



Our dear Friends,

Most of you are familiar with our dear Mother Mary Francis' words in the last chapter of *A Right to be Merry*: "Doors are things of mystery and magnificence, opening on to new vistas of things which are each day a little less unseen." Throughout this past year, we have rejoiced to discover that this little gem of Poor Clare wisdom also holds true for—*windows!* Allow us to open to you a few windows into our cloistered life, as our ever-widening vistas within the enclosure have revealed both the mystery and magnificence of God's overwhelming goodness to us.

G.K. Chesterton once described the Tabernacle as "the hidden room in man's house where God sits all the year, the secret *window* whence the world looks small and very dear." This, first and foremost, is the window which has commanded our attention throughout this past year, as it opens on to the widest vista of all—the ever-wondrous reality of the sacramental presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every day, our lives center around our hours spent gazing through this window to behold Him, while He in turn watches and waits for our love and adoration. Our Eucharistic Lord looked out his secret window upon twenty-one grateful Poor Clares last **AUGUST** and saw us bidding farewell to our dear chaplain, Father Paul Juniet, O.F.M., who was setting out for his new assignment in Jemez Pueblo, New Mexico. For over five years, he manifested to us his own centeredness on the Eucharist by faithfully celebrating the Sacrifice of the Mass every day, hearing our confessions, and making special trips to the monastery for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, services of love for which we are especially thankful as this Year for Priests draws to a close.

All of our Franciscan friars, in fact, have always made it one of their top priorities to take care of our sacramental needs with the "special solicitude" promised by our Holy Father Francis, and our new chaplains proved to be no exception. In late August, we welcomed Father Joe ("Pepe") Redinbo and Father Joe Nelson to Roswell; and in January, Father Charlie Martinez, O.F.M., who would serve as our new pastor at St. Peter's Parish. On **SEPTEMBER 11**, the visit of Father Gino Correa, O.F.M., the newly-elected provincial of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, conveyed to us the joyful hope always present in a new beginning. During a delightful shared recreation in the parlor, he also enriched us by sharing his own thoughts on the meaning of beauty in our lives. An artist of photography himself, Father Provincial's insights reminded us of the words of Pope Pius XII: "The function of all art lies in breaking through the narrow and tortuous enclosure of the finite, in which man is immersed while living here below, and in providing a *window* on the infinite for his hungry soul."

It was the "finite" type of window, however, which became the material focal point of all the major happenings of the past year, with **OCTOBER** marking the beginning of what we now affectionately (in retrospect!) refer to as "the Windows Saga." After several years of planning, pricing, and measuring, we watched with growing excitement as our devoted workmen began the arduous and time-consuming task of slicing 150 aged and near-decrepit windows (frame and all) out of our shuddering-but-still-sturdy monastic walls, and then painstakingly fitting in each of the 150 shining new (and sorely needed) replacement windows. We had to "move out" of each room as the work progressed, both in order to give the men ample space in which to work, and also to keep our meager Poor Clare furnishings from becoming penetrated through and through by cement dust. After the men finished their work each afternoon, the Poor Clare work force took over, descending *en masse* with brooms, dustpans, mops, and plenty of buckets of water on those areas where that day's windows had been installed. In the meantime, we also had to evacuate our choir, while another crew of workmen labored there to install our new (and also sorely needed) heating/cooling system in the choir and chapel.

Challenging as it was to have to evacuate temporarily both our choir and our cells, when the window work began in the refectory we also had to exercise our ingenuity in finding another place for all our meals. Our Mother St. Clare reminded us in our Holy Rule that we are "pilgrims and strangers in this world", and "camping out" in a community-room-turned-refectory left us delighting in the simplicity and poverty of a true pilgrimage. The refectory windows were completed just in time for us to return to our more spacious cenacle on the eve of our annual Eucharistic procession; and thanks to several intense garden days to prepare the outdoor processional route, the view from our gorgeous new single-paned windows the next morning was definitely spectacular. Nearly twenty friars were able to join us as Father Provincial carried the Blessed Sacrament through our monastic grounds, and the Eucharistic blessing upon all our efforts to beautify and maintain God's house fortified our hearts for all the work that lay ahead.

A week of community retreat in early **NOVEMBER** further strengthened us as we entered our monastic Advent, made unique this year by an unusual backdrop of scaffolding all around the outside of the monastery and the happy "musical" accompaniment provided by saws and hammers within. Yet all these circumstances did serve our interior preparation for the feast of the Nativity, as each new window called to mind not only God's provident care of his little poor ones, but also the mystery of the Incarnation itself. As Monsignor Ronald Knox once wrote, "Through the wall of our human nature, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ has made a great window."

As the final new window was set in place in time for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on **DECEMBER 12**, we breathed a communal sigh of relief and settled down to the more familiar pre-Christmas excitement of decorating every available nook and cranny in the house, to express our joy at the coming of our little Lord and Redeemer. The day before Christmas Eve, just as we were placing the finishing touches on the

interior of the monastery, happy glances out our new windows alerted us to the wondrous fact that our heavenly Father had decorated even our barren, wintry New Mexico landscape with a lovely white blanket of snow.

“Now he is standing on the other side of this very wall; now he is looking through each window in turn, peering through the lattices. I can hear my true love calling to me, ‘Rise up, my beautiful, my beloved one, and come’ ” (Song of Songs 2). On **JANUARY** 16, Postulant Elena responded to our Lord’s call by crossing the threshold of the papal enclosure to begin Poor Clare life inside the walls of our Roswell cloister. Although she had missed the window saga by just a few weeks, she quickly learned that the Franciscan adventure is actually never-ending—and that having 150 new windows installed also means having 150 new windows to wash!

The first week of **FEBRUARY** opened a new window into the art of communication, as our dear friend Dr. William Commins, Psy.D., shared his insights into the importance and challenges of clear communication. An opportunity soon arose to communicate our love of our vocation, when two groups of students from our local Catholic grade school gathered in our parlor to ask questions. “Why are you in there?” asked one kindergartener, to which Mother Abbess responded, “So we can pray for you without other distractions—we like to concentrate on our business!” If eyes are the window of the soul, we can be hopeful that the eager interest shining in the eyes of these inquisitive and lively youngsters may indicate that the seeds planted during this enjoyable visit will one day come to fruition in vocations to the consecrated life.

Our new interest in windows did not obscure the fact that there were still other maintenance needs pressing for attention; and in **MARCH**, our devoted workmen once again set up their scaffolding, this time in the nave of our choir, to begin some much-needed renovation work on the ceiling. Again we found ourselves in temporarily exile; but as we held lighted candles and renewed our vows before our tiny chapter room altar after Matins on March 18, our Mother St. Clare’s profession anniversary, we found it highly satisfactory to have our own little “Portiuncula” for that special day. Our Portiuncula pilgrimage was extended when Mother Abbess’ visit to choir towards the end of March to inspect the work’s progress prompted our contractor to inquire, “Since we are painting the ceiling, wouldn’t you like us to go ahead and paint the walls, too?”

The additional work meant that our return to choir would be delayed until Holy Week; and after a major housecleaning session on the very eve of Holy Thursday, we were at last able to reenter our now-glowing choir on the morning of **APRIL** 1, just in time for the Sacred Triduum. Mother had chosen a warm off-white color called “Summer Peach” for the choir walls, and we gazed in awe at the transformation wrought by a simple coat of paint, which fulfilled Mother’s desire to bring a little of that unique Assisi radiance into our own house of prayer.

Our hearts, too, were made radiant when we received the news that our beloved Augustine Cardinal Mayer, O.S.B., had gone to his eternal reward on April 30. Tears of gratitude flowed freely when Mother Abbess gathered us together to tell us of the earthly parting of him who had been such a father to our community. Cardinal Mayer was a loyal and strengthening support for our dear Mother Francis and our entire community for the past thirty-four years, and touched each of our lives in a very personal way through his own luminous holiness. Though our hearts grieved the loss of our loved “Cardinal Protector,” the thought of the heavenly welcome which awaited this faithful and devoted son of Holy Church filled us with inexpressible joy and gratitude; and his passing was a stirring reminder that we are all journeying toward those “things which are each day a little less unseen.”

More details of our beloved Cardinal’s final days and funeral Mass were shared by another dear *paterfamilias*, our much-missed Archbishop Raymond L. Burke, who visited us **MAY** 12-14. Since His Grace’s apartment in Vatican City is in the same building as Cardinal Mayer’s residence, he was able to share precious details that allowed us a glimpse into the Cardinal’s final days. We also learned more about Archbishop Burke’s own daily life in Rome, where he serves as Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura with profound love for and loyalty to our Holy Father. Our loved Archbishop graciously blessed our beautiful new chapel doors on the feast of the Ascension, and after an unforgettable rosary procession through our grounds that same morning, he crowned the outdoor statue of Our Lady as we together sang her praises. The memory of his heartfelt piety, steadfastness in the truth, and fatherly benevolence leaves us already looking forward to his next visit.

With all the large undertakings which came to a blessed completion during the course of this past year, one might be tempted to think that surely by **JUNE** or **JULY**, all the extra activity would be drawing to a close. However, our adventure with windows promises to have yet another chapter, as we now anticipate the replacement of our large choir and chapel windows sometime this summer—and then, hopefully next year, the construction of a small infirmary addition.

On **AUGUST** 11, as we celebrate the feast of our Mother St. Clare, whose “unswerving gaze is shuttered at last on earth and turned on Godhead”, we shall be asking her to bless and reward each of you, our dear friends, whose goodness has made possible this past year’s work of maintaining our cherished monastic home. Your kindness provides us with a beautiful window into the workings of God’s grace, who inspires every act of generosity in the hearts of our benefactors. May our Holy Mother Clare un-shutter our own eyes to the mystery and magnificence of God’s ways, and allow us to throw open our hearts to the full sunlight of His love, which we pray will be your reward for all eternity.

Gratefully and devotedly, in our Mother St. Clare,

Your Poor Clare Nuns