

Sentinels of the Dawn

The Newsletter of the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration
Our Lady of the Angels Monastery
Troyes, France

January 2020

Issue 24

As many of you know, the doors of our Chapel remain open every day from 8am to 8pm, welcoming those who wish to spend time in silent prayer before Jesus truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Since our Bishop, the Most Reverend Marc Stenger, designated our Monastery as the Eucharistic Sanctuary of the Diocese of Troyes in 2017, more and more people are coming to the Chapel to encounter Christ, to deepen their personal relationship with Him.



In today's world, we are continually bombarded with noise and driven by constant activity. For those looking for a haven of rest, an oasis of peace and quiet, our Chapel provides the perfect counter-cultural remedy! It is before the real presence of Christ, truly present in the Eucharist, that we can experience the love and mercy of God in a personal encounter with Him. Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "Eucharistic Adoration offers our communities the opportunity to unite in prayer with all religious for the salvation of the world, the salvation of all souls and for peace on earth. We cannot underestimate the power of prayer and the difference it will make in the world."

During the seasons of Advent and Lent, a number of people signed up to join us for Night Adoration from 8pm Thursday to 8am Friday. While the city of Troyes slept, those who made that commitment arose throughout the night, relaying one another hour after hour to spend time in silent Adoration, to pray for families, for those who are suffering, for peace throughout the world, and for the Church.

On June 23rd, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, several hundred people took part in a Eucharistic procession organized by the parish priests of our area that ended in our Chapel with Solemn Benediction. One can only imagine how many blessings were received by the faithful and the entire city of Troyes, as the presence of our Lord passed in the streets, bringing a sense of hope, building up communion.

Finally, for the Solemnity of Christ the King, Archbishop Yves Patenôtre, accompanied by Father Jean-Marc Grand, presided at Solemn Vespers with Benediction. Our Chapel was filled to overflowing with those who wished to participate in this festive celebration to honor our Lord as King of the Universe, King of our hearts. Afterwards, the faithful were invited to our parlor where Sister Clare-Myriam gave a powerful witness on Adoration in her own life.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, "Because Christ Himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, He is to be honored with the worship of adoration. To visit the Blessed Sacrament is...a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord" (CCC 1418). And now, we extend the invitation to you to come and pray...for five or fifteen minutes, for a half hour or an hour. The Lord will bless you abundantly!



"And if you find it hard to pray, don't give up...A wise spiritual guide once said: Prayer is mostly just a matter of being there. Be still; make space for God; let Him look at you and He will fill you with His peace."

(Pope Francis in Tokyo, 2019)

On July 30th, our Bishop Stenger celebrated the Mass of the Holy Spirit and presided at our community's Chapter of Elections. Mother Marie Emmanuel was re-elected Abbess. After her election was confirmed by Rome, Bishop Stenger returned to our Monastery to conclude the Chapter with the election of Sr Marie Antoinette as Vicar and Sr Marie Rosalie as Councilor. May the Lord bless them and our community with His wisdom, courage, and grace!

The Most Reverend Marc Stenger and Father Jean-Marie Raby celebrate a Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit on the day of our Chapter of Elections.



The newly elected Council - Sister Mary Antoinette (Vicar), Mother Marie Emmanuel (Abbess) and Sister Mary Rosalia (2nd Councilor) with Bishop Marc Stenger.

Bishop Marc Stenger blesses our Community following the Chapter of Elections.



During the month of May, the month of Mary, Mother Marie Emmanuel traveled to Poland to participate in the annual meeting of Abbesses of the Polish Federation of our PCPA Monasteries which was held on May 12-14th. Delegates from each Monastery participated as well; Sister Marie Antoinette and Sister Marie Rosalie were chosen to represent our community. Although the meetings are usually held at one of our Polish Monasteries, this year's meeting took place in the



beautiful Marian Shrine of Jasna Gora in Czestochowa. Our Sisters were blessed to pray before the icon of the Holy Virgin for the needs of our Church and for the world. Following Mass one morning in the tiny Marian Chapel, Mother M. Serafina, President of the Federation, prayed the Act of Consecration of our Mother Foundress at the foot of the altar. It was a very touching moment when we were spiritually united with all our Monasteries throughout the world.

October marked the opening of another pastoral year in the diocese of Troyes. Bishop Stenger chose the theme of "Missionary Disciples" for this year and asked our community to make 200 pairs of mini-sandals for the keychains that he would give to each pastoral minister during the Mass where he would send them on mission in our Diocese.



The term "missionary disciples", which Pope Francis invited all faithful to become in his apostolic letter, "Joy of the Gospel", has captured the minds and hearts of our Sisters. Missionary discipleship begins with, and grows in, friendship with the person of Jesus Christ. Once we have truly experienced in a personal way the immense love and mercy of God revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, daily life is no longer the same. It is always God's love and grace that first transforms us into missionary disciples. With the grace of our baptism, we carry within us that same love of God that radiates to all around us. To become a missionary disciple, then, is to hear the voice of Jesus calling us to live the new life of faith in him. Jesus' call to missionary discipleship radically changes our lives. We pray that this year may be an opportunity for each one of us in the diocese – priests, deacons, religious, and lay faithful, young and old alike—to "put out into the deep" and respond anew to God's call day after day.

Come away with me and rest a little ...



And so the first week of November, Jesus led us into the desert to speak to each one of us heart to heart. Our Holy Father Saint François of Assisi promised to always take care of Clare and her sisters and their spiritual needs, whether it was himself or one of his friars. Therefore, holding true to his promises, Father André Ménard, OFM Capuchin, was chosen to accompany us in our annual Community retreat. What a great joy and blessing for us! A true devotee of Saint Bonaventure and passionate about his teachings, Father André helped us to discover the works of this great Franciscan saint in a simple but profound way. As a basis for our meditation, a small booklet was proposed: "Holiness of life". This spiritual gem was written in 1260 by Saint Bonaventure for a Community of Poor Clare Sisters at the request of their Foundress, Isabelle of France, who wished to further advance along the path of evangelical perfection.

This too is what we desire and the response we received exceeded our expectations. The text of our dear evangelical doctor has not aged a bit: We journeyed along the way of "True Self-knowledge" to "Persevering

to the end", passing through "True Humility", "Perfect Poverty", "Silence and Discretion", "Application to Prayer", "The Memory of the Passion of Christ" and "The Perfect Charity of God." We found the content of these eight chapters of this spiritual exhortation to be still relevant today and very much suited to our way of life and our vocation. Needless to say, this retreat was a real grace for our Community, renewing us and rekindling in us the fervor of our first beginnings. May our Lord bless Father André abundantly in return for the spiritual treasures that he was kind enough to share with us.

We were also blessed to have Father Eric Clermont-Tonnerre, O.P give us a series of conferences on our Holy Father's recent documents addressed to contemplative nuns, *Vultum Dei Quaerere* (Seeking the Face of Christ) and *Cor Orans* (Praying Heart). We are very grateful to Father Eric whose conferences gave us a fuller understanding of these important documents and the encouragement needed to continue reflecting on their content in order to live out the vision of monastic life they describe.



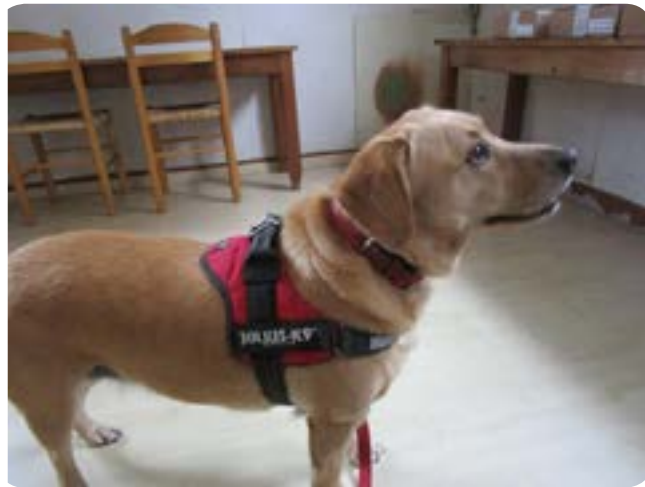
This past summer, the Sisters kept busy as usual working in the flower and vegetable gardens. Due to several heat waves from June to August, the work was a bit more laborious than usual, but God blessed us with an abundant harvest. Our freezers are filled with all the vegetables we need for the year and our hearts with thanksgiving for the goodness of our Creator.

Not only were the Sisters busy, but so were the bees! A little over a year ago, a young local bee keeper installed two of his hives on our property. The bees work non-stop for us pollinating all of the plants and flowers in our gardens; in turn, we offer them a habitat filled with a fantastic variety of vegetation and free from toxic herbicides. Periodically, the young apiculturist arrives on his motorcycle and dons his white beekeeper costume to inspect the hives and in season to recuperate some honey. We hope to learn more about the way these marvelous insects live in the "cloistered community" of their hive.



I am back by popular demand to give you a little update on my life as a dog in the cloister of the Poor Clare Sisters. With the arrival of winter, the Sisters work inside so life gets rather boring for me except for the compost heap where I like to snack. Unfortunately, the Sisters try to keep me away from that side of the property supposedly for my own good. During my last check-up, the veterinarian said that I've gained a few pounds: translation—more exercise and fewer dog treats! I was in the dumps over that news until one of the Sisters started taking me for short walks a few times a week. There's so much to discover out there—God has really created a beautiful world... Maybe you could find some time during the week to walk, too!

I wish you a Blessed New Year, filled with many wonderful adventures .. and good health, too!



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*May the timeless message of Christmas
 fill your hearts and homes with the
 wonder of the birth of Christ our Savior.
 May the Christ Child, the Word who
 became flesh and dwells among us,
 bestow upon you and your loved ones
 an abundance of blessings
 throughout the New Year 2020.*



Did you say
 “RENOVATIONS”?

Around this time last year, we shared with you the exciting news of the next renovation project which was about to begin... This would entail moving the kitchen to an area that was closer to our vegetable garden. We also planned to add on another large room which would be used to prepare all the vegetables and fruits from the garden for freezing or jams, making bread and for our baking projects throughout the year, especially at Christmas.

Thanks to the Foundation of Monasteries and your invaluable support, the construction work was able to begin in early May. Our new architect, Mr Paul Jourdain, formed quite an amazing work crew. Very competent craftsmen, they know each other well and often work together on construction sites. Their mutual respect creates an harmonious atmosphere and a spirit of collaboration That contributes to the work moving forward under the best possible conditions. To top it off, all the workers have been very respectful of our cloistered way of life, very courteous and dedicated.

The work began with transforming an old, rundown workshop into our new laundry room. Completed in the summer, our Sister in charge of the laundry has ever since been happily employed in this bright spacious, and highly functional space.

After their summer vacation, the workers returned in September, ready to begin the task of converting our former laundry room into a new kitchen and preparation room. The sound of jack hammers could be heard for days, as the large stone basin that was in the center of the room was gradually dismantled, the ground floor lowered to the level of the adjoining room, passage ways were opened, and then several truckloads of debris and dirt were hauled off. Next a large hole was dug for an underground cistern that will reserve



rainwater to be used for the gardens. Plumbers installed several yards of pipe to bring gas and hot water from the furnace room to this end of the building.

A staircase was disassembled, portions of the ceilings were opened in order to pass the ducts of the exhaust hoods up through the roof, new doors and windows were installed, walls were insulated, cables for lighting and electrical outlets were run, concrete was poured and then the floor tiles were meticulously laid.

Painting has begun and, if all goes well, the project will be completed by mid-February and the Sisters will be enjoying their new Kitchen!

“Hats off” to the construction crew for the work already completed, and many thanks to those who have supported us through their generosity and prayers. May God reward you!





L to R: Sister Martine Marie and Sister Antonine Marie

At the end of September, our two youngest Sisters were gathering fruit from one of our apple trees. They were happily climbing up its branches, as they so often did, when a large branch broke under Sr Antonine Marie's feet and she fell to the ground. The impact fractured her heel bone, but thankfully she had no serious injuries. She underwent surgery and returned to the Monastery after two weeks in the hospital. For three months, she was not allowed to put any weight on her foot. Her gentle spirit and her beautiful smile, despite her pain and physical limitations, touched the hearts of her Sisters and many others who cared for her physical and spiritual needs during her time of recovery. She is now walking without crutches and little by little participating in the everyday life of our community—dishes included!

We confide Sr. Antonine Marie again to your prayers along with Sr. Martine Marie who are preparing to pronounce their Solemn Vows this Spring. At the

end of January, our two Sisters will return to their Monastery of origin in Visakhapatnam India where they will participate in a three-month series of courses and conferences with other Sisters preparing for their final vows. Then, they will each make a prolonged, personal retreat and will finally commit themselves forever to live in poverty, chastity, and obedience in loving union with Jesus their Divine Bridegroom. In July they will return definitively to our Troyes Monastery—and our joy will be great!

June 1st, 2020, marks the 200th birthday of our beloved foundress, Mother Marie de Ste Claire. To commemorate this special day, a Mass of thanksgiving will be celebrated by our Bishop, the Most Reverend Marc Stenger, in Mazières-les-Brienne, the birthplace of our foundress. May it be an occasion for the people of Troyes and the other surrounding cities and villages to come to know more about this holy woman of God who was chosen for a special mission in the life and history of the Church in France, one that has spread throughout the world!



We wish to share with you a few extracts from our Holy Father's homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany which we found very appropriate for our life as Adorers of the Most Blessed Sacrament. To find the entire text, we invite you to visit the vatican website: w2.vatican/content/francesco/en/homilies/2020/documents

"In the Gospel (Mt 2:1-12), we heard the Magi begin by stating the reason why they have come: *We have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him*. Worship is the end and goal of their journey. Indeed, when they arrived in Bethlehem, *they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him*. Once we lose the sense of worship, we lose our direction in the Christian life, which is a journey towards the Lord, not towards ourselves. The Gospel warns us about this risk, for alongside the Magi it presents others who are incapable of worship.

First of all, there is King Herod, who uses the word worship, but only to deceive... The fact is that Herod worshiped only himself; that is why he wanted to rid himself of the child through a lie. What does this teach us? That when we do not worship God, we end up worshiping ourselves... In the Christian life, it is not enough to be knowledgeable: unless we step out of ourselves, unless we encounter others and worship, we cannot know God. Theology and pastoral effectiveness mean little or nothing unless we bend the knee; unless we kneel down like the Magi, who were not only knowledgeable about planning a journey, but also capable of setting out and bowing down in worship. Once we worship, we come to realize that faith is not simply a set of fine doctrines, but a relationship with a living Person whom we are called to love.



Do we find time for worship in our daily schedules and do we make room for worship in our communities? It is up to us, as a Church, to put into practice the words we prayed in today's Psalm: *All the peoples on earth will worship you, O Lord*. In worshipping, we too will discover, like the Magi, the meaning of our journey. And like the Magi, we too will experience a *great joy* (Mt2:10)."