

Reflection

*Offered by Sr. Melanie Paradis
October 5, 2015*

Feast of M. Clara Pfaender

Happy Feast Day!

Yesterday we celebrated the feast of St. Francis as part of large global Franciscan family.

Today we celebrate the feast of M. Clara Pfaender, the foundress of our congregation, Franciscan Sisters, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, or as we're known around here: the Wheaton Franciscans. This is our particular family time to celebrate.

Yesterday S. Glenna shared with us the importance of stories, of passing them on and living out our own.

Today we remember the story of M. Clara Pfaender. As part of Mission and Heritage Week you may have seen displays giving information about M. Clara. On Friday when I went to visit S. Catherine Anne at Franciscan Woods, there was a display by the elevator where I picked up this sheet about us. And then on Saturday when I went to Elmbrook for my flu shot, there was a beautiful display in the lobby sharing our story. She, we, are present in many places.

We are here because of Clara Pfaender.

In M. Clara's time, the mid 1800's, she experienced war, poverty and persecution. Sound familiar even today? She saw the need for education of orphans and healthcare for the poor. She met the needs of **her** times. One of those needs was a request for Sisters of German heritage to come to the United States and begin a hospital that would meet the needs of German speaking immigrants. She sent her best and brightest who built hospitals, taught in schools and cared for orphans, and begged for the poor. That became who we are today.

And here we are, continuing that ministry and meeting the needs of **our** times of 2015 through healthcare in our hospitals and clinics, and housing for families, elders and those in need, and opening our doors to those who are on the spiritual journey.

The Gospel tells us that ***unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only that; but if it dies it bears much fruit.*** This is what Clara Pfaender and all those who have gone before us have done: given of themselves for others.

Pause: let us take a moment to remember those sisters and covenant companions and associates who have given of themselves and gone before us.

This is our legacy as Clara Pfaender tells us in her own words that ***Love accomplishes great things.***

We are here because of Clara Pfaender.

As I was preparing for this reflection I prayed to M. Clara and asked her what needed to be said.

What would she say to us here today if she were sitting among us? I can imagine her saying:

- Thank you for greeting me so warmly at the door as I entered the building Thank you for whistling while you push your cleaning cart down the hallways Thank you for waving to me from the tractor as you mow the lawn
- Thank you for taking my tray to the kitchen at the end of a meal Thank you for keeping excellent and accurate financial records
- Thank you for showing me where to find documents in the shared files Thank you for recording, preserving, displaying our history
- Thank you for being a part of FMI, WFSI, Canticle Place, Tau Center, for all the places where you are and minister each day.
- Thank you for who you are and what you do. Thank you for being my sisters and my brothers.

She would say:

It matters **what** you do. And, it matters **how** you do it. You make a difference

Person to person Each day

As part of our Wheaton Franciscan family

M. Clara would say:

You are carrying on my work. I could never have imagined it like this, but you live out my legacy. You live the spirit of the Wheaton Franciscans. As the Wheaton Franciscan family you embody the charism of this congregation, and that will endure.

As a whole Wheaton Franciscan family, we together continue in M. Clara's words: ***to let love shine forth from our faces, from our eyes, from our lips, in our speech, in our manner, in all places and in all things.*** (and we know how to do this because of the example of all our sisters)

And I believe, as a final prayer, M. Clara would say to us the words we heard in the first reading from the letter to the Philippians:

***Do not worry about anything,
but in everything let your requests be made known to God by prayer
and supplication and thanksgiving.
And the peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

We are here because of Clara Pfaender.

Let's say thank you to someone today in Clara Pfaender's name.

Happy Feast Day!