



# The Canticle

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Voice of  
The Community  
of St. Francis,  
Province of  
The Americas

## Co-Creation

*Every true artist has had real, direct, and immediate contact with the beauty of the world, contact that is of the nature of a Sacrament. Simone Weil*

*O God, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all. (Ps. 104:25)*

When I was in 5th grade, I discovered dinosaurs. My interest in the geological ages of the earth and the incredible story of the evolution of life on our planet led me to read books on what were then new theories of planetary and cosmic evolution — plate tectonics, continental drift, and the big bang at the beginning of it all. This extra-curricular study provided me with a fine foundation for a spirituality of “awe” and a love and appreciation for God as Creator.

When I spent a year in the early 90s studying Creation Spirituality with Matthew Fox and company, I learned more about our calling to be co-creators, and to walk the Via Creativa.

*God is our Creator. God made us in His image and likeness. Therefore we are creators...The joy of creativeness should be ours. Dorothy Day*

*We are heirs of the fearful creative power of God. Meister Eckhart*

Since young childhood I have been an “artsy-craftsy” type. My first talent was displayed in drawing. To this day I still draw, but most of my art is utilitarian. We need a community Christmas card. OK. I’ll draw one. We need a drawing to spiff up a flier. OK. I’ll draw one. These drawings give me pleasure or sometimes remain a source of embarrassment and annoyance as my perfectionism kicks in. However, drawing just isn’t the right medium when I want to express the deepest things within me.

According to the first verses in Genesis, “God SAID”...God the Creator Spoke the Word, and things came to Be. So, for me creativity is related to expressiveness. What we create, speaks. And for me, music and dance have always been the expressive arts. Through these media I can express the deep feelings that I can’t put into words or paint in a picture.

When Sr. Maggie and I were at the Bishop’s Ranch facilitating the Advent Retreat, one day I noticed that Maggie had left open her art notebook with a drawing of the leaves she had been collecting. She has this notebook to look at again and again in the future.

I also thought of Sr. Ruth, who is a champion knitter. There are many people who still wear the sweaters, hats, socks, and gloves that she has made over the years, and several mothers who, I am sure, still treasure the incredible Shetland shawls she made to warm their newborns— (fine enough, according to tradition, that a shawl can be run through a wedding ring). She also knitted a terrific Good Shepherd with a small flock of adorable sheep for Godly Play at El Buen Samaritano.



Thinking about the enduring beauty and utility of things made by Maggie and Ruth made me consider the liturgical music and the sacred circle dancing that were the focus of my creative activity at the Advent Retreat. I have often thought of dance and music as ephemeral arts, but I suddenly realized they are more than that. Notwithstanding modern audio and video recording, they are truly arts “of the moment.” That is why I have always found movement meditation to be so effective for me. There is a way I can be “in the moment” when I move that is not true when I am doing something with my mind, or attempting NOT to do something with my mind, as in contemplative silence.



*“The singers and dancers will say:  
All my fresh springs are in you.”  
(Ps. 87:6)*

**Pamela Clare, CSF**

*As well as singing in church choirs since age 13 and engaging in sacred circle dancing and movement meditation, Pamela Clare sings in the San Francisco Bach Choir and dances in dialogue with the drums of Afro-Cuban folkloric dance whenever she has the chance.*

**Sr. Maggie, CSF**

why do I create?  
ask me why I breathe . . .  
making things  
a necessary part of living  
from earliest childhood  
drawings doll clothes  
doll houses and furniture  
made from whatever I could find  
scraps of fabric, boxes, rocks and sticks and leaves  
eventually learning to sew to knit  
learning to "do it right," to focus on the product  
but always the process is most important  
the making itself, not the thing that is made  
the best products are organically grown,  
an interaction, a dance: process defines work defines process

one making feeds another: as I work with paper and thread,  
focusing on colors and lines,  
a retreat meditation writes itself, unbidden, in my head  
all is meditation  
hands, breath, eyes, mind  
the slower work: knitting, crochet, beadwork  
one stitch at a time, one bead at a time  
the mind attentive to the work, the technique,  
care for how it is done  
the work itself, the act of making, is a prayer



**Sr. Jean, CSF**

What do vestment-making, candle-making and jam-making have in common?

You start with all the utensils needed, all the basic ingredients, and you follow directions. There is always room for using your imagination and being creative once you know the basic principles.

Each occupation is contemplative, a time when I am in touch with the creative spirit within me. A bunch of fabric, scissors, tape measure, needle and thread can become a beautiful vestment worn to the glory of God and enhancing worship.

A pile of old candle ends, molds, wick and a pan in which to heat the wax, become a candle to use upon the altar or in the Advent wreath, or on our table for festive occasions.

I often wonder who first put butter, sugar, eggs and lemon juice in a saucepan, cooked it until it thickened, and made lemon curd; fruit and juice with sugar boiled until thick to make jam? I once read that marmalade was really a mistake--the chef was making a sauce using chopped up orange peel. Too much sugar and too much cooking and it became jam.

I give thanks to God for the gifts and abilities given to me, for the joy of serving and giving pleasure to others, for the chance to give honor and glory to God the Creator of all.

As a young child I became fascinated with whittling soap. On lazy summer days, sitting on the front porch, I would spend hours trying to create something beautiful from a bar of Ivory soap. Much to my dismay the creation frequently turned out to be a pile of shavings and a ball, clump, or sliver that didn't resemble the bird or rose that I had envisioned. I quickly moved to working with wood and found that to be much more satisfying. I love the different types of woods and their unique characteristics of color, grain, smell, and feel. Over the years I have made many small objects and some pieces of furniture.

St. Aidan's Church decided to resurrect their Godly Play program and had some of the materials which were created from felt, or clay, but needed the wooden stories from the Hebrew Scriptures. With scrap lumber from some friends and the amazing odds and ends from "Scrap" (a recycling program), a borrowed jigsaw and drill, lots of sandpaper, and some very old polyurethane I began the project. I delighted in once again creating objects that would be of use while at the same time offering me the opportunity to play with the different patterns, textures, and colors of wood.

**Sr. Lynne, CSF**



*Sr. Lynne with the Tent of Meeting where the Hebrews worshipped during their 40 years in the wilderness.*

*Sr. Jean with The Rev. David Stickley wearing the dalmatic and stole Jean made for his ordination to the diaconate.*



*Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,  
Sphere-born harmonious Sisters,  
Voice and Verse!*

These words, written by the 17th century English poet, John Milton, are in my mind as I add my contribution to the creativity theme of this *Canticle*.

At various times in my life I have been inspired, motivated, asked to compose music — all very small-scale (no pun intended!) and usually suited to particular needs or situations.

My special interest has always been in writing for singing — the coming together of “voice and verse.” Sometimes I have used another’s words but have more particularly enjoyed writing my own words and then the music in which to clothe them.

I do not presume to be a poet — I write verse and try to make it uncomplicated, pleasurable and theologically sound. There are challenges here: how to avoid trite words if using a rhyming pattern; the need to be rhythmically consistent; to keep clear the central meaning and, above all, to create something that might inspire, uplift, comfort or strengthen.

Then comes the exciting part—hearing it in my head and working with musical notation. Sometimes the words call for a metrical version, others are better suited to a free-plainsong-type setting. It is a great wonder to me that thousands of musical works have been created from the traditional 13-note scale of Western Europe.

So — what key would I choose? What is the best rhythm? Gradually tunes and themes emerge to be shaped and worked at. If the setting is for more than one voice, one has to conform to the rules of harmony learned many years ago — the discipline of composing that I still try to accept and follow.

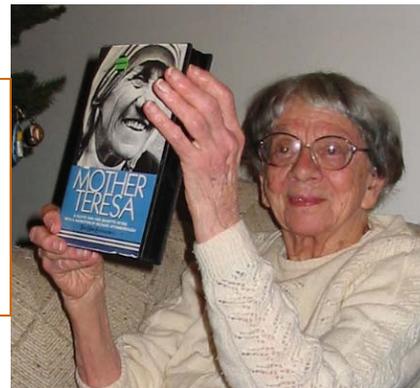
Finally, a new creation! May it be pleasing to those who sing it but, supremely, may it be an acceptable offering and give glory to the blessed Trinity, the true and holy Creator of all.

**Sr. Cecilia, CSF**

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*Musician and Versifier:  
Sr. Cecilia with her gift  
from an anonymous  
SSF Brother last  
December at our  
Christmas celebration.*



*Cecilia served as the organist at Holy Innocents Church in San Francisco for about 10 years (1975-1986). But not all her music has been seriously serious as this old archival photo shows. Here she gives a mock concert (note the Liberate candle) for the entertainment of the Brothers and Sisters at the First Order Chapter in Australia in 1990.*



**My God, My All**

Text and Music: Sister Cecilia, CSF

1. Praise to you, O God, that Fran-cis, van-ished by a pri-son wall,  
2. Praise to you, Our Lord, that Fran-cis gave up ease and weal- thy hall,  
3. Praise the Spir- it lead- ing Fran-cis, hum- bly on his knees to fall,  
4. Fa- ther, Son and Ho- ly Spir- it, hear us, as to you we call,

Re- cog- nised in you his mas- ter, turned to you: My God, my All.  
Pov- er- ty his on- ly la- dy, for your sake: My God, my All.  
While the marks of cru- ci- fix- ion seared him through: My God, my All.  
That we may, with bless- ed Fran- cis live for you: My God, my All.

© 2002 Text and Music Sr. Cecilia, CSF  
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# Consider Your Call...

## Learn about the Religious Life

Spend a week sharing our life of prayer, study and ministry in the city of San Francisco.

June 23-June 29, 2010

**“I didn’t know the Episcopal Church has Sisters!”**

This is a comment we hear all the time. The Religious Life in the Episcopal Church is too well hidden. Yet it is an enduring part of our Christian and Anglican heritage. Often people feel called to this way of life, but don’t know how to pursue the call. The best way to learn about Religious Life is to visit a religious community. Therefore, if you are between 21 and 55, in good emotional and physical health, free of family obligations, have questions about the religious life, and can imagine yourself

- Committing to a deeper relationship with God
- Living in a loving community
- Moving toward greater simplicity of life
- Honoring and nurturing the earth
- Working to eradicate poverty, prejudice and injustice
- Engaging in compassionate ministry with the poor and marginalized

..... We invite you to participate in  
**Consider Your Call**

This is a “live-in” week for women who desire to learn more about life in a religious community. Participants are invited to share in the life of the Sisters as part of discerning a vocation to Religious Life. There will be opportunities to share in our life of corporate and individual prayer, study the religious life, help with our work and ministry within the house and the wider Church and community.



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