

Winter of 2017, 2018



We began the winter months of 2017-2018 with a profound sense of gratitude to God and to our many friends. We said “goodbye” to some very special people. There was Dick Howard, who died on November 8, and whose wish to enter the Church was granted on October 17, just a few weeks before his death. Though he was not a Catholic, he faithfully attended Mass with his wife Olga for the 68 years of their marriage. After being baptized on October 17, 2017 he received First Holy Communion and Anointing of the Sick in November, shortly before he died. His wonderful wife, Olga, definitely attributes his actually entering the Catholic Church to our Sister Mary Alfred’s intercession. Then there was Father Gerald Gordon, TOR, who died on November 10, and had served as our chaplain and friend for many years. Lastly there was our beloved friend, Monsignor John Miller, who passed away from brain cancer on December 1. Monsignor was a very long time friend going back to our years in Philadelphia.

Our gratitude continues, this time for the beatification of Father Francis Solanus Casey, OFM Cap, which took place in Detroit, MI on November 8. What a gift he is to the Church with his great faith and the many miracles worked for the sick! We watched the ceremony on November 22 and were delighted to see some friends, Father John Paul Kuzma, OFM Cap and Father Wolfgang Pisa, OFM Cap in the congregation, Blessed Solanus Casey, pray for us!

November 25 found us expressing our gratitude through a festive meal for our guest from Puerto Rico, Sr. Maria Teresa Mendoza, OSC Cap, who had been with us since July. She came to learn English and study for her citizenship test, which she took on December 4 and passed with flying colors! Congratulations on being a new American citizen, Sister Maria Teresa!

December 3 found us closing the celebration of our 100th anniversary year with a special Mass on the First Sunday of Advent, celebrated by our Archbishop Charles Chaput. It was a joy to meet and be with him, as well as with Monsignor O’Donnell and Father Thomas Viviano, who both concelebrated with the archbishop.

Our first snowfall – a beautiful fluffy 6 inches - came on December 9, a special gift for Sister Isabel on her birthday. As Advent concluded, we celebrated our Christmas Midnight Mass with Father Frank Berna, one of our “family” members (nephew of our deceased Sr. Mary Regina Berna). Our special friend and chaplain Monsignor O’Donnell celebrated Mass for us on Christmas day. With joy we welcomed our generous priest friends who celebrated for us during the Octave: Fathers Brian Kean, Patrick Whittle, TOR, Bernard Taglianetti, William Kirk, Dennis Gill and Bishop Michael Fitzgerald.

On January 7 we shared our gratitude with the three Kings, as Sister Evelyn was chosen “King” by finding the bean in her sugar cookie. Sister carried the Infant Jesus in our procession as the Lord blessed the monastery. The day also brought bittersweet – but grateful - memories of our deceased friend, Monsignor Miller who many years ago used to come for Benediction on Epiphany Sunday with his RCIA candidates.

In February, we had an unexpected final occasion to remember our 100th anniversary as Father Ronald Giannone, OFM Cap came to celebrate a special Mass for us, since he had been unable to attend our ceremony in September. He brought Father Mano with him, an Indian priest who concelebrated, and several of our Capuchin Sisters from Wilmington, who have been such close friends to us over the past 30+ years. We shared much laughter and many memories over a festive meal, during which Father Ronald also shared the history of the Ministry of Caring, the organization he founded 40 years earlier to serve the poor of Wilmington, DE.

The following day, Monsignor O’Donnell celebrated Mass for us. At the end of Mass he told us to our great sorrow but with our understanding that because of health issues, he could no longer come for Sunday Mass.

February 11-13 was our Solemn Annual Exposition (Forty Hours) during which we offered many prayers for all of you, for the Church and for the world.

Spring



We were considering getting an air conditioning unit installed in our Altar Bread Room as the stoves generate a lot of heat when we are baking altar breads. The added humidity which is experienced at times during the summer creates an environment which is taxing both for the Sisters and for the proper functioning of the equipment. As we spent considerable time inquiring about different a/c systems, we realized we needed the advice of an engineer. Yes, we needed someone who could understand and take into consideration the varying factors that are involved in the baking, dampening and cutting of altar breads. A new a/c system was decided upon and was installed during the summer. We are grateful for the kindness of a generous anonymous benefactor.

Late winter and early spring brought some heavy wet snowfall and power outages to the surrounding areas. We are always happy when our generator starts up after we lose electricity. However, on one occasion when the generator did not pick up, the Sisters gathered some fresh fallen snow as a reserve to melt on our gas stove if a need for water should arise. A Sister asked, "Do we need to add water when melting snow?" We all had a hearty laugh!

Palm Sunday arrived early this year on March 25 and then Easter Sunday fell on April 1. Despite the snowstorms we had encountered, it was uplifting to see the daffodils and forsythias beautifully appearing just in time for Easter!

We were informed that some of our trees that had been planted close to our monastery building years ago were infected and dying. Concerned about potential structural damage to our building and equipment in the future, we employed a landscaper to cut down and uproot the potentially dangerous trees.

Throughout the year, one of the Sisters regularly videotapes various programs for us to watch as a community during our 'quiet' collation. Usually they are of a spiritual nature, but topics may also focus on nature, science, history, documentaries, etc. On holidays, birthdays, or feasts we sometimes enjoy a Hallmark movie or detective story. However, since the mealtime is less than an hour, the movie is usually spaced over a two-day period. This 'pausing' for another day may invite us to creatively use our imagination to ponder upon the unfolding or finale of the story!

May Crowning of Our Blessed Mother opened the beautiful month dedicated to Mary! This year Sister Joan Marie was honored to be the Sister who crowned our statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Many joyful celebrations of priestly ordinations are remembered during the month of May. This year, on the Eve of Pentecost, Monsignor Michael Flood celebrated his golden jubilee along with Fr. Edward Kelly and Fr. Gaspar Genuardi, both of whom are also golden jubilarians. Some family members and friends also gathered to rejoice on this very special and happy occasion!

We are very grateful for the priests who come to celebrate Mass for us after our beloved chaplain, Monsignor O'Donnell retired. Several retired priests from Regina Coeli Residence faithfully minister to us throughout the week. On Sundays, we appreciate the kindness of parish priests from St. Andrew, St. Bede, the Cathedral-Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, plus a Capuchin Franciscan Friar all of whom come regularly to celebrate Mass for us. Their presence is a tremendous gift to us all! We continue to pray for an increase of good and holy vocations to the priesthood within our Archdiocese.

Sister Maria Eden covered the altar bread work while Sister Anne and Sister Isabel attended a Joint Federation gathering of Poor Clare Sisters. The guest speaker, Father Dominic Monti, OFM, a well-known Franciscan scholar addressed the topic of the history of the Poor Clares during the Medieval Ages. The program and sharing was very enriching for the Sisters who attended. We are grateful that the presentations were videotaped and will be made available for those communities and Sisters who were not able to attend. This year also marked the 60th Anniversary of the establishment of the Holy Name Federation and the Mother Bentivoglio Federations of Poor Clare Sisters of the primitive order within the United States.

Summer

On June 12, Sr. Maria Tereza's brother, Novati, died very unexpectedly in a bus accident. Her other brother traveling in the same bus was in critical condition. Sister flew home to Africa to be with her family and for the funeral. She returned two weeks later. In July, Sister was told that her mother was dying and after prayer she asked to transfer back to her original monastery in Africa. Not too long after this, Sister Holy Spirit was called by her brother in Africa and told that her sister, Dorosta, was in the hospital and dying. Again after prayer, Sister also decided to transfer to her original monastery in Africa. Please do keep these two beautiful Sisters in your prayers.



A new audio/video tape by Bishop Robert Barron!!! We received the DVD of *The Mass*. It is just marvelous, so much so that we suggest going on the internet to buy a copy. In simple language the bishop goes through the different parts of the Mass and explains what is happening. We definitely recommend it to everyone.

During spring and summer, we received the Apostolic Constitution "Vultum Dei" or "Seeking the Face of God" on women's contemplative life. It is beautiful, and we give you only the first two lines: "Seeking the face of God has always been a part of human history. From the beginning, men and women have been called to a dialogue of love with the Creator." The "men and women" mean not just religious and priests but all men and all women. This beautiful call is for each and everyone of us!

On August 8, 9, 10 we celebrated our three nights of prayer with the people and our Sisters in preparation for the Solemnity of Saint Clare on August 11. Father John Paul Kuzma, OFM Cap presided over the beautiful days. All found Father's talks very insightful and helpful especially those on suffering and healing. Several of our seminarians and a transitional deacon were able to help us at the triduum ceremonies and at the Mass on Saint Clare's Day. The next day Monsignor O'Donnell came and celebrated Mass for us on his 90th birthday.

On a happy animal side, we had some workmen in the back of our monastery. Lady, one of our dogs, was very friendly with the men. Then Sister Patricia noticed her availing herself of one of their lunch bags, and beginning to just walk away with the bag in her mouth. The good men were startled and tried to get Lady to put down the lunch by offering her an apple. Lady **really** likes apples! She dropped the lunch bag to everyone's relief without even taking a bite into it. Everyone laughed as the dog enjoyed her apple.

On the sad animal side, we lost our impish little dog, Snickers on August 27. One minute she was sitting peacefully outside the place where she sleeps and the next minute she darted in front of our maintenance man's truck as he drove across our back yard. She was raced to the vet but died from her internal injuries. We had her cremated, had a prayer ceremony and then we buried her ashes. Lady misses her as do all of us.

Two weeks after the feast of St. Clare, one of the permanent deacons who comes for Benediction on Sunday evenings shared this story with us. Part of his family came for the three nights of the Triduum before the feast of Saint Clare. The last night when we have the Transitus of Saint Clare (the passing of the Saint from earth to heaven), we use candles and also have bells as we kiss the relic of Saint Clare. One grandson said to his twin sister who missed coming that night: "We really hit the jackpot tonight we had both bells and candles."

Do you remember the fairy tale of the Princess And the Pea? Her feeling the pea beneath many mattresses told the people she was the true princess. Our poor freezer was not working correctly. It had some ice build up on the bottom of it. We cleaned the ice. The water into ice came back again. We needed help from the professionals, and called the service person out. Then he came and checked things out listening to our tale of what was happening. A relatively short time after he came to us with a frozen pea! Just like the princess in the fairy tale, our freezer would not brook one frozen pea that had escaped and gone into the tube that allows the water from her defroster to escape. Pea taken out and princess freezer OK.

Autumn

Father Vincent Fortunato OFM Cap was our retreat master for our community retreat the first week of September. His reflections were very practical and basic to our spiritual life. Each conference began with a scripture passage that set the tone for his thoughts on Eucharist, faith, prayer, falling in love with God, mercy, the sacrament of reconciliation, humility, discipleship and discipline. He was delighted to find out that our monastery was within 15 minutes of the supposedly best pizza pie place on the east coast! He brought us some pizzas to enjoy the evening our retreat was over. (We think our aide's husband's pizza is better.)



In mid-September, the air-conditioning company returned to complete the work to enclose the baking and cutting area of the altar bread room. Since it is one big room and open, heavy plastic strips that act as curtains were hung on the doorways.

Two aspirants, arrived a few days before Sister Maria Ramonita's First Profession on September 29. The first stayed on for her month live-in and the second returned on October 15 for her month live-in. Then, the Feast of the Archangels found all of us rejoicing as Sister Maria professed her First Vows. Sister looked radiant as she vowed to her beloved Bridegroom, the Church and the community her vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and enclosure. Sister Jean Therese, as abbess, and Father Frank Whatley, O.S.S.T., the main celebrant, accepted her vows. All was beautiful with nine other priests concelebrating this "Profession Mass". Sister Maria's blood sister, Fe came from Los Angeles, CA to be here for this special day as did Poor Clare Nuns from New York, New Jersey and Delaware. Sister Patricia fulfilled her role as sacristan with her usual beautiful grace.

Father Frank Berna has been our go-to person for the Transitus of St. Francis for the past few years. He is Sister Mary Regina's nephew and has been a professor at La Salle University for many years. He is well versed in St. Francis and he always blesses us with a thought provoking homily. Our regular Thursday chaplain, Fr. Edward Kelly offered the beautiful Mass on the Feast of St. Francis.

Sister Anne gave a presentation on St. Clare to the Capuchin postulants of the St. Augustine Province and the Stigmata Province on October 6. They were accompanied by their postulant director, Br. Kip Ledger. We greeted them in the Padua room after our dinner. Typically, we ask each one for their hometown when they introduce themselves. When Br. Kip was asked for his hometown in Massachusetts, he responded, "Ware." Since most of us are not familiar with this town and it sounded like "Where," the Sister who asked the question repeated her inquiry several times with same answer. After a couple of rounds, we realized that "Ware" was the actual name of the town. We all had a good laugh!

Our good friar friend, Brother Larry Hilferty, TOR died unexpectedly in Loretto, PA on October 11. His passing was a loss for all who knew him. He served Mass for us on many special occasions, taught at Conwell-Eagan High School in Fairless Hills and lived with the TOR friars there before returning to the mother house in 2017. He was 67 years old. He leaves his mother and several siblings. May our Loving Father grant him eternal rest and peace. He was the past religious assistant for the St. Bonaventure OSF Fraternity which meets monthly in our Padua Room. On October 20, Fr. John Bednarik OFM Cap offered Mass assisted by Deacon Warren Leonard during which two of their candidates professed their vows. It was a joyful day for all of us.

The outside passageway from our building into our chapel has been leaking for many years. Since we have had so much rain, it was difficult for the roofers to find a window of opportunity to re-roof it. In late October they found 3 days to do the job. We are happy that the leaking seems to have stopped.

**May you have a very Blessed Christmas and
A New Year filled with God's graces.**

Your Poor Clare Nuns of Langhorne, Pennsylvania.