

A Healing Presence

There is a little ash tree growing on the site for the Monastery of St. Clare in Great Falls. It looks lonely amidst the tall grass, braving the wind and sun, but for the Poor Clares it symbolizes the future, not only of the building, which is rising behind it, but also of a Poor Clare community rooted permanently on that land. With the help of the contractor, the tree, a gift of our sponsoring monastery in Greenville, South Carolina on the occasion of our ceremonial groundbreaking in April, 2003, was planted in the area that will be behind our chapel.

St. Clare, in her Rule and her Testament, calls herself “a little plant of St. Francis”. How appropriate, then, is the symbol of the tree growing behind our chapel. The little ash tree reminds us of both our origin and our mission to glorify God throughout the Church. Today, with over 1,000 Poor Clare monasteries all over the world, some forty-six in North America alone, the people of Montana are witnessing yet another “plant of St. Francis” rooted permanently in their soil.

What does this mean to the people of Montana? It means that prayer will be rising for them continually in this place. The Poor Clares will be here for them, to receive their petitions and their needs, to offer hospitality and healing, and a place to come and pray.

Next to Mount Olivet Cemetery, the monastery will be in view of Benefis Hospital and the other medical buildings near it. This will be a constant reminder that we, daughters of St. Clare, are there to be a praying presence to support the medical community in their ministry of healing. Several scientific studies in recent years, one at Duke University Medical Center in North Carolina, indicate the positive effect of prayer on those undergoing medical treatments.

During St. Clare’s lifetime in the thirteenth century, many people came to ask her to pray over them. In a number of instances, people were healed instantly. Here are just a few examples: A Friar, sent by Francis, who suffered from mental illness was healed after falling asleep in Clare’s place in chapel; Sister Cristiana was healed of deafness when Clare made the sign of the cross on her head; Clare made the sign of the cross over a small boy who had a pebble in his nose and it was expelled immediately.

Many people call, write, and e-mail asking us for prayer. We take these requests seriously because we know that God wants us to be whole and holy. Sometimes, of course, the healing is of a spiritual nature, like the healing of an attitude or an addiction. Only God knows what we need most. The Monastery, like the little ash tree, will continue to grow, becoming a permanent place where today’s Clares will carry on their ministry of prayer for the people of Montana and beyond. We pray daily for the building of “a place where the people of Montana may come with their petitions and needs.”

Sister Maryalice