

Some of God's Many Graces During the Year 2017

Poor Clare Nuns of Langhorne, PA.

WINTER 2016-2017

"Jesus, I trust in you."

These words of Saint Faustina's and of the Divine Mercy devotion were an appropriate way to begin our winter season this past year. We had the great blessing of viewing a live performance of the story of Saint Faustina, given by Saint Luke's Productions (Leonardo De Fillipis). This latest production followed Leonardo's previous dramas of Saint Francis and of Saint Thérèse, and was touring the country. Performed in our chapel the actress made the life and mission of Saint Faustina come alive and reminded us to trust always in the mercy of Jesus and to pray for all people. We are so grateful for the sharing of their time and talent and for the spiritual preparation as we moved toward Christmas.

Our Advent Birthday Sister is Sister Isabel. No one is better at being there to help when we need someone. Sister is also one of the main angels for Sister Mary Francis. What higher compliment can anyone be given!

God gave us another gift of joy and inspiration on December 22, when the Men of Harmony came for their annual concert. The traditional Christmas hymns with the Dickens-era costumes always brighten our season, and add to the anticipation of the great feast of Christ's Nativity. Thank you, Men of Harmony, for your gift of music and joy and for your presence with us!

Our celebration of the Lord's Nativity was held at Midnight, and then again at 9 A.M. Father Frank Berna, nephew of our deceased Sister Mary Regina Berna, was celebrant for our Midnight Mass. It is always a delight to see Father Frank again, to be present at his reverent celebration of the Mass and to hear his inspirational preaching. At 9 A.M., Father John Bednarik, OFM Cap presided and gave us great peace with his joyful and holy celebration. We are also grateful to our many priest friends who came during the Octave of Christmas to celebrate with us.

January brought with it some special days, as well. On Epiphany Sunday, Sister Patricia found the bean in her cupcake and was pronounced "King" for the year, carrying the infant in our procession throughout the monastery. She is the grateful recipient of all our special prayers. January 17 marked a certain milestone for us with the death of Jerry Glackin, the son of one of our first benefactors. When the Poor Clares first came to Philadelphia in the early 1900's, his father, Ed Glackin, promised to give the Sisters one pound of butter and one dozen eggs per child that he and his wonderful wife had. They had eight children! His son, Jerry, then continued as a faithful benefactor in his own right. Now Jerry's son has offered to continue to help us. How grateful we are to them and to **all those** who have helped us through the years!

January 20 was a day to celebrate the life of our Sister Maria Eden on her birthday. This same day, we also remembered our nation as we prayed for the newly inaugurated President Trump and for the country. In late January and early February we were again visited by Giuliano and Francesco Papini, the manufacturers of our new altar bread equipment. They were here to help test the newly replaced humidifiers we received in mid-January, and also to help correct some issues with the stoves. Things are continuing to improve with our production as we gradually become more familiar with the new system.

Our spiritual life and our understanding of Pope Francis grew in February with our listening to a lecture on *Pope Francis, Preacher, Teacher & Reformer*. This was presented by Professor Gerard Mannion through *Now You Know Media*. He spoke of Pope Francis' early background and life as a Jesuit, as well as his vision of being a Church of and for the poor.

Spring, 2017

We experienced a relatively mild winter with no snow and we looked forward to March in order to spring ahead with Daylight Savings Time and with pleasant, warmer temperatures! However to our surprise, we had a 'Stellar Blizzard' that brought 8 to 12 inches of snow to the Eastern seaboard. A mixture of sleet and ice slowed down activity for a couple days.

March 1 heralded in our Lenten season of grace with Ash Wednesday. To enrich our souls spiritually and to prepare ourselves for the great paschal mystery of Easter, we watched some pre-taped videos. One was an EWTN mini-series on *Grace-Filled Living* with Father Brian Mullady, OP and Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers as they discussed the four moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. Another was a DVD series on the historical background of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter by Father John Baldovin, SJ. The Sisters also enjoyed watching Bishop Robert Barron's excellent presentations on *Catholicism: The Pivotal Players*.

Construction began in March to replace the original awning windows along the front of the monastery (upper level). The wooden frames had sustained much wear over the past 40 years due to extreme seasonal temperatures of cold winter winds and hot summers. Some windows were in great need of repair. One end of the building had to be done on scaffolding because of the height off the ground, and we prayed for the safety of the men working. We are very pleased with the results as the windows are now tight and eliminate the cold air plus most outside noise.

Several milestones were celebrated this year in the lives of our Sisters and Community. The first was Sister Mary Francis' 90th Birthday on March 26. Her favorite color, red, dominated the décor of our refectory (dining room). She received a beautiful birthday cake along with cards and gifts from family and friends! Occasionally she may need some assistance with meals; but cake and ice cream she can handle quite well on her own!!

Sr. Evelyn celebrated her 60th anniversary of religious vows (Diamond Jubilee) on April 29. It was a festive day that was rounded out with a special dinner and entertainment by the Sisters.

Monsignor O'Donnell celebrated his 65th anniversary of priestly ordination the following weekend at a 3 P.M. Sunday Mass with his family and close friends. Three of his classmates and a priest friend with whom he resides were able to concelebrate with him. One of his classmates is Bishop Louis DeSimone who was with us at the 800th Anniversary of Saint Clare's Birth some years ago. We greeted all of them in the hallway before they departed to enjoy dinner together!

The Sisters chose to crown Our Lady's statue in our chapel on the 100th Anniversary of her appearance at Fatima on May 13. Sister Joan Marie's name was drawn to crown Our Lady. Later that evening we watched the Papal Mass held at Fatima during which the two young visionaries, Jacinta and Francesco Marto, were canonized. Thousands were gathered for this very special day! At another time we watched a presentation that focused on Lucia and her life as a Dorothean Sister and later as a Carmelite.

Sunday, May 21 marked the 40th anniversary of our arrival in Langhorne from Philadelphia. Father Dennis Gill came to offer Mass for us as this was his 34th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. Monsignor O'Donnell concelebrated with him. Both priests had been assigned to the same parish years ago when Father Dennis Gill was newly ordained.

The end of May brought Sister Maria Ramonita's sister, Fay, and some of her family and siblings here for a visit. We were very happy to meet them. Some came from the east, New York and some from the west, Los Angeles. Beautiful families remind us that we are all one family in God's eyes.

It is always a thrilling sight toward the end of Spring to see the marvelous Japanese Snowdrop tree in the middle of our Sacred Garden laden with blossoms. The tree is then ready to shower down upon the ground its delicate flower petals as a 'snow white covering'!

Summer, 2017

It was a Fourscore Years celebration for our Sister Evelyn's birthday in June. In honor of her birthday, we were happy to be able to watch the newish video of *The Shack*. At almost the same time we celebrated the Solemnity of the Holy Trinity. If you know the story of *The Shack* you will be familiar with the Father, Jesus and the Spirit being present in this beautiful story. Thus everything fit together so perfectly for our viewing of *The Shack* because it also included our Trinity Sunday celebration.

The Poverello Group of Secular Franciscans was here for their annual Mass and meeting on June 11. Although all was beautiful, we felt sadness with the retiring of Father René, OFM. Father was their Spiritual Assistant for many years. We and many people in the area will also miss him.

We were very happy to have Beth, an outpatient dietician from Saint Mary Medical Center, come and check our diet. We eat soy products and just wanted to make sure all was good with our diet. Happy resolution!

In the "Animal World News of Our Dogs", Lady and Snickers were barking AND barking. We thought that they might have a groundhog cornered. When we were free to check, the Sisters found a very large (10 to 12 inches) snapping turtle tucked tightly in its shell, but fully alive. Sister Patricia cautiously picked it up on a shovel, put it in a wooden cart and took it to the edge of our property. There Sister showed the turtle a hole in our fence that it could use to make its way back to Core Creek Park and Lake Luxembourg from where we assumed it came. As of this writing there has been no further sight of the turtle.

On July 12 Sister Maria Teresa Mendoza from Puerto Rico arrived at our monastery. Sister was with the Capuchin Poor Clares in the USA from the beginning of this year trying to learn English. Her abbess wants her to learn the language for the needs of their monastery and to become a USA citizen. Sister is doing well with her English and we certainly enjoy having her with us. She has a teacher for two or three days a week, plus discs to practice English. We sometimes go through the questions for citizenship with her during our dinner time recreation.

Sister Mary Tereza and Sister Holy Spirit gave Sister Jean Thérèse a "Beautiful Bouquet" for her birthday! The bouquet was filled with various vegetables that they raised such as green beans, lettuce, beets and zucchini. Very beautiful and very practical! To the surprise of all, the beans in their garden kept growing into the fall.

The Saint Bonaventure Fraternity, who meet here once a month, had a Mass on July 25 for Father Fidelis Weber and Brother Larry Hilferty. Both TOR's are very special to the Secular Franciscans as well as to all of us Poor Clares in this monastery. We met with the two friars again on August 1 to thank them for their goodness to us all these years and to say goodbye. Father Fidelis served Conwell-Egan for over 50 years and Brother Larry for over 35 years. Both came to our monastery relatively often. We certainly will miss them but we know that they will be appreciated in their new assignments in Loretto Pennsylvania.

On August 5 Sister Mary Francis celebrated her 65th Anniversary of Profession of the Vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and enclosure. As anyone who has met her knows, Sister has the marvelous joy of someone who has given her all to God and is free to love all of God's children. Tales out of the convent: Sister Mary Francis had ice cream twice that day.

During our Triduum in preparation for the feast of Saint Clare, Father Richard Davis, TOR was our celebrant and homilist. Father has many friends in the area since he was stationed at Egan Catholic High School, now Conwell-Egan, years ago. His talks were inspired and appreciated. For the feast of Saint Clare Father Richard, our main celebrant, was joined by our chaplain Monsignor O'Donnell and Father Pat Whittle, TOR as well as by one of our Philadelphian seminarians, Ben Speranza. Our little chapel was full and the love and devotion of all present was felt.

Beauty and the Beast, a delightful musical film given to Sister Joan Marie, was enjoyed by all the Sisters on her birthday. Then we had two more birthdays or more correctly a dual birthday celebrated by our Sister Anne and Sister Maria Teresa at the end of the month. You guessed it! We had two more DVD movies, one for each Sister. Thus the Poor Clare Nuns were "movied" out by the end of August.

Fall 2017

After many months of planning and anticipation, September 23 finally arrived! It was a perfect fall day and the sun shone on all who came to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Poor Clares Serving in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. His Eminence, Cardinal Justin Rigali our Archbishop Emeritus of Philadelphia was the main celebrant for the Mass. He was joined by our auxiliary bishop, The Most Reverend Michael J. Fitzgerald, and 16 of our priest friends who concelebrated. Sister Jean Thérèse had a beautiful reading from Hosea, the organist/cantor from Saint Andrew sang the response, and Evan Ortiz OFS proclaimed our second reading. Father Chris Dobson TOR led us expertly and joyfully with the organ. Since our chapel was too small to accommodate the number who were going to attend the Mass, Monsignor Michael Picard, our pastor, graciously allowed us the use of the Church of Saint Andrew. We were pleased that many of our friends and benefactors were able to join us.

The Sisters carried specially decorated candles as we processed into the Church. Our oldest, Sister Mary Francis, was able to participate in all the activities of the day. She proudly carried her “electric” candle as she led the procession into the Church on Sister Evelyn’s arm while she smiled and nodded at all the people that she passed. The Mass was a beautiful celebration of the Paschal Mystery. Cardinal Rigali’s homily on the Gospel selection from Saint John on the Vine and the Branches touched all of us with his deep insights into our spiritual lives, especially as contemplatives.

We greeted our friends at the reception which was held in the cafeteria of Saint Andrew School. Several “angels” oversaw the food tables replenishing the cold cuts, cheese and soft drinks when needed. We had provided a table of small gifts for those who wanted to take home a little memento of the day. It was such a joy to share this special day with so many friends!

On October 1, our faithful chaplain of 12+ years, Monsignor William O’Donnell, officially “retired” from offering daily Mass for us due to his health. We will miss his homilies and his presence with us on a daily basis, but were delighted that he will still be able to come to celebrate our Sunday Mass. We had light refreshments in our parlors for him after Mass and invited our regular attendees to greet him and express their appreciation for his many years of service. We are now enjoying our five new chaplains who are priests from Regina Coeli, the residence for Retired Priests in Warminster. They take turns rotating through the weekdays offering daily Mass in our chapel. It has been great getting to know them and we are so grateful for their generosity and care in providing for us.

Fr. Frank Berna celebrated the Transitus of Saint Francis with us on October 3. We always enjoy the thoughts and reflections he offers us in his well thought out homilies. We are looking forward to having him return to celebrate our Christmas Midnight Mass.

We bid farewell to some of our Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia who regularly attended our daily Mass. Sister James Francis McGlashen OSF who is 98 years old came with Sister Pat Warman OSF on October 11 for the last time. She was moving to Assisi House in Aston near their motherhouse. Her companion, Sister Dolores Donovan OSF is already living there. We will miss their presence with us.

We are looking forward to closing out our year of celebration for our 100th anniversary of serving in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia on December 3, when His Excellency, The Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput will come to offer Mass with us. He will be accompanied by his secretary, Father Thomas Viviano.

We pray that each and every one of you may have:

**A Very Holy Christmas and
A New Year Filled to Overflowing with
God’s Love and Blessings!**