



GLANCE

Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity
Generalate – Rome, Italy

Volume 2011 # 4

Winter, 2011

Canticle of Creation

*With all creatures,
the brothers and sisters should praise the Ruler of heaven and earth,
and give thanks...*

Rule #10

How do our lives echo the Canticle of Creation?

CHRIST THE KING PROVINCE

Lüdinghausen, Germany

We look like kings



Francis of Assisi was able to see God in everything and to love and praise him in all his creation. Reading his canticle of creation, I imagine that this beautiful song has even more verses than those actually written down. The other stanzas may be read from the life of Francis: Be praised, my Lord, through every woman, man or child, especially those living on the outskirts of society.

Since 2009 the sisters of Christ the King Province take part in an intercongregational project called “Church for guests.” Together with brothers and sisters of three different congregations, I (Sr. Judith Kohorst) live and work there in a small community. At seven o’clock in the morning we open the door of our house and welcome homeless people. Many of our guests are drug or alcohol addicted, some are HIV-positive, and all of them know the feeling of being marginalized. It is not our main aim to help our guests, although we do offer help (meals, clothes, consulting service from a social worker and so on). We want to give our guests the experience to be welcomed, to feel that their presence is highly appreciated. A few months ago an artist in our town made portraits of some street men and women. When they looked at their images, they said, “We look like kings.” So what we try to do can be called, “to recognize the king or queen in every person” – like the artist did. We are looking for ways not to work *for* those people, but to work *with* them – and to enjoy their company. Once a month we take a trip together with our guests, go bowling or have a barbecue in the garden. Our way of life here is *one* possibility to sing another verse of the canticle of creation: “Be praised, my Lord, through the queens and kings living on the streets ... “

Sr. Judith Kohorst

HOLY NAME PROVINCE

Stella Niagara, New York

“We hold our world as sacred”

“Reuse, recycle, reduce. This is a kind of mantra which we, the sisters of Holy Name Province, use to live our Charism Statement: “with gentle courtesy toward all creation,” and our 2009 General Chapter Statement: “to hold our world as sacred.” As our world becomes more aware of the need for renewable energy, the reality of global warming, and our duty to use earth’s resources responsibly, we continue to do our part to reverence the “holy ground” God has given us.

Many of us use “Go Green” U.S. postage stamps which depict sixteen ways of preserving resources, many of which we already practice, like: compost, plant trees, share rides, buy local produce, etc. We have an Environmental Committee composed of sisters and lay employees who ensure that our “holy grounds” are fittingly maintained. A prominent bulletin board entitled “Environmental Concerns” keeps us informed of various issues and suggests ways we can contribute to preserving our planet. A number of sisters have nurtured vegetable gardens and shared their harvests with others.

The Environmental Science Class at the Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart (founded by our sisters in 1874) created a beautiful rain garden, growing flowers that used water collected in brightly colored rain barrels and run-off from a parking lot and a nearby building.

These are just a few ways that our lives are echoing the Canticle of Creation as we spread Franciscan joy and concern for all creation.

Sister Mary Kay Stahl

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS PROVINCE

Orlik, Poland

How does my life echo the Canticle of Creation?



I love Saint. Francis, and his loving God in creatures has spoken to me more than theological treatises. Every blade of grass that sways in the wind, the trees through which Brother Sun shines, and its rays that dance on the lake speak to me about God. Whenever I walk, especially in our forest, God’s love amazes me. Whenever I see flourishing forest moss or small flowers, I think that since God made them so beautiful, and they are here today and tomorrow will be trampled upon, how much more beautiful is my soul, whose destiny is eternity! How God’s love delights! Contact with nature introduces order and harmony in my life. It is one of the ways in which God finds me when I flee from irritation, nervousness and excessive emotions. It is also the way in which I search for God when I miss Him so much. I absorb God’s presence in the forest silence and in solitude. Silence and solitude – two sisters, which in our consecrated life are a little bit forgotten. They are especially beloved by God. I experience that it is through them, that God gives me many graces. Mother Earth with all its colors, fragrances, all her richness automatically directs my thoughts to God. Each moment, such as these, is precious and unique. Each is an opportunity and a call to pray with gratitude for all the gifts, especially for the seemingly self-evident: for water, sun, fire. God's love has given them to us and that is why they are.

Francis’ Canticle every day teaches me how to die in order to live for others. I fall, but I am not discouraged. I experience that in my fall, the Lord weeps with me. I experience, too, that my return to God brings joy to me and to others as well. Truly blessed is the fault! Dying hurts, but when one is dying because of love, the pain is smaller. Our common life without taking the risk of dying does not make sense and becomes unbearable. I pray that God will enlarge my heart and all of the sisters with His love, so our lives become sacred and we will totally serve the Lord with joy and gratitude, praising Him for all the good.

S. Magdalena Pokrzywinska

MARY IMMACULATE PROVINCE

Nonnenwerth, Germany

“ECHO” of the Canticle of Brother Sun

“To hold our world as sacred witnessing our passion for Christ to all creation” – this statement of the General Chapter was and is to be “translated” into everyday life. Can there be a better “help to translation” but St. Francis’ Canticle of Brother Sun, this beautiful poem, a present which our Seraphic Father has given to us and to the whole world?



Artwork: S. Hanna Klapdohr

During the year this “Canticle of Brother Sun,” as well as, texts on the different verses have accompanied us in our province. Individually and in community we have reflected on what St. Francis calls us to and what our response can be and should be, like: praise and thanks and serving him with great humility. Both aspects have become important to us: the spiritual symbolic dimension as to the creatures addressed and called upon in this poem, as well as, the motivation for our way of living with gentle courtesy toward all creation.

Where we praise God not only in light, cheerful times, but also in dark hours, there our life is an “echo” of St. Francis’ canticle which was “born” in hours of deep suffering. Where we open ourselves to the breathing of the Spirit in our time, where in our prayer we draw strength from the divine source and help people to find their way to this source – there the canticle of Brother Sun becomes concrete and alive. When the fire of compassion for Christ is still burning – even after many years of working in the Lord’s vineyard, and when we help each other to constantly arouse the fire, then our life pours out light and warmth. Where we try to be reconciled with ourselves and our neighbors, there peace is growing which the world needs so urgently. In a special way our elderly sisters witness to the spirit of the Canticle of Brother Sun by impressively bearing old age and sickness in patience and contentment. Poverty, gratefulness and humility are concretely lived by letting go of vitality and by accepting help. Certain that God has prepared a home for them, they can expect death as a sister, a sister guiding them to the “goal” which they have longed for all their life.

Not only we, as sisters, have dealt with the Canticle of Brother Sun. At regular intervals women of different age groups came to “Oasis Days” at Nonnenwerth to talk about the different verses of a text, to pray in silence and to obtain strength and spiritual input for their everyday life.

A group of our students of the orchestra of our Gymnasium in Nonnenwerth followed the footprints of St. Francis on their pilgrimage to Assisi during Fall break. The young people, in search of their individual way of life and of values worthy to live up to, were “witnesses” of the way St. Francis walked in poverty and humility. The encounter with this saint who experienced the mystery of God in his creation and responded to God’s call by a radical following of the Gospel impressed them deeply.

“The enthusiasm of St. Francis for nature became more understandable each day when having a view from our house over the whole valley. Where else should Francis have preached in nature, if not there? Suddenly religion and faith were quite self-evident. Secluded in our own ‘hermitage,’ CASA DEL BENE, we never had any problems when talking about questions and doubts which we had in our hearts,” so they wrote in their account of the journey. They have experienced that the town where St. Francis lived, the plain where he served the lepers and the small churches and hermitages where he encountered God, are holy ground in a special way. Where Francis composed his Canticle of Brother Sun and where in his spirit a fraternitas of brothers and sisters originated, there they had experiences which they summarize in the following words: “The most impressive experiences will still stay alive for a long time. Now it is clear that our orchestra is a much stronger group community – this is our quite personal miracle which Assisi has worked.”

S. Andrea Becker

ST. CLARE MISSION

Tanzania

**“...With all creatures the brothers and sisters should praise
the RULER of heaven and earth.”**

Please listen to two of our Sisters here in St. Clare Mission, Tanzania who through their ministry of counseling are able to praise our good God:



Hello, Peace to all of you. I am Sr. Angela, osf. I am living at St. Clare's Convent in Butimba, Mwanza. Last year, I took a course known as C.P.E. (CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION) at Bugando Catholic Hospital here in Mwanza. I am now working at Nyakahoja Dispensary run by the Diocese under the direction of the Canossian Sisters. My specific work is with those living with HIV/AIDS. I am happy working with these patients because nowadays many are willing to accept their situations as compared to before. Some patients were even killing themselves because of despair. It encourages me that there is more hope as they realize their disease is not the end of their life. They need more care, prayers and love and I am happy to be able to serve them in that way.



Hello, Peace and all good. I am S. Edina, osf. I am living in St. Elizabeth's Convent here in Biharamulo. I attended the Clinical Pastoral Course in Mwanza this year. I am now working at Biharamulo District Hospital as a General Counselor. I work with people living with HIV/AIDS as well as other patients with various problems. I feel touched by this ministry because I like helping people to face their problems. Most people are able themselves to find ways to solve their problems. In this way I feel I am participating in the work of the Good News of the Gospel. Thank you for your prayers for all those suffer.

SACRED HEART PROVINCE

Denver, Colorado, USA

GRATITUDE TO MY SISTERS AND BROTHERS

Holy triune God, with Francis, I praise You for all my sisters and brothers, all the creatures of this beautiful world. With them I praise You. I desire to express my gratitude to them for all they teach me about You and help me to know You more and more.

Mother Earth, thank you, for sustaining us by giving us a foundation, nourishing us, and even gathering us to your very bosom at our death.

Brother Sun, you give us light and warmth, bathing us and giving life. You are always there even if hidden by clouds. Your very name reminds us of the Son of God.

Sister Moon, you reflect the sun as I should reflect God. You are light in the darkness of night, calling me to be light for those in darkness.

Wondrous Stars, how you show the immensity, the beauty of our God! Flickering, twinkling in the night sky telling me to let my light shine, to use my talents no matter how small.

Air we breathe, our very life, without you we die; without God we cease to be. Brother Wind, how you remind me of the Holy Spirit! From whence you come, from whence you go, no one knows.

Sister Water, as rain you're so refreshing, cleansing, giving life like our God, yet mighty and terrible is your power.

Snow, you cover all with ermine, giving moisture and protection, yet blinding you can be.

Oh you clouds, how you drift and sail across the sky moved by the wind as I need to be moved by the Spirit! You bring rain and snow; you shield us from heat of sun, rekindling us that life is filled with light and darkness.

Brother Fire, you are beautiful; you give us warmth and light and show us God's consuming power of love.

You Rocks, so stable and firm like Christ, the Rock!

Minerals and Gems, your beauty and infinite variety, as well as your usefulness, are like the graces with which our God adorns us.

You animals, great and small, you show the infinite creativity of God. You are the source of food for each other and for us. I marvel at your God-given instincts to care for each other, your young, and even us!

Sister Birds, how you soar in the heavens; would that I might soar towards our Creator! How beautifully you sing His praises! How you provide for your young sheltering, feeding, teaching, mirroring our heavenly Father!

Reptiles and Insects, you show us the magnificence of numbers and kinds that God has created. Your beauty, as like the butterfly, so symbolic of the Resurrection!

Fish and all aquatic creatures, you live in the waters as we live in the presence of God.

Plants, Grasses, Flowers, and Trees, I thank you for your beauty, showing me God's beauty and infiniteness. Especially, Brother Cottonwood, as you reflect the light of the sun, you tell me I must reflect the Light of the Son!

All Creation, thank you! Let us together give endless praise to our Creator!

S. Mabel Meng

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PROVINCE

Santa Maria / RS - Brazil

Children and Youth praise the Lord!

As Franciscan Sisters, following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi and Mother Magdalen Damen, we are sowing seeds of hope in our history today. We carry out the charism of the Congregation so that children and youth in different realities of this sacred ground of Brazil can praise the Lord, and perhaps one day be part of the Franciscan family.

With the desire to extend the Franciscan spirituality that more "*brothers and sisters praise the Lord, king of heaven and earth, with all creatures, and give thanks*" (Rule and Life,10), two sisters of the Province minister full-time in vocation pastoral of the Church of Brazil, and several others give part time to this ministry.

With this pastoral program, the sisters reflect on the different vocations: marriage, priesthood, religious life and single life, as well as, on other topics, like care for life. Vocational weeks are held in schools; gatherings with youth groups are held; radio programs, formation for teachers, lay leaders and encouraging communities to witness and pray for vocations; meetings with young women who express a desire to follow the Franciscan religious life, vocational guidance through personalized letters, emails and other electronic mail, visits to the girls and their families, assistance to vocational schools, participation in planning and study of Vocational Promotion Service Team in different dioceses, development of vocational materials, update the province vocational site and regional meetings of Vocational Promotion Service with the Sisters in the Province

There are many challenges in this ministry, similar to those faced by our six pioneer sisters in this Brazilian sacred ground, but always the certainty that God will provide!

Sisters, let's praise the good Lord for his presence on our journey as province and Congregation!

Sister Janet Rosane Roiek



MOST HOLY TRINITY PROVINCE

Semarang, Indonesia

From St. Francis' *The Canticle of Creation*

Most high, all powerful, good Lord
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor and all blessings.
To You, most High, do they belong
And no man is worthy to mention your Name.

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially BROTHER SUN!
For he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor.
All of us in Indonesia, join in praise of BROTHER SUN,
For he gives to our land, bright sunshine every day,
So that the climate of our land is one of the finest in the world!

Praised be You, my Lord, for SISTER MOON AND THE STARS, for in Indonesia,
They shine clear and beautiful and brighten the darkness for us!

Praise to You, my Lord for BROTHER WIND AND SISTER WATER!
For THE RAIN that brings our rice crop to harvest, so there is food for all!

Praise to You, my Lord, for OUR MOTHER EARTH AND BROTHER FIRE!
Our earth produces food and with fire, we can cook our simple fare.
Our earth also produces flowers to gladden our hearts.

With so many signs of Your Love, we too, learn to love, to give and to forgive!
And not to be afraid!

What can the future hold for us but more signs of Your loving care?
And so, we can even be ready to welcome BROTHER DEATH, as well,
For we have learned that whatever You, my Lord, send, is good.

So, Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve him with great humility.

Sr. M. Brigid Conboy

SACRED HEART OF JESUS PROVINCE

Porto Alegre, RS/Brazil

“All creation is groaning in labor” (Romans 8,22)

This article shows our commitment to nature during this year of 2011 with our actions with the children at the Children's Home of the United Works of Social Assistance. We are developing the issue of “Fraternity and Life on the Planet” to awake consciences to the love of God for all of us and the necessity to care of all the creation. The Children's Home has the mission to find ways for a better life for the children and their families, relationships, dreams and responsibilities with life, a gift of God.

Nature should be in perfect harmony, but sometimes we do not care of that life which is wounded: sound pollution, chopping down trees, wasting water, and so on. That all is disrespect for nature and humankind suffers the consequences caused at people's own hands.

The spirituality of our mission, is based on St. Francis of Assisi. He lived in perfect harmony with God's creation -- so deeply that at the end of his life, he sang the “Canticle of the Creatures.”

That is his expression of being brother and sister to all creatures. We try to plant these good seeds in every pastoral work witnessing and announcing the good news.

The Kingdom that Jesus came to announce was life. “I came for everybody to have life in abundance.” (John 10, 10) With the focus, Fraternity and Life on the Planet, and the Gospel words, “Creation moans in pain of bearing” (Rom 8, 22), we want to make an effort to grow in greater fidelity to the creator and giver of life. We do not create life, but we have the power to destroy it, which is being blind and being against the Creator. Destruction of the environment and pollution of the water and the air are consequences of irresponsible politics, putting survival of life on the planet at risk.

Facing this complex reality we realize that the big challenge of humanity is to discern between knowledge and practice in order to build fullness of life. Developing abilities to life in fullness is to live in harmony with Mother Earth, our sister. We are called to care for this patrimony with tenderness and love together with the children and teenagers.

Three things remain:

The certainty that we are always beginning.

The certainty that we always need to go forward.

The certainty that that we will be interrupted before finishing...

Therefore, we can make a new path from the interruption.

From a fall, we can make a step of a dance;

From fear, we can climb above;

From dreams, we can make a bridge;

From searching, we can encounter.

(Fernando Pessoa)



Community Mother of God Pirapozinho – São Paulo/Brazil

ST. FRANCIS PROVINCE

Redwood City, CA

“Praising God through fair and stormy and every kind of weather”



Candida Micaela
Leticia Consuelo Nely

Within the Mayan tradition we learn from our Elders how to interpret the signs of the times. Here in Palenque, Chiapas we are experiencing all kinds of stormy weather. Winds bring destruction and at the same time they bring new life.

In the midst of violence caused by organized crime and drug dealing, citizens all over the country are awakening, organizing movements of peace. Meanwhile men, women and children risk their lives as they migrate from Central America and Mexico to the United States in search of a life where basic human needs are met. At the same time, indigenous peoples create Mayan Altars where the first harvests are offered to the God of Life, are blest and distributed so that no one is without food in their villages. The economic situation brings dark clouds: the trafficking of organs, women and children and an increase of violent gang activities. Yet, our indigenous Sisters participate in gatherings of native peoples from Chiapas and Central America who come together to celebrate the Sacredness of Life, creating an Indigenous Theology that honors a Mother-Father God of Life.

Our Sisters in Chiapas are called upon to minister to village communities living in divisions and conflict. They serve as mediators, planting seeds of reconciliation. We continue to gather the energies of Father Sky and Mother Earth that create LIFE in the midst of the forces of Death. We live our faith and our mission knowing we are a thread in the lineage of Mother Magdalen, Francis and Clare, and we are not alone.

Consuelo, Leticia, Micaela, Candida and Nely
Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico

GENERAL COUNCIL SHARING

Rome, Italy

**With all creatures, the brothers and sisters should praise the Ruler of heaven and earth,
and give thanks...** Rule #10

For many months, the General Council has been asking all the sisters for the congregation to pray for the Mission and Provincial Ministers Meeting in November. Thank you for your prayers! We felt your presence with us in spirit as we prepared for and participated in the wonderful celebration of who we are as daughters of Mother Magdalen and how we minister to the sisters of the congregation she began.

The theme of the meetings was: Rebuild my house: we walk on holy ground. During the course of our time together, the rebuilding of our community “house”, physical and spiritual, was considered. Looking at the various rooms of the house: What do we see in this room? What are the values we hold that are expressed in this room? What might need to be recovered? Refreshed? Remodeled? Each day



we received a key with a question to help us reflect and unlock the reality, the hopes and the dreams we discovered there. We knew your presence in each of these “rooms” as we prayed together, reflected, walked in sacred space, laughed, sang, read, and discussed many things. We are grateful for the Spirit that bonds us and for your prayerful support. During the time of our meetings four sisters died and we felt their presence in another way, supporting us still in the arms of God.

Top row: S. Noeli, S. Maria, S. Katharina, S. Rita, S. Theresio, S. Mirona, S. Patricia

Bottom row: S. Paula, S. Clara, S. Claricia, S. Marguerite, S. Charitas, S. Deborah, S. Susanna, S. Edith, S. Vera, S. Hanna

Looking ahead, we ask your prayer for the following events in the congregation:

January, 2012

February 13 – March 20

February 24 – April 24

March 20 – April 12

Annual Visit to Tanzania

General Visitations, St. Francis Province, and Redwood City, CA

General Visitation, Holy Name Province, Stella Niagara, NY

General Visitation, Sacred Heart Province, Denver, CO

S. Deborah, S. Hanna, S. Paula, S. Clara, S. Theresio

