

Entrance on February 2, 1996



It is with great joy that Mr. & Mrs. Jerry L. Johnson
announce that their daughter

Alicia Maxine Therese Johnson

has entered the Monastery of
Poor Clare Nuns in Los Altos Hills, California

February 2, 1996

The Feast of the Presentation
of Our Lord in the Temple

*“...Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor,
and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” (Luke 18:22)*

*I will scatter my youth
like petals before Your face...*



Poor Clares begin on earth the occupation of the blessed in Heaven. It was for the contemplation of God that we were created. And when all activities have ceased, when earth no longer turns on its orbit, and the sun has vanished in smoke, the work of contemplation will go on for all eternity. If there were not a single child to teach, no infidel to convert, no sick to nurse, the vocation of the Poor Clare would still endure. She is called by God not so much to do anything as to be something. Her life prefigures eternity.

Poor Clare “Nova”
February 2nd — March 18th, 1996



When a young woman first enters the cloister, everything about her new life is just that — new! For this reason, the youngest member of the community is called a **nova**, a “new one.” She is the object of the community’s most tender love and compassion as she begins a totally novel way of life. The nova is dressed in the brown jumper and white blouse of one who aspires to wear the holy habit one day. She wears a short white veil, almost transparent, which is placed on her head by Mother Abbess the day she arrives. This veil is worn in our monastic choir and in the refectory, showing forth the sacredness of these places. As her footsteps become more sure and her mind more at home with the newness of her surroundings, the day approaches when she will exchange her nova veil for the veil of the full fledged **postulant**.

Poor Clare Postulant

March 18, 1996 - February 11, 1997



“Postulant” also has a special meaning; she is the “one who asks.” The asking here is referring to the formal request to be admitted into the novitiate, the joyful ranks of the novices. Besides the privilege of asking to receive the holy habit, the new postulant is given other responsibilities. These are called “charges” and they are given solemnly by Mother Abbess in the presence of the entire community. Now she is in charge of certain areas to clean, gardens to weed and care for, sewing to do for her sisters. She will have her turn at reading in the refectory during meals and announcing to the world that her sisters are at prayer as she rings the tower bell

before the beginning of the Divine Office. The postulant soon learns to make all of her life a prayer as she takes these commands of God and makes them her song of love. Her joyous footsteps are turned toward the wondrous day when she will receive the holy habit and her new name.

Q. Why do you speak through a screen in the parlor?

A. Because of our vow of enclosure, which of its nature seeks to express its reality in signs. And this also explains the low brick walls and ivy covered fencing which surrounds our property. That is, we are perfectly content to remain on our monastery grounds for the love of God because, as our loved Mother Mary Francis has written, “God is enough, and everything else is not enough.”

(A Penny Catechism of our Poor Clare Life)



Investiture in the Poor Clare Habit

February 11, 1997

When the solemn announcement of the date of her investiture is made by Mother Abbess, her joy is complete for now she prepares to become the fiancée of Our Lord and King. The fire is stoked and her heart is inflamed with the burning desire to give up everything for the One Whom she loves. On the day of her investiture, she takes off the snow-white festive gown she has worn to greet her King and is clothed by Mother Abbess with the rough-brown garments of the lowly. With joy she lets her long silky hair be cut and the novice-white veil be placed upon her head. She kicks off her white satin shoes to walk barefoot in the way of the Lord. Embracing the crucifix which is handed to her, she is now a Poor Clare and is given a new name signifying her new life.



She is ready to walk with light step and unstumbling bare feet with her crucified Jesus singing, "Amen, Amen! Without ever turning back!"



Clothed in the holy habit, Alicia receives a new name...

Sister Mary Bernadette of the Good Shepherd

Q. Why do you dress alike?

A. Mostly, we suppose, because we think alike, at least on all vital and crucial matters such as the wearing of a distinctive religious garb. In other matters not of principle, the nuns show forth the widest possible diversity of opinion, as is frequently revealed at recreation. This essential unity of thought and purpose must be part of the Clare-charism, for our religious habit has changed very little since our Mother Saint Clare first received it back in the year 1212. (Penny Catechism of our Poor Clare Life)



Poor Clare Novice

February 11, 1997—September 13, 1998



Another exterior sign that marks a novice is her smile. Jesus has called her to be His own. Her one desire is to respond with all her heart.

A novice is one who has already officially begun religious life but who is still learning and preparing herself for complete consecration to God in vows. She is the fiancée of Jesus. She cannot as yet don the black veil of a professed sister since this is the sign of complete bridal consecration. Instead, the white engagement veil covers her head. The cord she wears around her waist is without the four knots which symbolize the four vows she is preparing to make but it is a constant reminder to her of already being bound to Jesus in love.



Q. Why are you so happy?

A. “Because Our Lady of Guadalupe is your Mother,” Father Thai Trinh, O.F.M., would answer, and we would agree. And besides, is not happiness the reward promised to the little poor ones of the Gospel? “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” The truth of the matter is, that we have indeed found happiness in the cloister, and this truth keeps drawing vibrant young women to enter. Why is that? Well, we suppose it has everything to do with Who made us, and why; and that takes us back to the beginning. Yes — God made us, and for Himself; and we can imagine no greater happiness and fulfillment on earth than to be living in ever-growing union with Him. Perhaps these words of Pope Paul VI can best answer this question:

“God is everything for us. God is life. God is power. God is truth. God is goodness. God is beauty. And, in the end, God is our happiness.”

(A Penny Catechism of our Poor Clare Life)

First Profession of Vows

September 13, 1998



"My dear daughter, what do you ask of God and of His Church?"

"I ask for God's love and a share in the life of this religious community of Poor Clares."

"Receive this veil by which you are to show that you are totally given to Christ the Lord, and dedicated in your cloister to the service of the Church."



"We give you this Rule to observe and to cherish. If you keep it, it will keep you and bring you to Christ our Lord."



"Receive this cord, knotted with the symbols of your vows. May it be a sign of your blessed binding to Christ our Lord."

On the great day that a novice exchanges her white veil for the black veil of the **junior professed**, she is truly now a Bride of Christ. When a sister makes her first holy profession, she makes it before the witness of Heaven and earth, vowing to live the life of obedience in the footsteps of her Spouse. In poverty, she will follow her Mother Saint Clare in depending completely upon Divine Providence as revealed through her superiors and sisters. In her vow of chastity, by God's grace, she strives to be worthy of a marriage with her Spouse. Her heart will always be totally surrendered to Christ. Her whole life is a gazing upon Him. In her vow of enclosure, she is totally submissive in His arms. The enclosure seems to be a little space, but these blessed arms of Christ embrace the whole world. She promises to keep these vows, ever confident as she leans upon God's loving arm. Her eyes are turned down the last stretch of her novitiate journey, and her classes center on preparation for solemn profession.

“I have sought Him Whom I love with all my heart.”



Sr. Bernadette receives long-awaited hugs from her family members.



Solemn Profession of Vows... Forever!

February 2, 2002

*Now, Consecrated Spouse
of Christ,
The world can part you
never,
For you are His, as He is
yours
Forever and forever.*



*Not like an earthly bride
who vows
Her love til death may
sever,
Death only brings you
face to face
Forever and forever.*

As the day approaches for her total consecration to Jesus in solemn vows, the Bride of Christ realizes more and more the magnanimous, gratuitous gift of God's unconditional love that is her vocation.



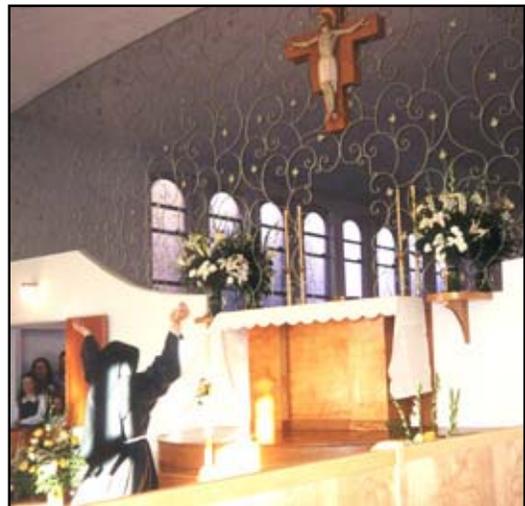
From the Rite of Solemn Profession . . .

Prostrate in the center of choir during the ceremony of solemn vows, she offers her life to God forever in an act of total oblation.



Singing a song of total surrender, she approaches the altar:

*"Receive me, O Lord,
according to your word
and I shall live, and let
me not be confounded in
my expectation."*



Bishop: "Receive this ring, Sister Mary Bernadette, that marks your sacred marriage with Christ. Keep unbroken faith with your Bridegroom, and so be able to enter into the wedding feast of everlasting joy."

Bishop: "Receive this crown, Sister Mary Bernadette, which your Spouse, the Son of God, offers you. May you deserve to be made a partaker of his Passion on earth and of his glory in heaven."



Sr. Bernadette: "Amen."

"Behold, what I have desired, I now see; what I have hoped for, I now possess; I am joined to him in heaven, whom I have loved on earth with my whole heart. I am espoused to him whom the angels serve, whose beauty the sun and moon admire."

Receiving greetings and prayer requests after the Profession

Hers is the call to be the spiritual mother of all God's children. She does this by a life of prayer, penance and sacrifice and discovers a joy she could never have imagined.



You are in my prayers; please keep me in yours!