

160th Anniversary of the Founding of our Congregation
by S. Melanie Paradis
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We received a wonderful letter from the General Council which in part reads:

On October 30, 1860, Bishop Konrad Martin approved the Constitutions written by Mother M. Clara Pfänder, thus confirming the foundation of our Congregation. For the young women who had gathered around Mother M. Clara, it was a day of exuberant joy, deep gratitude to God and courageous readiness to give their lives.

Following the example of M. Clara, our Sisters and companions have been giving face, heart, and hand to our charism for 160 years. We all experience that our faith shows itself concretely in the Franciscan Incarnation, through which we birth God into the world.

Thus, unity with God and nature, the joy of togetherness and of spontaneous, competent assistance belong to our life.

A careful attention to the needs of the time with a view to concrete people is close to our hearts. Empathetically we try to engage and turn to all.

As Franciscan women and men, we feel deeply called to recognize the dignity of each person and of all creation. We receive joyfully and give willingly.

We seek closeness to the weak and stand up for them in a spirit of justice and peace. Simplicity and appreciation for all that we received characterizes our lifestyle. We are gentle in our accompaniment and take care to always leave each person free.

Those are the words of inspiration in the letter from our General Council.

Last year on this day at the end of my reflection I asked:

What is ours to do, for the time being?

Next year will be the 160 year anniversary of our founding.

When we look back at this year, what do we want to see?

Oh my goodness. How much we have to look back upon.

As the new St. Clare Regional Community we have refounded ourselves. We have followed in the footsteps of Mother Clara and all the sisters who have gone before us. We have embodied anew what it means to be Franciscan Sisters, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

We have reflected, examined, discerned, created, reviewed, written, discussed, re-written, prayed, affirmed

Agreements
Bylaws
Statutes and a
Vision Prayer

All during the time of COVID and mostly via Zoom!

What grace filled accomplishments for us as we re-envision our lives together for the sake of God's people and all of creation!

But more so, we said a collective "yes" as a community committed to a future of love.

Let us continue to follow in faithfulness the foundation our foundress laid out for us, living our charism of love.

Let us live into the life God offers us, now, knowing that those sisters who came before us did the same in their times.

Let us remember our ability to meet the needs of our times in new ways.

Let us be courageous and hopeful to live into the next steps together.

Anchored in our spiritual heritage and grateful for the blessings of love in the past 160 years, we accept God's renewed call with confidence.

In 2022 we will celebrate 150 years of presence in the United States and 75 years of presence in Wheaton. What will we be able to say about ourselves then?

We have our new Vision Prayer to guide us.

With Brother Francis, Sister Clare, and Mother Clara,
we humbly pray
to be a blessing in the heart of the world.

O Holy Mystery,
Open our eyes to recognize that All are One.
Open our ears to hear the cry of Earth,
our common home.
Open our minds to learn from Creation's diversity.
Open our hearts to be a Presence
of peace and reconciliation.
Open our hands to serve in Love,
meeting the needs of our time.
Open our lives to engage contemplatively
the emerging Future.

In the Spirit of St. Clare:

*What we hold, may we always hold,
What we do, may we always do
and never abandon.*

Amen.