

The Canticle

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

LIFE IN PANDEMIC TIMES

How to worship together in these times?

We have been able to continue our regular round of Daily Offices in the chapel. Unfortunately, there is no Holy Eucharist but we have added a mid-day service of prayer and intercession which honors the saint of the day. Zoom worship on Sundays from Holy Innocents Church, as well as Wednesday evening discussion groups, have been part of our life. Sr. Pamela Clare has been helping with music and lay reading for the Sunday services. For two and a half months this Fall she helped with the online worship for Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe congregation which shares the worship space with Holy Innocents.

How to do ministry in these times?

Jean has continued her involvement with the seminarian's discernment group at Holy Innocents, now online, and also leads a weekly tele-Bible Study with two members of Holy Innocents.

And what about massage? (Definitely problematical in these Covid times, even as many people in the Tenderloin suffer terribly from isolation and lack of touch.) Pamela Clare's ministry of massage with homeless people has been on hold since February. However, one of her usual work assignments is with an Integrative Pain Management Program at a public health clinic in the Tenderloin. The massage, acupuncture and movement therapists put together an online wellness group that started in March and has continued. In October a second pain management group was added. As part of the program Pamela offers one-on-one and small group self-



Srs. Maggie and Jean at Jean's anniversary celebration — all masked up in the chapel at San Damiano

massage and distance Reiki sessions. It is gratifying to see what people can do for themselves with some instruction in self-massage.

And then there are those endless Zoom meetings & Conferences....

Maggie and Pamela Clare have attended online conferences for our own CSF Chapter, the SSF Brothers' Chapter, the Third Order SSF Chapter, the Conference of Anglican Religious Orders of the Americas, the TSSF Western Convocation, Nuevo Amanecer (the national Episcopal Latino Ministry conference), the Interna-

tional Embodiment Conference....and the list goes on.

How to honor important life events in these times?

Two major celebrations for St. Jean have fallen during the past few months: her 50th anniversary of Profession of Vows and her 90th birthday. Figuring out a safe way to celebrate was challenging. For her anniversary we joined the brothers at San Damiano (with masks on except for the dinner). It was very emotional to share the Eucharist together for the first time in months. Then for the birthday we had three little tea parties (all carefully socially distanced and masked). Two were at the church and one with just two guests in our living room. Then finally, a lunch with the SSF Brothers.

As well as celebrations, we have had to deal with Sr. Ruth's death in September. Like many people, we postponed the memorial service in hopes that restrictions would lighten up, but instead find ourselves preparing to gather on Dec. 17 in the middle of another "Shelter in Place" edict. You will find more information on Ruth and her celebration on the following pages.



Sr. Ruth, CSF 1949-2020

Sr. Ruth was diagnosed with metastatic cancer in January and died peacefully under hospice care on September 7. It was a fitting date, since it was the anniversary of the blessing of St. Francis House. Ruth was one of the four pioneering CSF Sisters from England who arrived in San Francisco in 1974 to found the American Province of the Community of St. Francis.

It was the AIDS epidemic which hit San Francisco hard in the early 1980s that provided Ruth with her life's work. In 1984, with the help of Ray Cope (former Br. Philip Leonard, SSF), she formed a non-profit corporation to provide affordable accommodations and support for families who were visiting loved ones with life-threatening medical conditions. She called the organization The Family Link because she knew of the importance of the link between the sick people and their families and also, in the early days of AIDS, how important it was to link families who were going through similar traumas, providing them with people with whom they could share their grief.

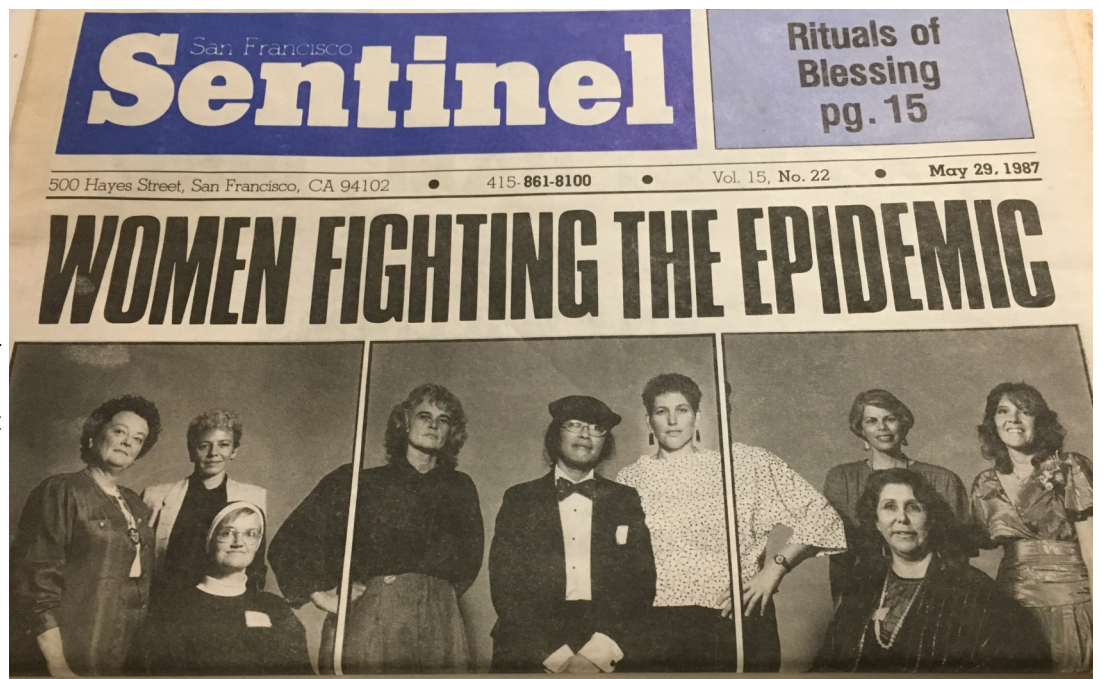
Over the past 35 years The Family Link has provided over half a million guests nights to people from every state and all continents except Antarctica. There are many grateful people around the world who remember Sr. Ruth with love. Her compassion for their grief touched them deeply. Many of her guests became close friends. She was acknowledged, honored and awarded many times for her work with the Family Link. She even was awarded the Jefferson Award, a locally-awarded honor sponsored by a national organization founded to honor outstanding achievements in public service.

One of her dreams was for a former guest, Shabnam Gul, to succeed her as program director of The Family Link. She was able to see this dream fulfilled in March when Shabnam was hired and Ruth was reassured that the future of The Family Link was in good hands.



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Ruth loved, respected and was fascinated by animals. She was a faithful vegetarian and animal rights defender. Her vet introduced her to the painted dogs, wild dogs in southern Africa and she became an advocate for them and the indigenous people learning to protect the animals they once killed. She was usually surrounded by very large dogs which went with her everywhere—even to church. The need to walk the dogs got her out





into nature. She particularly loved walking along the coastal cliffs at Ft. Funston overlooking the Pacific. She could watch for whales migrating along the coast. She found the ravens endlessly fascinating and she was awed by their intelligence. She became a keen observer of the flora and fauna of Ft. Funston and when she bought an iPhone, she began taking photos of the flowers and the ravens, as well as the dogs, of course!



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Ruth balanced her work with grieving families by engaging in life-giving, creative activities. She became a licensed contractor and helped build several houses. She was a champion knitter, able to create virtually anything with yarn and knitting needles. In her latter years she took up baking and was known for keeping the early service coffee hour at church stocked with homemade cakes—a different recipe each week. At Christmas she baked traditional English Christmas cakes as presents for friends.

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Ruth’s 35 years of working with families grieving the illness and sometimes death of their loved ones gave her a great familiarity with dying and death. She was comfortable with her own dying and said that she felt like hers had been a long and fulfilling life. (Her compassion was for the young people she encountered as fellow receivers of chemotherapy treatments). She attributed the witness of so many AIDS patients she knew in the 1980s with teaching her how to die. At the time of the 30th anniversary of The Family Link, she wrote of death in these words: “The living icon is that we journey together into God’s embrace. The hand that reaches out to us already has us carved into it. For me the journey’s end is filled with hospitality; a place of union and reunion, where sorrow and sighing are no more, and the words, ‘Welcome home’ will ring in our ears.”

Memorial Service

Thursday Dec. 17, 11 am (local time)

The service will be livestreamed on our Facebook page... *Community of St Francis American Province.*

The video will remain on the page for viewing again or at a later, more convenient time, depending upon your time zone. You can watch the video even if you don’t have a Facebook account. If Facebook asks you to log in, ignore it and click anywhere on the left column (where it lists videos and photos, etc.) and that message will disappear.

For everyone on our email list, we will send a live link that goes directly to the video about 15 minutes before the start of the service. On our Facebook page as of Dec. 17, you can also see the service bulletin and a video of the slide show of Sr. Ruth’s life.

The Canticle

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The Canticle
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Pandemic



Sr. Jean's 50th Anniversary of Profession celebration at San Damiano Friary with the SSF Brothers (August 29). Pizza and salad makings provided by the sisters and golden paper plates (and venue) by the brothers.

The Canticle—digital version
Send us your e-mail address!



Jean's 90th birthday celebration (November 9) at Holy Innocents Church. Masks off for this photo, then back on quickly! 6 guests (3 couples) carefully socially distanced around the room and food prepared by Jean herself.

Contact Information

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