

This is a re-typed version of a vocation bulletin that our used to send out. It has some interesting reflections, many from sisters who have since passed away. Some of these sisters were German, and their grammar might seem a little off. Any typos are my mistake, please try to ignore them ;). Also please keep in mind the times these reflections are written in. Some of the terms used commonly then, might sound a little funny to our ears today.



Reflections

FROM MOUNT ALVERNO

Vol. VII, No. 4, July-August 1976

I ask myself the questions: "What is my place in the middle of this chaotic and noisy world as an older Religious? What is real Peace, Justice, Love, Hope of a beautiful life hereafter?" As I seek to unravel the richly and diverse and productive life of a Sister and as I give myself and others the answer, it is this, to quote Pope Pius XII: "Know what you are. Love what you are and live what you are."

One's life must be "Christocentric", that is Christ first, Christ second, Christ third, and Christ all the time!

Being a lover of history I ask myself another question to delve into the "How did it come about that I became a Religious?" I take a close look at the various signs which led me to the convent. These were people, books and events in my life. Of course, my dear family, which I habitually thank God for, had such a strong influence on me. It was a family where daily Mass and communion were customary for my parents. The rosary and litanies were daily prayed together in our parents bedroom where I can remember was enthroned a statue of Mary.

We looked up to her and she looked down upon us. Those precious hours and days I will never forget. I learned the art of nursing already right within our family and in our neighborhood. Practical chari-

ty too was a daily learning experience. Before my family ever sat down for the noon meal we had already brought food to the sick and to mothers who had just given birth to a baby. We had 13 children of our own and ten usually at home at any one time with the others away at school or in the service. And we still managed to have four children of one poor family at our table. Beggars were also welcome and sat with us for a meal at times. This helped us to see what hunger meant and begging for food was like. I feel that this sharing of our daily bread with others brought down God's special blessings on our family. All this and many more signs led me straight to the Franciscans. If we would study the spirit of St. Francis closely I think we would find these Christ-centered ideals strongly present.

The second of the various signs which led me to the convent was books. And I sure read my share of them! I was especially attracted to books of founders of orders of religious communities. My fondness for this type of book became well known in my family and teasing was on the daily routine. We are all curious what others are reading when they seem so intent on it. Well, instead of the love stories that my brothers and sisters expected to find in my room, they found the lives of founders and lives of the saints and, of

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RELIGIOUS
VOCATION



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course, the Bible. My love for Religious Life was laid already when I was very young. Grace, this beautiful gift of God, had been held out to me through my family and friends, like beams of the sun. All that I had to do was "to catch the rays" and follow the call.

What does Religious Life mean for me today? Now in the autumn of my life? The same as it did when I entered 40 years ago, when I said on my reception day; "Lord, it is almost too much happiness and joy!" Today, after storms and dry spells have passed, after the Lord has chiseled and hammered at me, there is still much to be done. But the Spirit of God has led me and He will lead me on!

My concept of convent life has brought me to the decision to live as happy as possible, as good as possible, and with a great quantity of humor. To enjoy the beauty of creation will make us poor and wealthy at the same time, and this brings much peace and happiness. Also it is so good to go once in a while into the desert - not to a geographical one - but to the solitude of our own heart where created joys are consumed and reborn in God. In silence we will also discover that we must extend ourselves from the point of being essentially Christocentric to also necessarily becoming sociocentric. Being a Sister is preeminently a social calling. Why? God calls us from society to Himself and then He commissions us to return to society with His gifts in order to enrich and restore it.

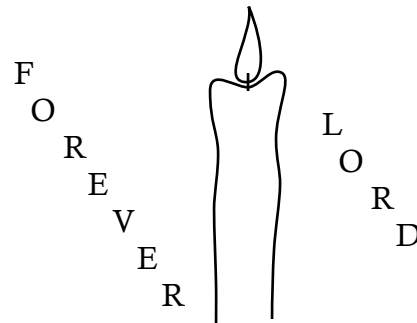
The third sign which led me to the convent were special events. There were so many I was over 30 years of age when I entered and had seen life with open eyes and ears. I experienced both God's presence and His absence in my life. This helped me to find the fine thread which led to a life that was truly worth living. As in everybody's life, I too had sunshine and rain, hail and frost and cold, but God was always the magnet that attracted me again and again. I felt disappointments and successes. I have never regretted my choice to vocation.

I will close with a new song that I learned in a prayer group that I am privileged to be a part of.

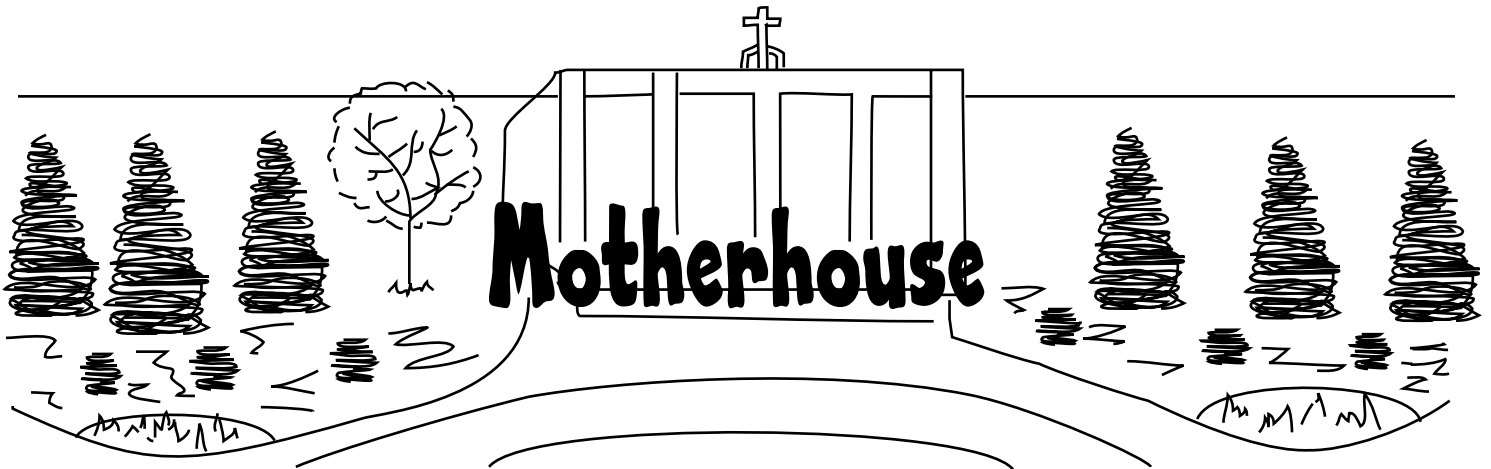
Grace is flowing like a river
Flowing out from you and me
Flowing out into the desert
Setting all the captives free.

Love in Christ and St. Francis,
Sister M. Pius, O.S.F.

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Plan to join us either in person or in spirit as our Sister Mary Jane pronounces her religious vows FOREVER at the Eucharistic Celebration of the Mass, planned for 11:00 A.M. On August 6th! The ceremony will take place in the chapel at our Motherhouse in East Peoria. "I, Sister Mary Jane, vow to Almighty God, in the presence of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, our holy father St. Francis, all the Saints, and you Reverend Mother, to live in consecrated chastity, poverty, and obedience FOREVER according to the Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis of East Peoria, Illinois." Sister will receive a ring, signed with a crucifix, symbolizing the eternal bond she has made with Christ and our religious community. Please join us in our rejoicing!



A FINAL HOMECOMING!

Since the founding of our Community on July 16, 1877 the Sisters had not enjoyed private living quarters. Their main interests were the sick poor. Everything was done to provide the best help for the needy. For themselves, the Sisters were satisfied with any small room, usually in the attics of the hospitals.

With the growth of the Community there was also the growing need for a definite and separate place for a novitiate, where the young Sisters would be appropriately educated for their religious and professional life. It was not until the fall of 1929 that the cornerstone was laid for a Motherhouse, including a novitiate, adjacent to St. Francis Hospital in Peoria, Illinois. On November 25, 1930 the new convent was dedicated. The Sisters rejoiced as they moved from the corners of the hospital into their new home. Three floors on the north wing housed the novitiate, including educational facilities.

After 30 years and with continual expansion of the hospital, our Community felt that a more appropriate place for the Motherhouse and Novitiate, providing much needed privacy, should be considered. On May 17, 1962 ground was broken for a new structure on a 40 acre farm land in Edgewood Hills, ten miles north of East Peoria, Illinois.

The complex was constructed in two phases. The first was the novitiate for the young girls,

and the second portion was the Motherhouse for the elderly and retired members of the Community. A beautiful chapel stands in the center.

On August 25, 1963 His Excellency, Bishop J. B. Franz, laid and blessed the cornerstone at the entrance of the new structure. On December 9th the novices moved into their new home consisting of a three story building with private bedrooms, spacious dining and visiting areas, offices, kitchen, laundry, and a special building with ample educational and recreational facilities. Open house was held on December 14th and 15th and attracted over 1,350 visitors. On January 29, 1964 Bishop Franz blessed the novitiate and dedicated the chapel. In his sermon the Bishop stressed the fact that the novitiate is always a place where the young girl is introduced into a new way of life, a way of life that prepares her to bring Christ to others by observing the Rule and Spirit of this Franciscan Community.

After the completion of the novitiate buildings and the chapel, work was immediately begun on the Motherhouse. This complex comprises a two story administration building with lobby, visitors rooms and offices, and infirmary wing with a nurse's station, laboratory, and facilities for occupational therapy, kitchen and dining rooms, a recreation room, four separate buildings for Sisters on retreat which are connected by a large

multi-purpose room, and a small meditation chapel for the senior Sisters.

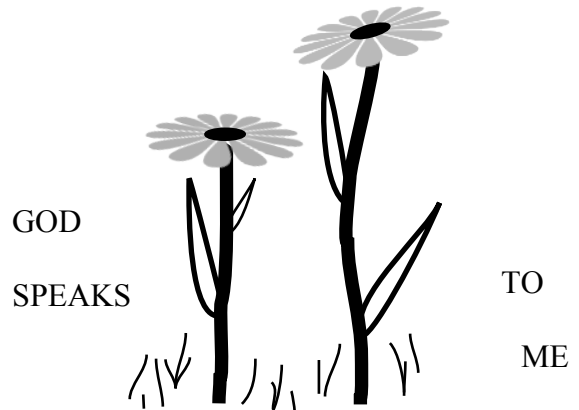
The big day for the senior Sisters came on September 15th, the Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Mother. It was a day of great joy. At ten o'clock in the morning car after car and several ambulances arrived with the dear aged and infirm Sisters, three of them in their 90's and still walking on their own. There were 16 in their 80's. With canes and crutches they came. By 5:00 P.M. Forty senior Sisters were well situated in their new home. It was truly a day of thanksgiving to God for this long-awaited reward. After 50, 60 and more years of hard labor in the service of the sick, the Sisters now have in their new home and outdoor environment every opportunity for spending the evening of their life in a much-earned and well-deserved climate of privacy and in a peace conducive to close union with God in prayer.

Sister M. Pieta, O.S.F.



CELEBRATING
OUR BIRTH-DATE!

On July 16th our religious community will be exactly 99 years old! Our holy foundress, Mother Francis Krasse, left us with these meaningful words: "Wonderfully and full of love has the dear God guided us during the past. Each new day was a new evidence of the Fatherly goodness of God. How much gratitude we owe Him! How will we begin to express all the feelings of our hearts inspired by the memory of the multitude and the greatness of His kindness!" Yes, 99 years of serving this wonderful God is reason enough to celebrate!



I was walking down the hall on my way to our dining room to join my Sisters for the noon meal when I saw one of our older Sisters sitting on a chair just outside the entrance. She was looking so intently out the window opposite her. Her eyes were sparkling. I stopped and stood by her. She was looking at a brilliant red flower, all absorbed in its beauty. When she noticed me near her she smiled and said: "It isn't so hard at all to pray, Sister. Just look!" She was lost in quiet wonder. Then she proceeded to tell me that prayer is simply thinking of God, that all asks of us is to think of Him. She recalled that she could hold a flower in her hand and say: "How wonderful. God made that."

I sat down a minute near her and I sensed that she once again left me for the beauty of that flower. She was thanking God for it. I found myself thanking God for sharing with me this pearl of wisdom from one of my own Sisters. Then Sister looked at me again with one of those ear-to-ear grins and gave a heart-warming laugh. We walked together into the room.

God wants me to think of Him, just to think of Him... What precious reminders of Him He has left for us, in flowers, in each other, and in all creation!

In His Peace,
Sister Judith Ann, O.S.F.