

Heartbeats

**Servants of the
Holy Heart of Mary**

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Sixty Years of Religious Life

Sr. Charlene Cesario, sscm

"It is absolutely remarkable to me that I am celebrating 60 years of religious life. And I want all to know, accept and celebrate the unconditional love of God," softly states Sr. Charlene Cesario, her brown eyes expressing both presence and remembrance.

The image of the loving Father-God was placed in Charlene's heart by her own father. "He planted seeds of unconditional love. He was a simple man, a loving man, a tender and truthful man. This is what I wish to pass on. When I think of myself as a child, tears of joy come to my eyes. I wish to pass on to others what I learned about God through my father."

Born in Chicago, Sr. Charlene is the second of five children of Pasquale "Charlie" and Mamie "Mae" (Fabbrizzio) Cesario. Her sister Rose, with whom so much of her life was

shared, and brother, Johnny, are deceased. Brothers Charles and Tony and all her nieces and nephews compose Char's big, loving and passionate Italian family.

Char received the call to follow Jesus in 5th grade when she received her first Holy Communion. "I was so excited to receive the Body of Christ, I wanted to instantly run out and offer it to everyone." Later, the usual adolescent crushes occurred but led her, in the end, to realize that she wished to be a "Bride of Christ".

One day when she was a sophomore in high school, Char visited a relative who was a woman religious. It was entrance day and the Superior General asked her if she would like to enter the convent. Charlene answered "yes" and stayed that very day. Although her parents acquiesced to her request, they quickly realized that a mistake had been made. Char's sister intervened via a hand-delivered letter and Charlene



Sr. Charlene Cesario, sscm

came home in 24 hours. Before she left, Char was told, "you have a vocation, but you need to go home."

At that time, her family moved to 56th and Whipple in Chicago, St. Gall parish, where the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary served as teachers. Younger brother Johnny, "very conveniently" told Sr. Magdalene di Pazzi Charlene's story. Charlene was invited to see the boarding school in Beaverville on ceremony day. Sr. Mary of the Precious Blood asked if she would like to stay on as a boarder. This time, her parents agreed to her request. Char's father would come to see her "every single weekend."

At the end of her junior year, Mr. Cesario suddenly died.

A brief story illustrates the charity of the man. After his death, a ledger of sorts, listing charity given to the needy of the neighborhood, was found on a calendar in his butcher shop. The listing showed that with every charitable gift given to the poor, Mr. Cesario would deduct the equivalent amount from his income.

After her graduation, Charlene was ready to fulfill her desire to enter religious life. She chose the S.S.C.M.'s because three classmates were entering the novitiate. Char's deep love for the Blessed Mother was the primary cause of her choosing a Marian congregation. Her favorite S.S.C.M. during high school was Sister Joseph Marie (Sr. Myra Dionne), who pinned on Char's veil- a tradition that honored Sister-Mentors of new members. Char reflects that Sr. Myra was "very dear and still teaches by her life how to love God and the Blessed Virgin Mary."

After profession, Sr. Charles Marie, (Char's name in religion) spent a number of years as a primary grade teacher, a Director of Religious Education, and a pastoral

associate. After her retirement from full-time ministry, and following a natural outgrowth of her entire life of service, Charlene took on the call of becoming a spiritual director. Many men and women have spiritually profited by her listening ear and understanding heart.

Looking on her 60 years of religious life, Sr. Charlene reflects that "different individuals give different insights and gifts. I love women religious, and admire them because they learned how to live, celebrate, honor and serve their congregations. At the same time, they remain free and faithful to who God calls them to be in all areas of life. My dream and my hope is that we understand that the most important thing in life is that we will love one another." May that dream continue to be fulfilled in and through your marvelous life, Sister Charlene.

Italy Part II

Sr. Carol Karnitsky

Siena

Mid-pilgrimage found our group in Siena. St. Catherine was our focus here. The local guide was very attached to this 14th century third order Dominican, and had a very intimate and folksy take on their relationship. "I will break a you teeth if you do not do this for me, Catherine!"

The basilica of St. Domenico houses a unique relic: the entire head of the saint. (Her body is buried in Rome). Our guide, Donatilla, once leapt into the cordoned off area where the mummified head of Catherine is kept and found out only later that it was protected by laser alarms. "It was a miracle I did not get caught!" she proclaimed.



Relic of St. Catherine

Catherine came from a prosperous family and was 24th of 25 children. She was a visionary, mystic, philosopher and theologian. As a third-order member, she was not confined to a cloister. In fact she traveled from town to town exhorting the populace to greater lives of faith. She was politically astute, and persuaded a Pope in exile to return to Rome from France. She wrote extensively. Scores, if not hundreds, of letters of hers have remained. Five hundred years after her death at age 33, Catherine was named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Paul VI. What a powerful woman, completely dedicated to God and involved in justice issues of her time. At this site I remembered the Catherine's in my life: my mother, my cousin Kay, and Sr. Catherine Bartlett. I believe that each in her own way was well-named.

Siena has another interesting occurrence. Twice each year, on July 2 and August 16, a free-wheeling horse race is held in the city center.

A dirt track is created. Lotteries are held to match the horses with their jockeys who ride bareback. Ten of the seventeen sections of the city

are represented. These races are centuries old. What time do they start? "When the riders get there," our guide tells us. I'm looking forward to catching these races via YouTube.



Siena City Center

Florence

I kept seeing signs for Firenze and wondering why I hadn't heard about that city before. It dawned on me once we entered the metropolis that Firenze is FLORENCE. Lesson learned. I had been looking forward to seeing things in Florence for years. This amazing city is considered the birthplace of the Renaissance.

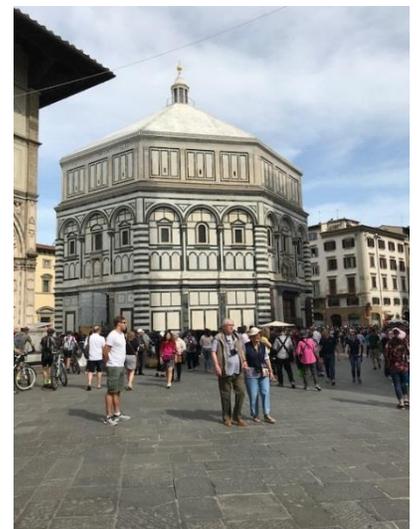
Art and culture ooze from Florence's pores. The iconic statue of David, carved by Michelangelo, was a high point, of course. We viewed the statue from various angles, taking in the magnificent achievement with a sense of wonder.

Other statuary was intriguing – point in question, another Pieta that seemed to be emerging from the huge block of marble as if it were an embryo awaiting full definition.



The Emerging Pieta

The main basilica is Our Lady of the Flowers. ('Firenza' means flowers). Both the basilica and its detached baptistery are created with multi-colored layered marble.



Florence-Baptistery

I found these edifices the most beautiful buildings that I viewed on pilgrimage.



Florence
Our Lady of the Flowers

Other highlights were seeing Dante's home. (It's been too long since I traversed the world of the Divine Comedy). I learned that Dante was the first to write in the idiomatic language of the people. That fact, and the reality that he was an accomplished poet who could tell a good story, allowed for his popularity.

Florence is considered one of the fashion capitals of the world. I was entranced by the shops that displayed gold and leather goods. Scores of delicate gold jewelry bedecked shelves. The hand crafted purses in one shop must have numbered close to a thousand. One could smell the new-leather aroma immediately upon entering the store.

Padua

I was drawn to the atmosphere of Padua, in great part because of the Basilica of St. Anthony. One of the most popular of all the saints, Anthony was born in Portugal, accepted into the Augustinians but left the order for the Franciscans because of his intense desire to be a missionary. Anthony never went to an exotic land, but his amazing capacity for preaching was recognized and his words converted thousands to the love of God. He is also known for being a bit absent-minded. One story declares that he lost his Office Book often and would have to look for it. Many people ask him to find lost things:

Tony, Tony, turn around...something's lost that must be found.

Photo taking isn't allowed in the Basilica of St. Anthony. Too many people had disrespected the shrine by taking selfies in front of the altar of sacred relics that includes St. Anthony's "incorrupt tongue, jawbone, vocal apparatus, and skin from his head." Also found are, "Anthony's pillow stone, hair-shirt and a piece of his cassock."

Besides these there are many other relics in each of the three niches of the chapel. The heritage of my Polish ancestors drew me to a Turkish Navy club, a gift of King Sobieski, and the reliquaries of John Paul II, Faustina Kowalska, Maximilian Kolbe, and two Polish Conventual Franciscans martyred in Paricoto, Peru in 1991.

At the place of St. Anthony's burial, pilgrims - I among them - placed hands in silent prayer on the cool, green stone of the crypt. There I remembered family members who bore the name of Anthony, a popular name in my mother's family: two uncles, and two second cousins, one of whom is my godson. I also prayed for a young man who has devotion to Anthony and who is discerning a call to priesthood. I thanked St. Anthony for his help over the years.

Padua is a university town and the love for learning is obvious. In the cloisters surrounding the basilica, one found artistic displays meant to edify and educate.

One display consisted of 1200 pairs of shoes dyed green that represented, according to the

artist, “the green path that humanity is called to follow”. Another display had a number of shoes with the stories of adventure and courage attached to each display.



Other artistic endeavors, carvings and statues, filled the courtyards and their cloister walks.

I particularly loved the statue of St. Anthony and the Child Jesus. This work shows the iconic relationship of Anthony and the Child Jesus in a fresh, bold way. The statue, named *St. Anthony, Intercessor between Heaven and Earth*, has the Child Jesus flying in the air, barely touching the hand of the saint.



Padua-Intercessor Between Child Jesus and Earth
Venice

Venice was hot, crowded, and not much to my liking. There were thousands of people moving across a wide expanse of open city square (the largest in Europe) and countless bridges. We were warned to “watch for ‘pregnant’ women” who would “crowd in to relieve us of excess money or jewelry.” The Basilica of St. Mark was very dark and musty. One could see little inside. I concentrated on the intricate tiles that decorated the floors. At least I could see them.

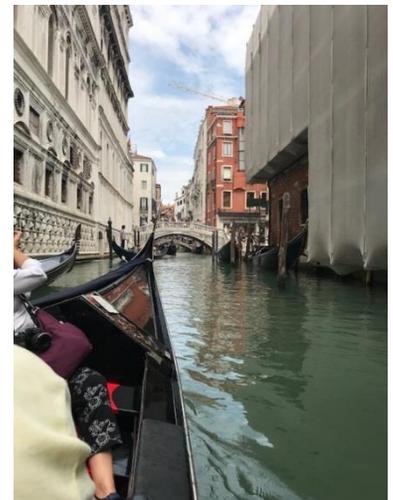
I sighed at the Bridge of Sighs. Where was the Venice of Claude Monet’s paintings, the home of the Donna Leon mysteries? How did Angelo Roncoli, John XXIII, fare during his years there? But the gondola ride is not to be missed...that experience was

nearly worth the disappointment.



Venice Gondola Ride

How could people live there? Beats me. Yet, there was one benefit of Venice—the outer island experience.



Venice

Island Trip to Burano

Venice Lagoon is home to many small islands. Our side-trip to the island of Burano was delightfully refreshing. Burano is a fishing village. Because it is shrouded by fog very often, inhabitants began painting their simple homes bright colors so fishermen

would be able return more easily. We were told that the colors are registered and home owners have to contact a special office to get permission to use a color.



Burano

Colorful Painted Dwellings



Burano

The island is also noted for the art of lace-making. Burano was one of our favorite places for its beauty, uniqueness and simplicity. Nothing touristy was sold at its shops. The meal we enjoyed there was all sea-food - five courses of various offerings from the Adriatic Sea.

All too soon, our pilgrimage to Italy was over and our flight

back to Chicago brought us home. I am still processing the impression that this time has made on my heart. I will ever remember the gracious generosity of the people of Church of the Holy Spirit, who gave me this gift. My dream ministry led to a dream experience.

The phrase *love the unlovable* came to me often. The Mass at the crypt chapel at Assisi was a beautiful example of the forming of a group of travelers into a Eucharistic community. We were much closer with each other after that Mass.

What could seem a throw-away comment from our guide, Giuseppe, made an impression on me. I had worn a cap decorated with a queen-like symbol. He said, "Don't forget that you are a queen, you are a leader."

Italy is a unique and fascinating place. Because I have visited there, I have been nourished by great art, intelligent guides, friendly restaurateurs, hearty travel companions, and a blessed sense of the mystical. I will ever remain grateful for this experience that added so much to my knowledge and spirit.

Province Days Agenda

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Thursday, August 2nd :

White Sox Afternoon Game (Cub fans are invited!) All Weather permitting

Friday, August 3rd :

- 3:30 pm:
Beaverville Cemetery; a Time of Remembrance
- 6:00 pm:
Pizza; St. Mary's Community

Saturday, August 4th :

- Photos
- Continental Breakfast
- Meetings?
- Mass
- Lunch
- Afternoon Presentations
- Acceptance of Bernadette Pabon into Novitiate during
- Missioning Service

Sunday, August 5th :

- Brunch
- Jubilee Mass
- Reception

A more detailed agenda will be sent out soon.