



NEWSLETTER
OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2015

From the Minister

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

God bless you in this eager and hopeful season of Advent! May the Feast of the Nativity and the newborn Jesus bring you joy and peace! And may you be always ready for His coming again, in glory and power, and work diligently to prepare the world for the Kingdom of God!

On top of the wonder and the beauty of the Season, Pope Francis gives us such a wonderful, exciting and profound blessing – December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, began the Jubilee Year of Mercy! The Jubilee emphasizes “mercy before judgment, and in every case God’s judgment will always be in the light of His mercy.” We must respond by putting mercy in the forefront of our own lives; as we ask God to “forgive us our trespasses,” we cannot forget to “forgive those who trespass against us.”

And mercy means more than forgiveness. It means assistance to the poor, food to the hungry, and companionship to the sick, homebound and imprisoned. It means comforting the suffering, teaching the catechism, standing up for the faith and praying for the dead. It means doing, LIVING the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, as our father Francis demonstrated so clearly in his life.

An indulgence, or remission of the punishment for sin, is offered to anyone who passes through the “Doors of Mercy” identified by the Pope and local Bishops. There are “Doors” at the Cathedral of St. Jude in St Petersburg, the Epiphany Cathedral in Venice, the Basilica of Mary Queen of the Universe in Orlando, and Our Lady of Mercy Church in Boca Grande. All are within a two hour drive from St. Pats. As usual, anyone making such a pilgrimage must also go to confession, go to Mass, and pray for the Pope's intentions to receive the indulgence, within 20 days of going through the door.

I hope all of us take advantage of this remarkable opportunity! And I wish you all the Merriest Christmas and a happy, joyful and mercy-filled New Year!

Love always,

Theresa

Celebrations

Anniversaries

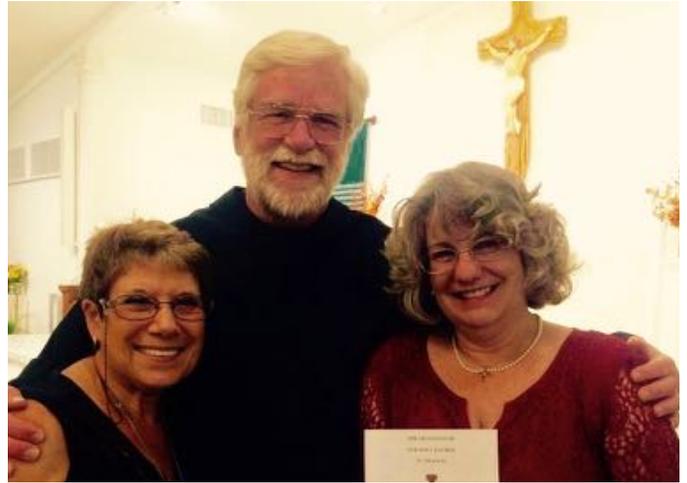
Irene Garcia (November 13, 2010)
Diana McKinney (December 1, 2012)
Marie–Therese Waddell (October 28, 1982)

Bill Morgan (December 1, 2012)
Theresa Zesiewicz (December 1, 2012)

Transitus

“St. Francis spent the last few days before his death in praising the Lord and teaching his companions whom he loved so much to praise Christ with him. He likewise invited all creatures to praise God and, with the words he had composed earlier, he exhorted them to love God.

“Even death itself, considered by all to be so terrible and hateful, was exhorted to give praise, while he himself, going joyfully to meet it, invited it to make its abode with him. ‘Welcome,’ he said, ‘my sister death!’” (Celano, Second Life.)



“The idea of death in the Latin *transitus* (transition, passing over) represents a unique Christian terminology linked to the paschal mystery. It consecrates the passage of the dying to eternal life. Offering the sacrifice of his or her personal life, the believer shares in the paschal transitus of Christ himself.”



On October 3, 2015, members of the St. Michael Fraternity participated in the rite of the Transitus at St. Patrick Church. Fr. Stan Holland, TOR, presided.

The Transitus is an annual celebration on the vigil of the feastday of St. Francis for Franciscans all over the world to remember the passing of Their founder and spiritual guide from earthly life to eternal life with God.



Discipleship

Chaplet of St Michael the Archangel

The Chaplet resulted from a revelation by Portuguese Carmelite sister Antonia d'Astonaco and was approved by Pope Pius IX in 1851. St. Michael told her he wanted to be honored, and God glorified, by the praying of nine special invocations, corresponding to the nine choirs of angels. Praying the Chaplet brings help from St. Michael and the choirs, deters demons and fosters a Pure Heart. The blessings also extend to the families of those reciting the prayer.



“O God, come to my assistance! O God, make haste to help me! Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and shall be forever. Amen.

Then nine Salutations are prayed, each followed by an Our Father and three Hail Marys:

#1: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Seraphim may the Lord make us worthy to burn with the fire of perfect charity. Amen.

#2: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Cherubim may the Lord grant us the grace to leave the ways of sin and run in the paths of Christian perfection. Amen.

#3: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Thrones may the Lord infuse into our hearts a true and sincere spirit of humility. Amen.

#4: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Dominations may the Lord give us grace to govern our senses and overcome any unruly passions. Amen.

#5: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Virtues may the Lord preserve us from evil and falling into temptation. Amen.

#6: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Powers may the Lord protect our souls against the snares and temptations of the devil. Amen.

#7: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Principalities may God fill our souls with a true spirit of obedience. Amen.

#8: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Archangels may the Lord give us perseverance in faith and in all good works that we may gain the glory of Heaven. Amen.

#9: By the intercession of St. Michael and the celestial Choir of Angels may the Lord grant us to be protected by them in this mortal life and conducted in the life to come to Heaven. Amen.

Then say four Our Fathers for St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael and your Guardian Angel.

“O glorious prince St. Michael, chief and commander of the heavenly hosts, guardian of souls, vanquisher of rebel spirits, servant in the house of the Divine King and our admirable conductor, you who shine with excellence and superhuman virtue deliver us from all evil, who turn to you with confidence and enable us by your gracious protection to serve God more and more faithfully every day. Pray for us, O glorious St. Michael, Prince of the Church of Jesus Christ, that we may be made worthy of His promises!

“Almighty and Everlasting God, Who, by a prodigy of goodness and a merciful desire for the salvation of all men, has appointed the most glorious Archangel St. Michael Prince of Your Church, make us worthy, we ask You, to be delivered from all our enemies, that none of them may harass us at the hour of death, but that we may be conducted by him into Your Presence. This we ask through the merits of Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Five Franciscan Martyrs Region

Secular Franciscans and the Church

by Marie Thomas, OFS, Regional Minister
(condensed from the Fall 2015 Newsletter)



As Christians, Christ told us to “love one another.” In fact, this is how others will know we are Christian.

If this is true of all Christians, how much more does it apply to Secular Franciscans? Our Rule and General Constitutions, Article 30, emphasize this fact: “The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity (members) to which they belong ...” Nowhere does it single out the Spiritual Assistant or the Minister or the Regional Council or the Formation Director as the sole persons who are responsible in bringing all the fraternity members to a deeper relationship with God. This is everyone’s responsibility.

If Francis were alive and in our midst today, I believe, he would weep with grief over these developments. What have we done to his order? How far have we strayed? We all promised to be attentive to the Holy Spirit and do God’s will.

Let us remember our final destination is to be united with God. Let us be God’s smile to one another and share God love as we resolve to follow the admonition of Pope Francis, who wrote in his book, *The Joy of the Gospel*:

“Everyone needs to be touched by the comfort and attraction of God’s saving love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings.”

Family Focus on Ralph



Ralph Castellano was born in Ybor City on March 29, 1963. As a young man he was on the wrong side of the law. Through it all, however, he felt the pull of Our Lord, and at 25 he was baptized at St Paul’s.

But he continued his harmful lifestyle, which led to his incarceration. In prison, the Spirit continued to draw him. At the same time, his dad, aunt, and sister died of cancer. He currently takes care of his mother.

Ralph felt a call toward St. Francis, but for a while was unsure of the path he was to take. After a mis-start he talked with his confessor, who suggested he contact Buzz about the Secular Franciscans.

Ralph is a member of the St. Lawrence parish and serves them as a Eucharistic Minister and Sacristan. He’s also involved in a Gospel Study Group and is studying with the Lay Pastoral Ministry Institute.



Jubilee of Mercy!

(Condensed from a September 1, 2015 letter from the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization)

“My thought first of all goes to all the faithful who, whether in individual Dioceses or as pilgrims to Rome, will experience the grace of the Jubilee. I wish that the Jubilee Indulgence may reach each one as a genuine experience of God’s mercy, which comes to meet each person in the Face of the Father who welcomes and forgives, forgetting completely the sin committed.

“To experience and obtain the Indulgence, the faithful are called to make a brief pilgrimage to the Holy Door, open in every Cathedral or in the churches designated by the Diocesan Bishop, and in the four Papal Basilicas in Rome, as a sign of the deep desire for true conversion.

“Likewise, I dispose that the Indulgence may be obtained in the Shrines in which the Door of Mercy is open and in the churches which traditionally are identified as Jubilee Churches.

“It is important that this moment be linked, first and foremost, to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It will be necessary to accompany these celebrations with the profession of faith and with prayer for me and for the intentions that I bear in my heart for the good of the Church and of the entire world.

“I have asked the Church in this Jubilee Year to rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The experience of mercy, indeed, becomes visible in the witness of concrete signs as Jesus himself taught us. Each time that one of the faithful personally performs one or more of these actions, he or she shall surely obtain the Jubilee Indulgence.

Jubilee Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money, the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things, made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error. Let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God! Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord.

-- Pope Francis

Seasonal: Christmas!

The Sources of Franciscan Joy

Dear brothers and sisters, as we remember the intense joy that St. Francis felt in the special celebration of Christmas, it seems appropriate for us to share some reflections on the sources of Franciscan joy with you.

We would like to start off by affirming something that on first reading may seem a bit strange: joy is a very serious matter. By this we mean that real joy, the kind that comes only from the Spirit of God, forms and shapes the human heart and colors every aspect of our human existence. It is much different than a fleeting sense of contentment or happiness and, in a real sense, can be understood to be the same as true love and freedom. It requires us to be constantly open to the guiding presence of God in our lives and a willingness to always live in and cooperate with the Divine Will.

Thus we can say that being joyful is not an easy task and that at times it seems that it is easier to be driven by sorrow and pessimism. For this reason the Sacred Scriptures frequently exhorts us to be joyful. As St. Paul encourages: *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!”* (Ph. 4:4).

Today the world needs the witness of a Franciscan life that is a true reflection of Christ and one that is carried out as a total and joyful donation of the self. The only way that we can do this is if we are “joy filled people” – people who recognize who we truly are before the Lord of All and who can honestly and joyfully call all to praise God in and through creation as St. Francis did so well before us.

Let us not forget that a sad saint is an insignificant saint. As one of our brothers here in Rome reminds us: *“We are not to blame for the face we have received but we are responsible for the faces we make.”*

For this reason our *Rule* gives us this challenge: *“... it should be obvious that (the sisters and brothers) are joyful, good humored, and happy in the Lord as they ought to be”* (Art. 20).

Let us embrace the heritage and example that we have received from St. Francis and be joy-filled instruments of true joy!

Condensed from the Letter of the Minister General and General Council to all the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular on the occasion of the Solemnity of Nativity, 2009





Mary Our Mother

Immaculate Conception

December 8

“The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin,” Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854.

A common misunderstanding is that Mary did not need a savior. In *Ineffabilis Deus*, Pope Pius IX explicitly affirmed that Mary was redeemed by the foreseen merits of Jesus. In Luke 1:47, she proclaims: “My spirit

has rejoiced in God my Savior!” This refers to Mary’s pre-redemption by Christ.

Our Lady of Guadalupe

December 12

On the morning of December 9, 1531, a native American peasant Juan Diego saw a vision of a maiden at the Hill of Tepeyac, part of the village of Villa de Guadalupe. Speaking to him in the Aztec language, she said she was the Virgin Mary, “mother of the very true deity.” She asked him to build a church there in her honor.

He then sought out the archbishop of Mexico City, who told him to ask the lady for a miraculous sign. First, she healed Juan’s uncle. Then she told him to gather flowers from the barren top of the hill, which was full of Castilian roses. He carried them to the Archbishop in his tilma. or cloak. When he presented them, they discovered the miraculous image of the Virgin that is enshrined in the Basilica today.

In 1754, Pope Benedict XIV declared Our Lady of Guadalupe patron of New Spain and approved liturgical texts for the Mass and breviary in her honor. And Pope St. John Paul the Great canonized Juan Diego before a crowd of 12 million at the basilica on July 31, 2002.



Reflection



On October 3, 2015, Marie Rose Coady and David Alan Koehler wed at St. Patrick Church! Fr. Jim Angert, TOR, presided, with concelebrants Fr. Robert Schnieder, pastor of St. Stephen Church in Valrico, Fr. Lynn Plazewski, pastor of Christ the King Church in Tampa, and Deacon Ben Hooks of St. Patrick Church. Michelle Taylor delivered the Responsorial Psalm, and Maria Victor and Ralph Castellano presented the gifts.

Lord, Grant that I might not so much seek to be loved as to love!

