

Monastery of St. Clare

Summer 2020

May almighty God bless you. May God look upon you with mercy and give you peace.

Blessing of St. Clare

Our Sister Community in Huehuetenango, Guatemala



Left to right: Sisters Ana Maria, Sandra, Jenny, Conchy, Agnes, Jessy, Benedicta, Elizabeth and Guadalupe

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Our monastery in Huehuetenango, Guatemala began with an invitation by Bishop Victor Hugo Martinez to our Memphis community in 1980. He said, "Prayer is the only thing that can save my country." After much prayer we decided that, yes God was asking this of us. Our decision was unanimous.

So began the preparation, learning Spanish, something about the culture, packing things needed to begin a new monastery. After much prayer, five members of the Memphis community offered to go and were accepted. We arrived on November 30, 1981.

The thirty-six year-old civil war was in full bloom (1960-1996) and we were able to experience the pain and hope of the Guatemalan people firsthand. On the morning of February 13th, 1982, Brother James Miller, a Christian Brother and educator, helped us get settled in our new monastery. Later in the day he was murdered by three masked men. On December 7, 2019 Santiago Miller, FSC was declared a "Blessed" and added to the Litany of the Saints. This was a great honor for the Christian Brothers and the Church of Huehuetenango.

The years have passed quickly and our founding abbess, Sister Mary Peter Rowland, is now in the arms of God. Little shoots are sprouting and there are now nine sisters. Energized by their deep faith, we pray with and for the people of Huehuetenango. COVID-19 has added to the extreme poverty of so many. But the Lord gives us hope. A sign of this is our new relationship with our TR Sisters — and with you, our new friends. We join you in confident prayer and, as St. Paul advised, "Give thanks to God at all times." ¡Mucho gusto!

Sr. Agnes

A Message from Our Abbess

Sr. Carolyn



Dear Ones,

There's good news floating around. Have you heard? Our Poor Clare family is expanding again! In Huehuetenango, Guatemala we have a community of Poor Clare Sisters that was founded by our Memphis monastery.

You can read all about them in this publication. The really good news is that those sisters are becoming OUR sisters in a very real way. So let's move over and make room! No, we do not need to build a bigger monastery because their life and mission is and will remain in Guatemala. In every other way they are "moving in". Your Travelers Rest Poor Clares have made the decision to sponsor this community as our own. Your Guatemalan Poor Clares are just as eager and ready to become one with us. Practically speaking this means we will be staying in contact electronically and we will be learning more about each other. We will support each other in our life of prayer and in every other way that is needed. We hope in time to be able to actually visit each other's monastery so we can experience our sisterhood in a tangible way. Of course, travelling between countries being what it is at this time that will not be in the near future, but we are not giving up hope. I don't even have to ask if you have room in your hearts for our expanded family. You've proven the answer to that over and over. Thank you!

Other news to share. Your generous response to helping with our tiny house, which will be named "Portiuncula" has made that dream a reality. Fr. David Phan, OFM will be moving in there once the friars leave St. Anthony's. Although Fr. David will continue to be very busy ministering among the Vietnamese community, it will be wonderful to have him living so close and praying with us as he is able.

Finally, I want to say again, "We miss you so much." We, like you, are looking forward to the day when we can be together again. Until then, let us hold each other in love.

Blessed to be your sister, *Carolyn*

Abbess of our Sister Monastery

Sr. Conchy



Introducing the Abbess of our Sister Monastery
Hermana Maria
Concepcion Menjivar
Peraza, OSC

Maria Concepcion
Menjivar Peraza (Sister
Conchy) was born on

November 1, 1966 in El Salvador, the fifth child of Concepcion Peraz de Menjivar and Mercedes Menjivar. Before responding to God's call and entering the Monastery in 1999, she belonged to a youth group AMOR; *Amigos Misioneros Obreros Renovados Friends Renewed Workers Missionaries*, in which they prepared themselves to serve the Church in different apostolates, as catechist for youth and adults, and to give retreats to meet Christ. She has been abbess since 2013. Sr. Conchy sees our Poor Clare life as being part of a global round of prayer. As one community ends praying, another begins.

Today there are nine sisters in the Monastery of Our Lady of Wisdom of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Like many Poor Clare communities they support themselves by baking and distributing altar breads, sewing liturgical vestments, making cards and rosaries. They also give talks on our life and prayer. The gifts of generous benefactors also support their community. The War which motivated the sisters to come ended in 1996, but there is still violence in this part of their nation because of drug trafficking which was pushed out of Mexico to this border area.

On Sunday, the chapel is filled and after Mass people come up and talk to the sisters and ask for their prayers. They are a place of prayer in Huehue. Our Sisters join with the people in their concerns and offer to God their prayer for a just world, and for healing in families, for jobs. Their prayers embrace the world. Now as we become a Sister Monastery to our Poor Clares in Travelers Rest, we will especially pray for each of you.. Sr. Conchy

Our Tiny Home

(We named it Portiuncula, “little portion” after Francis’ and Clare’s favorite church)



Sometimes you have a dream, give it some wishful thinking and a touch of practical effort – and all of a sudden God just seems to make it happen! That’s what happened to bring us a lovely Tiny Home this spring.

We have a mobile home on our property that we’ve had over 25 years which we use for our personal retreats.

Fr. David Phan, OFM, one of our brothers, will be remaining in Greenville after the friars leave St. Anthony’s parish, asked if he could possibly live in our hermitage temporarily while his new Vietnamese parish stabilizes. He would be able to celebrate Eucharist with us during the week.

We wanted to accommodate him of course, so we were willing to “make do” without our hermitage and find other ways of making retreats. But then we started looking online to explore Tiny Homes. “Coincidentally” an anonymous benefactor offered a generous donation toward the underwriting of this dream of ours!

Eventually, we were led to look at one for sale at Creekside Tiny Home Community here in Travelers Rest- what a surprise to find one so close! It wasn’t going to fit our needs, but we met the community’s owner, Justin Draplin, who in turn, helped us purchase one (at a discount) from the company he buys his Tiny Homes from! It turns out Justin and his family occasionally worship with our faith community! What a small, wonderful world of connections we’re blessed with!

So it seemed this is a God thing! We talked about it, prayed, and decided this was God’s lead and we should follow. Thanks to your generosity, even in this difficult time, we are able to have our dream come true sooner rather than later! Fr. David will use it first; then we will have our turn! Thank you!

Thank you for your generous response to our Spring Appeal

A Poor Clare Family Tree ~ Travelers Rest, SC 1955 - 2020

Cincinnati, OH ~ 1990

Mother Bentivoglio Federation
Sponsored by Duncan

Great Falls, MT ~ 1999

Holy Name Federation
Sponsored by Greenville, SC (Travelers Rest)

Huehuetenango, Guatemala ~ 1981

from Memphis, TN
In 2020, Travelers Rest, SC
becomes sponsoring Monastery

Stamford, CT Monastery ~ 1985

Holy Name Federation ~ Closed 2003

Greenville, SC ~ 1955

from Jamaica Plain, MA.
Moved to Travelers Rest, SC, 2008

Memphis, TN ~ 1932

from Evansville, Indiana. Closed in 2019.
Sisters moved to Cincinnati, OH and
Travelers Rest, SC.

Boston, MA ~ 1906

from Evansville, IN
Moved to Jamaica Plain, MA, 1934

Evansville, IN ~ 1897

Mother M. Magdalen & Sr. M. Constance
Arrived in the USA 1875

Omaha, NE ~ 1878

First Monastery in USA 1878

San Lorenzo Panisperna, Rome ~ 1305

St. Francis of Assisi
1183-1226

St. Clare of Assisi 1193-1253
San Damiano ~ 1212

Our hearts are filled with gratitude this year as we celebrate our presence here in South Carolina for 65 years. We also give thanks for all our sisters who over the centuries responded to God's call and passed down our way of life to us.

It all began in 1212 when St. Clare heard God's call and left her family home. Soon other women followed her. As this first community grew sisters would leave to found new communities in other places. One of these was the Monastery of San Lorenzo Panisperna in Rome which was founded in 1305.

One hundred and forty-five years ago, two blood sisters, Mother M. Magdalen and Sister M. Constance Bentivoglio, left this beloved community to respond to the desire of Pope Pius IX to have Poor Clare Sisters in the United States. Times were hard, but eventually John Creighton expressed a willingness to help the sisters build a monastery in Omaha, Nebraska. The Sisters' early hardships bore fruit in 1897 when a group of Sisters was invited to Evansville, Indiana to start a monastery there.

Before her death in 1905, Mother Magdalen was already planning to bring our way of life to Boston, Massachusetts. Two of the Sisters who travelled from Evansville to Memphis, Tennessee in 1932 had actually lived with Mother Magdalen and shared her vision.

After World War II there was a surge in religious life and our Jamaica Plain Monastery was able in 1955 to send twelve sisters to Greenville, South Carolina. Other Sisters went to Andover, Massachusetts and Kiryushi, Japan. Our Memphis sisters in 1981 responded to the Church's invitation to make foundations in Central America by agreeing to go to Guatemala.

In later years it was difficult for one monastery to make a foundation so when God inspired new foundations in Stamford, Connecticut, Cincinnati, Ohio and Great Falls, Montana, they were founded by our two federations and each sponsored by a sister monastery.

Together we have twenty monasteries. Our monasteries are independent but our federations offers collaborative assistance in various areas as needs present themselves. Each community takes root in a particular location and is nourished, supported, encouraged and blessed by those who visit and pray with us. Each of us is who we are because of you – part of our Poor Clare family.

A Novel Easter Parade



Watching the television became a large part of everyone's life as the Stay at Home requirement kept everyone indoors. We saw that there were lots of creative people adapting to the new way of staying put. Drive Bys became a way to stay connected. We saw teachers driving down the street to encourage their students and first responders parading by the hospitals at shift change to cheer on the frontline medical staff, doctors, nurses, medical technicians and hospital staff. So as Easter approached, we thought we would have an Easter Parade for the Poor Clares at the Monastery.

I then sent an email to my source (Agent N) inside the Monastery to make sure that the Sisters would be available at that time and was assured that that was their free time. It was a no brainer to organize. We sent an email request to members in our community who attend the Monastery for Saturday Mass, to meet at 1 pm in a parking lot and drive to the Monastery. Easter arrived and we came together and headed off to see our Poor Clares. I sent Agent N an email letting her know we were on the way but when we arrived it was obvious that Agent N does not do emails on Sunday so we called backup Agent M and asked her if the sisters could come to the front door. As you can see in the picture, the smiles and excitement on the sisters' faces as our little caravan drove past the front door was palpable. What a wonderful Easter Parade.

-Mike and Suz Weitzel

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As Easter drew near, our hearts were full of anticipation to celebrate the joy of our dear Jesus Christ's rising from the tomb. We longed to shout out, "Christ is Risen! Alleluia!" But this year for us, as for so many of you, Easter was well... "different." Easter was joyous, yes, but there was a cloud of sadness over it. We were not able to celebrate Easter and to break bread together with our faith community. Imagine if Mary Magdalen had no community to share the risen Christ with!

Easter parades have been part of Christian culture since its earliest beginnings. In Holy Week we have two processions – Palm Sunday and the Walk to Calvary. Together with the Easter parade, they brought a unity of spirit to the faithful and visibly reached out to nonbelievers.

We were blessed by some members of our faith community to experience an "Easter Parade." On Easter afternoon an intercom page was heard throughout the monastery to come to the front door. We could never have imagined the great gift waiting for us.

Car after car drove up our driveway and around our front circle. People we know and love waved and wished us a Happy Easter! We could never have imagined such a blessing. One sister shared that this gift was, "truly overwhelming to my heart and brought tears to my eyes. It was a kiss of God for my soul." Another shared, "I was touched to the heart and felt very loved." Another, "It was so gratifying and joyful...an Easter moment never to be forgotten." We all shouted to each other, "Christ is Risen Alleluia!" We were so touched by the love of our faith community. It reminded us that this is the meaning of Easter - that God's love for us is so great that nothing, not a grave, not even a pandemic can dim this great and wonderful love.

-Sr. Theresa

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I rejoice and exult with you in the joy of the Spirit. Saint Clare
Me regocijo y me alegro contigo en el gozo del Espíritu. Santa Clara



As we celebrate our Anniversary Year
we thank God for each of you!
We will especially hold you in prayer on August 11, 2020
as we commemorate this anniversary.

In honor of this special occasion we are creating
a family picture album of all of you who are part of our life.
It will be outside our chapel with your prayer petitions.
If you would like to participate
please send a photo to info@poorclaresc.com

This is a special statue of St Clare which traveled from our monastery in
Memphis and is now in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel here in TR.