

# Classic Franciscan

## In Stitch and Song

By Julia Pearson, SFO



*Cindy and Jim Wesley, SFO  
on their 25<sup>th</sup> Profession Anniversary  
May 1, 2008*

Like a favorite Franciscan saint, Anthony of Padua, Cindy Wesley is a teacher. She recounts the story of Francis replying to Anthony's request to teach. Francis said yes, as long as it doesn't take away from prayer. Cindy teaches fourth and fifth grades - just 14 students - at the Manchester Elementary School. It is a small, rural school with four classrooms to serve grades K- 8, located three hours north of San Francisco, in redwood country. Living on Highway 1, Cindy drives by the ocean every day on her way to work. It was in her car on such a trip that Cindy had been pondering/praying about the time required for the position of Regional Minister of the Blessed Junipero Serra Region, which serves Northern California and Northern Nevada. The "still, small voice" of God answered her with a simple, practical question, "Why don't you consider job-share?" A special education teacher now takes Cindy's class on Mondays; and since the end of February a year ago, she has been the Regional Minister and her husband, Jim, has been the Regional Formation Director of Blessed Junipero Serra Region.

The voice spoke, and her heart listened, when as a 17-year-old, Cindy converted to Catholicism, while being raised in a Protestant family. She and Jim met later through church activities and have been married for 37 years. Jim retired after teaching science for thirty years to middle school students. Their daughters April, Sarah,

and Mary, have given them two grandsons and three granddaughters.

Singer John Michael Talbot said, "...one of the most Franciscan things you can do is apply your creative gifts to the way God is worshiped" (John Michael Talbot, The Lessons of St. Francis, Plume, 1998:105). With guitars and voices, Cindy and Jim have been local parish musicians for over 30 years. The haunting "Amazing Grace;" "This Alone," based on Psalm 27; and both versions of "Servant Song" are always fresh and new to them.

An accomplished quilter, Cindy uses fabric and needle to create religious art wall hangings reminiscent of the beautiful iconic and tapestry traditions. Eight panels make up her "Canticle." "The Rule" is a quilt measuring 5'x6'. Both pieces are hanging at the San Damiano Retreat in Danville, California. Cindy stitched, by hand, the quilt displayed at the Quinquennial in 2007, in Pittsburgh. A current precious piece in progress, requested by friars is called "Bonaventure." It will be hung in the St. Bonaventure Room of the main building of the St. Francis Retreat in San Juan Bautista, California, which replaces the building burned in a 2006 fire. Six of her quilts were lost in the flames.

Jim and Cindy joined the Secular Franciscan Order over 25 years ago. Continually inspired by St. Anthony's "love of God, his faithfulness of God," Cindy, like Anthony, also loves books. She happily recommends The Shack, by William P. Young; St. Anthony: Words of Fire, Life of Light, by Madeline Pecora Nugent; as well as authors Henri Nouwen and Thomas Merton. She cites St. Francis' "The Prayer Before the Crucifix" as her comforting prayer. Her "lifeline," when Jim had a heart attack at the age of 52 years, and when her oldest daughter had thyroid cancer, comes from the Gospel verse of Luke 8:50. Jesus assures the father of the young girl who has died to not fear, but believe. In her own words, Cindy says that "*Fear is useless. What is needed is trust!*"

*Quilts hanging in St. Boniface Friary in San Francisco:*



*St. Clare*



*Wolf of Gubbio*