisters are involved in ministry.

~Sisters of St. Clare,
Florida Region



Good News

EMPOWERING THOSE TO WHOM WE MINISTER

SISTERS OF ST. CLARE,
FLORIDA REGION,
FALL 2007 – ISSUE III



Over five hundred people attended the Mass and many of those remained for the reception in the parish center where we enjoyed some wonderful food and met lots of new friends. To see more of our pictures from the celebration, please visit our website at www.sistersofstclare.com

ST. CLARE - AN INSPIRATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Although St. Clare was born to a noble family in Assisi, after hearing St. Francis preach she was determined to follow Francis' ideals by leading a simple and contemplative life. Clare asked Francis to write a rule for her and the Sisters. After receiving a one-page document, "The Form of Life" from Francis, she modified it and thus became the first woman to write a "Rule" for women based on the Franciscan ideals of Gospel Poverty – dependence on God for all daily needs; Contemplation – where God was "all" in their lives; and, Community – the joining with others of the same calling and recognizing each as a child of God.



"Gaze upon the Lord" painting of St. Clare of Assisi by Sr. Lila Dempsey.

ransack the convent in 1240. While always obedient to the Church, she demonstrated great courage by retaining the Franciscan ideals as the Sisters' way of life rather than adopting a different lifestyle which, though Religious, was not based on the "privilege of poverty."

St. Clare's life continues to speak to all of us. She challenges us to incorporate simplicity, singleness of purpose and unity of families and communities into the complexity of our 21st-century lives. As Pope John Paul II wrote of St. Clare, "Clare's contemplative journey, which will culminate in her vision of the "King of glory," begins precisely in her total abandonment to the Spirit of the Lord, in the same way as Mary did at the annunciation: that is to say it begins with that spirit of poverty which empties her of everything, but the simplicity of a gaze fixed on God."

Clare often demonstrated her determination and strength of character. She was fearless in protecting the Sisters, and indeed the entire town, from the Saracens who attempted to

One sister's profile: SAYING "YES" TO GOD'S CALL

Sister Kathleen Luger was eight years old when she first thought about a vocation to the religious life, but as her musical talent developed, her thoughts of a religious vocation receded. With time, Sister Kathleen mastered the cello (you may have heard her play at the St. Clare feast day celebration). However, years after she had become a highly respected professional musician and was playing in internationally known orchestras, she read a biography of St. Francis of Assisi and her thoughts about religious life surfaced again. "As my spiritual life began to grow, I began to become dissatisfied with the focus on job, status, and those kinds of things," Sr. Kathleen says. "The total 'counter-cultural' aspect of St. Clare's and St. Francis' lives attracted me."

After a great deal of prayer and soul searching, Sister Kathleen joined the Sisters of St. Clare in 2000 on the feast of St. Clare. Sister Kathleen adds, "The mission of the Sisters of St. Clare is bringing Clare's contemplative Charism to the world. Each Sister spends at least an hour each day in personal prayer – generally before the Blessed Sacrament. When we really listen to God speak to us, we become more peaceful, more Christ-like, and more able to bring the light of Christ to others." **If you would like to learn more about us or are considering a vocation as a Sister of St. Clare, please call us at (727) 517-0197 or visit our website at www.sistersofstclare.org.**



People frequently ask Sister Anne Kelly, the leader of the Sisters of St. Clare mission in Central America. "Why did the Sisters of St. Clare go to minister in El Salvador?" The underlying reason is our Franciscan Charism – our call to be missionaries.

In response to the sweeping changes of the Vatican II Council and the social encyclicals of Pope John XXIII, the Latin American Bishops advocated programs to improve the living conditions of the poor. Responding to that call, the Franciscan Friars determined to strengthen their work with the needy of El Salvador. In 1971, a Franciscan friar appointed to San Francisco Gotera Church asked the Sisters to undertake a ministry dedicated to the underprivileged of his parish. Sr. Helen, Abbess General at the time, went to El Salvador and confirmed that the conditions were indeed dire. At our General Council meeting of Christmas, 1971, the decision was made to send Sisters to Central America.

By the mid-seventies, there was growing political tension and repression was widespread. In 1977, Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdamez was appointed Archbishop and within days, many priests were murdered. The Archbishop increasingly advocated on behalf of the poor. Because his influence was intolerable to some Salvadoran factions, he was assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass in his church. Violence against the Church continued during the early 1980s, causing the number of active priests to decline; consequently, 40 percent of rural parishes lacked a priest.



Our initial ministries in El Salvador involved the formation of catechists and community leaders...

Sister Phyllis Shaughnessey, who now ministers in Florida, ministered in El Salvador for twelve years during the civil war. At that time, some missionary work

had to be curtailed and the Sisters needed to work with human rights organizations. When peace came, the mission expanded to the capital city of San Salvador and to Guatemala. The Sisters have established a Formation program to train aspiring local women to become sisters and have undertaken new pastoral tasks including work in the schools and the marginalized areas in Guatemala City. "We have been abundantly blessed by the Lord and pray that we may remain open and willing to follow His call wherever that may be".

Although the Latin American Church was vibrant, there was a shortage of priests and religious; however, "Basic Christian Communities" were springing up and the laity needed to take on a vital role in the Church. Our initial ministries in El Salvador involved the formation of catechists and community leaders and developing programs for community prayers and celebrations.

SISTERS OF ST. CLARE MINISTRY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Above left: Sister Anne Kelly, Leader of our mission in Central America, Sister Juana Guzman and Sister Marina Estelina admire a statue of St. Clare at their convent

Above right: Sr. Lucia makes friends during her visit to the El Salvador Mission



Because our Rule of Life was received from both Francis and Clare, the feast of St. Francis on October 4 is especially important to the Sisters. Francis died in 1276 at the age of 44, but during his short life he founded the Order of Friars Minor for religious priests and brothers – observed today by more than 35,000 men; the Rule for the "Clares" - observed by more than 20,000 women today; and, the Third Order, written for lay men and women who wish to sanctify their daily lives in the

OCTOBER 4 IS THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

spirit of Christian poverty and prayer. Today, more than 1,000,000 Secular Franciscans observe the rule of the Third Order.

In 2009, the Franciscan family will celebrate the 800th Anniversary of the Franciscan Rule. For all Franciscans, the Gospel norm of love and poverty are basic to humble service. Living in a world with war, terror, poverty and uncertainty, Christianity is exposed to questions about the existence of God, and the meaning of life and death. Our Franciscan Charism - identifying ourselves with the Gospel as Clare and Francis did - helps us to respond with trust and courage to the many challenges we face in our modern world.