



The Canticle

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

Old and Young Together, Let them praise your Name, O Most High! (Psalm 148)

Pamela Clare, CSF

The subject matter of this issue of *The Canticle* is ministry with the young and the old. Inside you will find several articles telling about our ministry in association with Holy Innocents Church, San Francisco. These works are with children and elders who are being cared for. But there are others....

My work with the Care Through Touch Institute on the skid-row and surrounding poor neighborhoods of San Francisco also brings me in touch with the young and the old. There are homeless young people on the streets—some unaccompanied minors, others with their families. The city's major shelter for homeless families is next door to our CTI office in the Tenderloin.

It is one of the places we work. Most of the teenagers are in the Haight and the Golden Gate Park areas, but from time to time I run into people in their early twenties at the places I work. However, the population I encounter much more frequently is the seniors.

According to a recent national study by the University of Pennsylvania, many of today's street people hit the streets in the 1980s era of recession and slashing of social programs. The median age of single adult homeless is 53, and the average life expectancy on the streets is 64. In San Francisco this year there has been a sharp increase in homeless seniors, especially women. With the decreased life expectancy, some are suggesting that

we will see a big "die-off" of homeless and a significant decrease in the number of people on the streets over the next 10-15 years.

On the other hand, the description of the 1980s situation which saw the birth of the modern homeless crisis sounds a lot like our current socio-economic crisis. So, the oldies may be dying off, but we may well be breeding a new "big bang" of homeless people in our time.

I meet these folks in CTI's massage work at the various social service agencies for the poor. It is very sad to see homeless young people, but it is outrageous to see all the



homeless seniors, especially the women. These are some of the most vulnerable and frail members of our society, and we aren't taking CARE of them. For many the decades of homelessness have left them old before their time—with crippling arthritis from sleeping on the ground in all weather, diabetes and amputations from poor foot care, and addictions and their consequences in mental and physical health.

Jim Wallis of Sojourners says in his most recent book, *On God's Side*, "The prerequisite for solving the deepest problems this country and the world now face is a commitment to a very ancient idea whose time has urgently come: *the common good*...How do we treat each other, especially the poorest and most vulnerable? How do we take care of not just ourselves but also one another? Only by inspiring a spiritual *and* practical commitment to the common good can we help make our personal and public lives better."

**And then "old and young together" may indeed
praise the name of the Most High!**

GODLY PLAY AT HOLY INNOCENTS

Sr. Jean, CSF

For the past 10 years or so I have been privileged to be involved with Godly Play, a method of teaching Bible stories developed by Jerome Berryman based on the Montessori method. Barryman describes it this way: "Godly Play respects the innate spirituality of children and encourages them to use their curiosity and imagination to experience the mystery and joy of God."

Being "ready" is a key word in Godly Play, the story teller has to be ready, the children are asked by the door keeper if they are ready before going into the room. When all are ready and sitting cross-legged on the floor, the story teller begins with a prayer, then a child is asked to move the marker on the Calendar to the appropriate week of the Church's year.

Some stories are told using a desert box (large wooden box filled with sand) and the children can hardly wait to get their hands in the sand! Materials for the Parables are in gold colored boxes because they are very precious, and sometimes it takes a long time to really get into the parables.

After the story the children are asked some "Wondering" questions. I wonder what part of the story you liked best? I wonder what is the most important part of the story? I wonder where you are in the story? Some wonderful things have been said by the children; awe and mystery are very real.

Once I was telling the story of the building of Solomon's Temple, putting the Ark into the Holy of Holies. I came to the place where the animals were sacrificed and with one voice the children cried out: "NO!" My attempt to explain why, in those days, animals were sacrificed as an offering to God, did not go down well with those little animal lovers.

The prayer at the close of the session is very special. Each child in turn is invited to say a prayer out loud or silently in their heart. Out of respect for each child all are quiet. Sometimes the atmosphere is so charged you sense the presence of the Holy.

Sr. Jean has many years of experience in children's ministry, having started with the Church Army in England as a Children's Missioner before she became a Franciscan. She and Steve Walker were the ones to introduce Godly Play to Holy Innocents Church, San Francisco, back in 2001.



Sr. Jean "getting ready" by practicing her story of the Tower of Babel for Pentecost Sunday.



and MUSIC....

Sr. Pamela Clare, CSF

I worked with children and youth for 25 years at El Buen Samaritan/Good Samaritan (the Latino congregation in San Francisco), and since joining Holy Innocents Church in 2004, I have focused mainly on singing. However, beginning a couple of years ago, several times a year, with the assistance of organist/choir director and keyboard artist extraordinaire Bill Keck, I prepare a children's choir to sing in the service. St. Francis Day and Palm Sunday have been favorites, but this year we also sang at a tribute in June to all who have contributed to children's ministry the past year.

Sr. Pamela Clare and Bill Keck teach some of the children of Holy Innocents the "Butterfly Song." We are making butterflies with our hands — although the crocodile with its "great smile" is always the favorite!



VISITING WITH SENIORS

Sr. Jean, CSF

As well as working with the very young, I also am involved in a nursing home ministry. Once a month I join a team of people who lead a Communion Service at a nearby residential home. Like children, Seniors can be restless and disruptive. Some live in their own little world, talking to themselves. Others are just not interested in this church group who have come and carry on as if we were not there. Others enjoy our visit and greet us most warmly, joining in the singing—in and out of tune! One resident always knew the hymns and would sing verses that were not in our books, and argue with whoever was giving the little homily. Once I was given some Bingo winnings “For the children”.

Going round with the Sacrament can be like running an obstacle course: wheelchairs, canes, tables and feet have to be negotiated. A member of staff is there to guide me to those who wish to receive Communion. I am always very touched by the response of the residents. Some make the sign of the cross; often a face lights up with a beautiful smile. However far away they may be mentally, there is recognition of the Holy as I say “The Body and Blood of Christ “ A God moment is experienced.

Young children and Seniors, I believe, are very close to God. The young in their innocence have a sense of awe and mystery and an eagerness to experience life, whereas the Seniors are those who remember and wait—both holy occupations. They are preparing for the last great sacramental experience of moving from this life into the next

I thank God for enabling me to share in both ministries.

GROWING OLD IN COMMUNITY

Sr. Cecilia, CSF

Among our Community Intercessions is one for “the Elderly and infirm.”

Look with mercy, O God our father, on all whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace; give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help; and, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer* p. 830)

This prayer speaks eloquently to one growing old in Community and has regard for the well being of the whole person. Inevitably one’s physical condition is a major concern and limitations caused by failing vision, hearing and mobility are frustrating. It’s difficult to accept that you can’t any more do what you used to do, and pride sometimes blocks a “willingness to accept help.” I am grateful for the way my Sisters so often see my needs and come unasked to my help and always respond willingly when I do ask. The prayer above asks for an “increase of their faith and their assurance of your love.” In times of quiet and meditation, I try to “be still” and trust in the presence and unfailing love and mercy of the Blessed Trinity.

As a Franciscan Sister my vocation remains a calling to live a life of prayer and service after the example of Francis. Old age brings limitations to an active participation in ministry but often presents different ways of serving my Sisters and people beyond the community.

Above all I need to “pray without ceasing” with praise and thanksgiving.



Sr. Cecilia celebrated her 93rd birthday in May! She does have trouble getting out and about, but she is still active in our life at St. Francis House, being the Chapel Sister, helping with office administration, cooking once or twice a week, and helping with laundry!



Sr. Jean and Deacon David Stickley administer communion to Seniors at the Sheffield Nursing Home.

CSF NEWS

- Sr. Pamela Clare was re-elected as Minister Provincial in March.
- Sr. Sue, Minister Provincial of the European Province, spent 2 weeks in June with us in San Francisco.
- Lynne Sharp (Sr. Lynne) has been released from her vows as of Chapter in June. She will be returning to Rochester, NY, in the fall.
- Sr. Jean went to the Third Order Society of St. Francis Provincial Convocation in Minneapolis in June.
- Sr. Pamela Clare helped raise \$950 for the Julian Pantry (a ministry of Holy Innocents Church) with her participation in "A Spring Sing." She performed the Habanera from Bizet's opera "Carmen" and Violeta Parra's "Gracias a la Vida."

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Community of St. Francis, American Province*



*Ministry
With
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And
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Old and Young Together

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