

INFLUENCED BY CHARISM

Eight years ago the Wheaton Franciscans hired the first lay person to be their archivist, Jeanne Guilfoyle. Jeanne had been an associate of the Wheaton Franciscans for nine years and was familiar with the general history of the Wheaton Franciscans and their special charism of love through her experience with the sisters. She shares, "It didn't take long for me to love this community of women after I was introduced to them. I have been spiritually infused by their manifestation of God's extravagant love."

As a new archivist, Jeanne remembers the first time she read about a person deeply affected by one of the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters. Dr. Raymond Ritter, a physician from one of the Wheaton Franciscan hospitals had written an article for the newsletter of the hospital about his work with Sr. Monica Brune in the 1940's and 1950's. Dr. Ritter recalled Sr. Monica as "teaching and giving her staff direction chiefly by example rather than much talk," much like St. Francis.

He reminisced that Sr. Monica would often stay with a critically ill patient during the night and be with the patient "almost continuously" until they stabilized. When Sr. Monica retired, Dr. Ritter noted she "spent most of her time caring for the roses along the fence. These flowers did well because of her gentle care, just as her patients did." Jeanne says that the Sisters' way of life and charism of love have changed people's lives. The Archives hold the stories of these events of love and service.

Sr. Alana Gorski, a member of the leadership team, works closely with Jeanne. "Jeanne is a unique person. She is a natural historian and a person who savors memoirs. She carries our charism in her heart and her bones. Jeanne reflects the essence and values of an archivist in our times. She sees value in and reverences the most mundane, ordinary items that the sisters have. She saves and honors every scrap that holds meaning of a Province Chapter. At an event or community gathering, she always holds the historian's perspective."

When Jeanne was in Rome on a pilgrimage to the places of our foundress, Mother M. Clara Pfaender, Jeanne had the privilege to hold in her hands a special artifact, a cross dated from the 1860's, which was Mother Clara's during the time of the founding of our community. Jeanne's face was all aglow as she told this story to Sr. Alana. Jeanne remembers, "I was invited into the office of the General Directress of our international community.

There sitting on her desk was 'the cross!' (as Jeanne's voice grew louder and her hands raised to her heart).

"I believe in that symbolic gesture, Jeanne sensed the faithfulness of Mother Clara Pfaender and the love of Christ that propelled her to begin our community. Everything came together for Jeanne in that moment – her love of history, her love of story and her love of our charism. We are truly blessed to have Jeanne Guilfoyle among us," says Sr. Alana.



Mother Clara's Cross

Jeanne adds, "The dual roles (archivist / associate) complement each other because they both focus on the charism of love that is the hallmark of the Wheaton Franciscans." As Mother Clara says in the Founding Constitution, "Let love be the Queen, the Rule, the spirit, and the life of the Congregation."

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