

Christian love breaks down every barrier, brings close those who were distant, unites strangers, and reconciles enemies. It spans chasms that are humanly impossible to bridge, and it penetrates to the most hidden crevices of society.

By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it.

*Pope Leo, Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te, 120*



May this love Pope Leo speaks of soften our gaze and strengthen our commitment to goodness. Let us then look back on the past year with this gentle, warm gaze...

This year, we were able to welcome many people. Our mayor visited us to celebrate Sr. Francine's 60th jubilee anniversary, the altar servers came to visit our host bakery, the Carnival participants visited us, as is their annual tradition, to ask for good weather for the procession and for no accidents, catechumens dropped in for a conversation and vespers - a formula many groups accepted this year.

Many came to offer us spiritual nourishment: Fr. Hans Tercic regularly gave us conferences, Fr. André Jansen guided us through several days of Franciscan reflection, and Fr. Martin Moors preached our retreat. Thank you for this enrichment!

In June, the superiors of the contemplative communities met with our bishop. Fr. Bart Coenegrachts gave a passionate presentation about the synodal process.

Our foundress, Saint Clare, was honoured by all our friends and acquaintances. We celebrated the Eucharist in the St. Gangulphus Church and held the reception in our garden. The evening before, we celebrated festively with our confraters from Leuven and Hasselt and with Sr. Hannah. We started with the 'Transitus-vespers' and then we had a lovely dinner together. Thank you for your friendship!

The 'Reading Day' took place at our monastery again this year. Barbara Mertens took us on an inward journey with "Poverty as our Compass" – we thoroughly enjoyed this day of reflection.

We receive much friendship from many people; thank you to all who think of us, are concerned about us, and sometimes even pamper us.

We feel united in prayer with all these people, and we bring them before the face of God...

Over the past year, we have not only been able to meet people, but we have also had to give them up into the loving hands of the Father. Sadly, Els Poukens, the sister of our Sr. Karien, has passed away. And the entire world has said goodbye to Pope Francis, only a year after we welcomed him here in Belgium. We wish and pray for his successor, Pope Leo, to have God's wisdom and love to fulfill his difficult task.

A tense moment in our community: Sr. Karien had two stents placed. It went well, and now her heart beats again for the Lord and all humanity.

Our garden has transformed: grass has been sown, and a garden shed and carport have been installed. We planted several grapevines with the help of Marc Henderix (the nephew of the late Sr. Emmanuel), who taught us all about grape-growing and maintenance.

Our annual Poor Clare Day took place in Ostend, gathering all the sisters for a wonderfully convivial, delicious, and cultural day. Thank you, dear sisters, for this pleasant gathering!

Also in Ostend, abbesses and delegates gathered for the general council meeting and the election of a new federal council. Our Sr. Elisabeth was elected president of the Flemish Poor Clare Federation; Srs. Martine van Oostende and Greet van Stabroek are council sisters, and Sr. Sabine van Stabroek remains our secretary. May it be a successful collaboration! In our community, too, it was time for a new board. Sr. Mariette has been reappointed as abbess, and Sr. Elisabeth is vicar.

We are grateful for the excellent cooperation and support we receive from the Diocese of Hasselt regarding all kinds of practical matters.

Our parish federation is alive and well! Even though we are cloistered sisters, we participated in several activities due to a lack of pastors.

With the Christian community of Sint-Truiden, we were able to celebrate the Easter Triduum intensely in the Church of Our Lady. The "Evening of Churches" at Pentecost brought atmosphere and inspiration.

But the opening of the seven-yearly Trudo celebrations was especially magnificent! We were invited to the medieval Lauds, and that evening we participated in a light procession with more than 100 homemade banners from groups and associations in Sint-Truiden. Our bishop also participated. We marched through the city of Saint Trudo, ending in the Church of Our Lady for the Vespers. Truly impressive! The following day, Christ King, there was only one Eucharistic celebration in the entire parish federation (in the Church of Our Lady), where we, together with all the people of Sint-Truiden, celebrated the founder of our city, Saint Trudo. It was a wonderful surprise when, at the end of the celebration, Polly Vanmarsenille received the honorary decoration *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* in recognition of his 40 years of service to the Church.

We would like to conclude with a quote from Pope Leo: "Charity has the power to change reality; it is a genuine force for change in history. It is the source that must inspire every effort..." (Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexisti Me*, 91).

May we all be powered in 2026 by the force, joy, and inspiration of the deep love that comes from God. Thus, the Christ Child is truly born!

***Merry Christmas and a Blessed 2026!!  
Your Poor Clare Sisters of Sint-Truiden***

We cordially invite you to join us in prayer and celebration:

Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24th at 8:00 PM:

Christmas Vigil with Eucharist in our chapel.

Christmas Day, Thursday, December 25th at 9:00 AM:

Eucharistic celebration in the St. Gangulfus Church, accompanied by the Gregorius Choir.

Evening Prayer (Vespers) will be held in our chapel at 4:30 PM.

Boxing Day, Friday, December 26th at 9:00 AM: Eucharistic celebration in our chapel.

Evening Prayer (Vespers) will be held in our chapel at 5:00 PM.

Welcome!