

AUG
2019

FRANCISCAN SISTERS, T.O.R.

of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother



Perpetual Profession LOVE IS THE FOUNDATION

BY SR. MARY GEMMA HARRIS, T.O.R.

In July, Sr. Mary Gemma, Sr. Anna Rose, and Sr. Teresa professed their perpetual vows. Pictured above are Sr. Mary Gemma and her parents.

I know my vocation is needed in the Church. There is no doubt about that. *“The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few”* (Matthew 9:37). At a time when others are being shaken in their vocations, the Church needs men and women faithful to the Lord’s call. Souls are crying out to be saved through prayer and sacrifice.

This is all very convincing to me and has helped solidify my vocation as I made final vows. But it is not the heart of the matter: the foundation of my choice is that I am not merely needed, but that I am wanted by the Lord, even desired. How do I know this? I know because he meets my own desire for him and answers it with infinite love.

Recently, I prayed with Genesis 29:15-30, the story of Jacob and Rachel. I was praying for the grace of perseverance, that, just as Jacob worked and waited two sets of seven years to wed Rachel, I would also persevere to the end to be with my Beloved. As I prayed, I imagined Jesus asking me the same question that Laban (Rachel’s father) asked Jacob: *“Tell me, what shall your wages be?”* In my mind’s eye, I saw a table sitting between us covered in treasures and bags of gold coins. My heart cried out to him, *“You are all that I desire!”* and I overturned the table and threw its treasures aside.

As I prayed with other Scriptures related to perseverance and waiting for the Lord, I experienced a growing longing for union with him. This is the story of my life. Ever since I was a little girl, I have yearned for this infinite love and it has driven me far seeking approval, pleasure and all I thought love looked like. I re-lived this emptiness and desire to be filled. As this prayer time drew to a close, my heart welled up with a longing that had to be expressed. I opened my hands and spoke out loud, *“Come, Lord Jesus.”* Immediately he answered. I felt overtaken by a wave of what I can only describe as love. I knew he wanted to be with me; I knew he wanted me.

The only true reason for my commitment is love—not necessity, not urgency, not productivity, not even evangelization. Love is the only thing that remains when the dust settles.

Aslan, a Jesus-figure in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, says at the close of *The Last Battle*: *“Unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.”* I cling to the hope of seeing him face to face in heaven, but the joy that hope brings assures me that, already, *“I found him whom my soul loves”* (Song of Songs 3:4).

To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love



Perpetual Profession

CHOOSING AND RECEIVING ALL

BY SR. ANNA ROSE CIARRONE, T.O.R.

Sr. Anna Rose receiving her ring from Mother Mary Ann as Sr. Mary Gemma and Sr. Teresa (front) look on.

Traditionally, the sisters who are preparing for perpetual vows have a dinner with all the sisters who are already perpetually professed. During the meal, I enjoyed listening to my sisters share various bits of memories from the day of their final vows as well as wisdom (from the practical to the sublime) about what to do or expect on the day of vows.

Many sisters asked me if I was going to carry on my person a list of requests or intentions, or perhaps a letter written to the Lord. The idea was very attractive, and I also knew many of the sisters and the saints had done it. So, not wanting to be outdone by the likes of St. Therese, I thought and prayed for the rest of the week about what kind of list to compose and what I could possibly say to the Lord on the biggest day of my life. However, the more I tried, the more I came up empty. I felt that no list of intentions I could make would be big enough: in the spirit of St. Therese, my heart cried, "*I choose all!*" I wanted especially for each soul who has been and will be connected to my "yes" and my vocation to be brought to salvation, even those

I don't know. And as far as a letter to the Lord, everything felt flat and inadequate.

When the day of final vows arrived, I realized I was to be, myself, the offering. During the liturgy, those professing prostrate themselves on the ground before the altar, giving physical witness of what is occurring: all is being given and offered to the Lord. The litany of the saints is sung and all those present invoke the names of men and women who have gone before us and done the same. As I lay prostrate, I begged the intercession of each saint invoked and God's mercy on each person part of the torrent flooding my heart. After a while, though, I couldn't even call to mind individual people - there were just too many! The litany continued, and I felt each person that I desired so dearly to be saved by the Lord's mercy was truly within my own heart, and was safe in the Blood and Water flowing from Our Lord's Heart in which I was immersed. What a gift to share in the Christian life, to give our own lives so that others might live!



Sr. Teresa prostrate (left) and radiantly smiling (right) during her perpetual profession of vows.



IT'S WORTH IT

BY SR. MONICA SPATES, T.O.R.

Sr. Monica (pictured above with her family) and Sr. Faustina celebrated their 25th anniversary of vows earlier this summer.

To those who live the vocation of marriage and the single state, our life may seem like one in which we barely touch the ground: all is peaceful, perfectly ordered and love alone rules. Let me assure you that we do touch the ground and at times our feet get pretty muddy, and we can become so lost in the mire that it becomes hard to make sense of things or see God's plan. But God in his goodness, amidst the crosses of life, reminds us that we do have a destiny. He does have a plan and in his mercy he gives us "Tabor moments" which allow us to go on as we fix our eyes on Christ. My Jubilee celebration was one such moment: in the midst of so much pain and confusion, as I will explain below, the heavens opened, the clouds parted, the storm was hushed and God was present assuring me that it was all worth it.

The six months leading up to my Jubilee celebration were perhaps the most demanding, terrifying, costly, painful and difficult that I've experienced in religious life. The only thing holding me together was the certainty that what I was asked to do was from God. There were moments when I was encouraged to go in a direction other than I felt led. I questioned my ability to go on, and my very vocation was at stake. But He spoke to me through others, gave me courage in the face of tremendous fear, and invited me to live by faith alone, following his will despite how I felt. I hardly had time to anticipate or prepare for the renewal of my commitment (we renew our vows at the Jubilee Mass) that would hopefully hold me until death... or perhaps the way I was asked to live in faith amid great difficulty was the preparation for this recommitment... His preparation.

Amidst the trials, I questioned if I could recommit my life to the Lord. I once again saw that following the will of God is the foretaste of heaven. As I knelt before our wood relief, joining Mary at the foot of the Cross, knowing that those I love were behind me and He whom I adore was before me (in the Blessed Sacrament), what I experienced was a foretaste of heaven, because this was God's will for me. It was one of the happiest days of my life.



A QUESTION OF COMMITMENT

BY SR. AGNES THÉRÈSE DAVIS, T.O.R.

Sr. Anna Rose (left) and Sr. Agnes Thérèse (right) with their medals after finishing the Cleveland Marathon in May.

I am just a little bit attached to my watch. I hate being late and hate wasting time, which means I pretty much need to know what time it is at all times. There have only been a few occasions in my life when I have willingly foregone my watch. One of them was on the day of my final vows; another came more recently, when I ran in the Cleveland Marathon in May with Sr. Anna Rose. (We ran on behalf of our community as part of a fundraiser and effort at evangelization.) This prophetic act signified my total commitment to the thing at hand.

Ultimately, the time didn't actually matter. No matter how fast or how slow I ran, I was committed to running the distance. Knowing the time would, likely, only distract me from that fundamental task and perhaps even make the commitment more difficult to keep.

Commitment has been a theme in our community in the past months: we celebrated Sr. Faustina and Sr. Monica's 25th anniversary of vows, then were blessed to rejoice in Sr. Teresa's, Sr. Anna Rose's, and Sr. Mary Gemma's final vows. These celebrations of commitment came in the context of a year with more departures than usual from community (given the nature of discernment, there is always some flux in numbers through the year). All these events have worked in my heart as an encouragement to stay the course, alongside Paul's words in Acts 20:24: "Yet I consider life of no importance to me, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to bear witness to the gospel of God's grace." May each of us, by God's gracious gift, testify through the fidelity of our lives to the good news of God's grace, his life in us which is bearing fruit for eternity.

RESULTS

- 16 teammates on Team Sole Sisters (in the 5k, 10k, half and full marathon)
- \$5,095 raised
- Total running time for Sr. Anna Rose and Sr. Agnes Thérèse: 9 hr 28 min



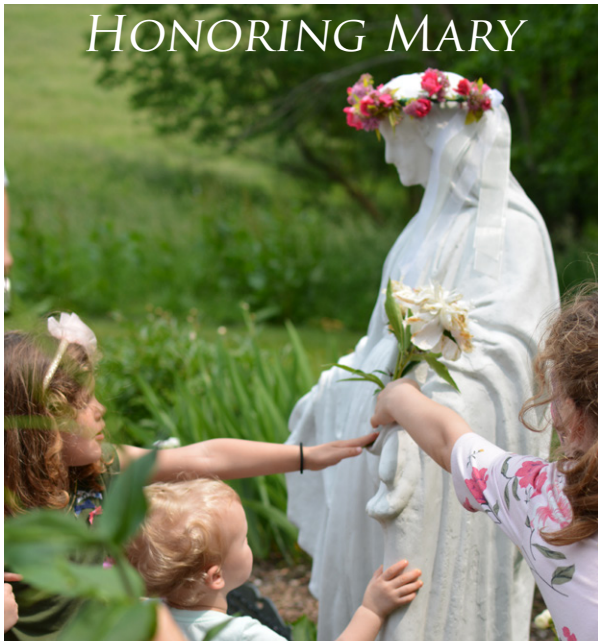
Thank you to all our supporters, especially the Ciarrone family!

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We so enjoyed the chance to welcome you to our home to pray, play, and honor our Mother Mary with a procession and crowning.

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*"To Glorify God and Make
Known His Merciful Love"*

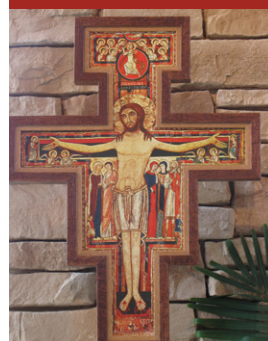


Jubilee



Sr. Monica in prayer (top left), Sr. Faustina renewing her vows (top right) and Sr. Faustina's family (bottom) for Sr. Monica's and Sr. Faustina's 25th anniversary of vows.

Joy at the Cross



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ST. FLORIAN HALL,
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MASS- 4:00 PM
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