

# Out Dorothy's Window

By: Associate Lynette Shea



My relationship with Sr. Dorothy Clare began, I think, in the fall of 2010. She started out as my spiritual director, a relationship we still treasure today. As she and I became closer friends and I learned more about what it was the Franciscan Sisters believed in and the areas of life they dedicated themselves to, I knew I wanted something more from our relationship; it was something I saw in her that I wanted to be a part of. I knew I wanted to become an Associate.

She invited me to my first Associate Weekend in 2012. There are no words to explain exactly how I felt. I do remember writing to her and asking her: “What is happening to me?” I felt so much love and absolute joyfulness, I thought my heart would burst! I knew I was being called to be an Associate and into a relationship with these amazing women. So in April 2013, I promised these Sisters and Associates to “share their Franciscan charism, the heritage of their past, their Franciscan vision, their call to holiness through baptism and their concerns for one another, our world and our church.”

After my ceremony, it took me eleven days to reflect on my journey and to put into words what I was feeling to share with Sr. Dorothy. I told her then, and it builds on itself every year, “Standing at the altar on Sunday was almost overwhelming. Reading my commitment, and feeling so much love and inclusion, were palpable.” I cried with pure elation as the Sisters and Associates sang the blessing of St. Francis to its newest members. I told her I felt like a door had been flung open wide and I got to walk through to follow a new path of Franciscan spirituality. I felt differently, I felt I was seeing things with new eyes, feeling things with a new perspective, loving things with a new heart! Every April I am blessed to continue and to affirm those feelings all over again.

This year was my eighth year attending, and each time I am filled with anticipation and happiness. This weekend is not just a time to reconnect with friends; it’s a spiritual recharging. Each year as I stand and renew my commitment, those feelings are strengthened and renewed. Each year I feel drawn a little closer to and a part of this wonderful community of women (and men), their love of God, Francis, Clare and Mother Moes and their call to service.

I am guided to think with an open heart of all God’s creations, keeping my heart open to what He calls me to be! It is a light that burns bright within me, one that grows bigger and brighter every year, graced by the Sisters of Saint Francis and strengthened by a call to share this joy with everyone!

So...I reflect on that little song, *This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine* – Put it under a bushel ...NO, I’m gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!