



# The Franciscan Times

Winter 1999

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER HELPING MEMBERS OF  
THE THIRD ORDER OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. FRANCIS SHARE  
THEIR COMMON JOURNEY THROUGH NEWS FROM  
FELLOWSHIPS AND INDIVIDUALS, REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND  
TAPES, POETRY, STORIES, ESSAYS, REFLECTIONS,  
MEDITATIONS, GRAPHICS, AND WHATEVER THE HOLY SPIRIT  
MIGHT BLOW OUR WAY.

## *Intercessory Prayer: An Online Discussion*

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

Sometimes I have a problem with Intercessory Prayer. Sometimes I just feel that I am rattling off a list of names. Also I find it hard to keep track of people to pray for. I guess everyone needs prayer. Since God knows what we need before we ask him, do we have to specify our needs and those of others? I would rather just be present in faith and trust HIM. I hope that I am not shocking anyone. I would rather pray for people who have no one to pray for them than to be praying for people who are already being prayed for and who have large numbers of people praying for them such as various church leaders, both ordained and lay. It seems that they have the market cornered on receiving Intercessory Prayer.

Please give me your knowledge and insight about this. Help me get on the right path with this.  
John Calabrese

**Dear John,**

I think most of us have problems with intercessory prayer. It can be very repetitive and list-y at times, not to mention boring. Something that helped me was reading that when St. Teresa of Avila (I think it was her!) would pray for others, she felt it was most effective to simply speak the person's name and basically visualize that she was giving and lifting them into the very presence of God (who ultimately knew what they most needed.) She felt that since we don't "always" know what people need, it is often best to simply pray for them in this way, knowing that God would answer

### **Day Sixteen of the Community Rule**

*Tertiaries recognize the power of intercessory prayer for furthering the purposes of God's kingdom, and therefore seek a deepening communion with God in personal devotion, and constantly intercede for the needs of His Church and His world. Those who have much time at their disposal give prayer a large part in their daily lives. Those with less time must not fail to see the importance of prayer and to guard the time they have allotted to it from interruption...*

the prayer according to what the person needed most. It is more a prayer of the heart and soul than a prayer of the mind. I think your desire to simply be present and trust God is right on track! Prayer should not be a drag or a burden, and it is okay to do what works for you. God desires our presence more than a particular form or method of prayer.

I do believe that God puts certain people on our hearts to pray for. If there are some people who you feel led to pray for, pray for them. The reason we often pray for our church leaders is because it is felt that some of the heaviest responsibilities of the church are put on them, and their decisions and actions, etc. affect the church as a whole. By praying for them you are, in a sense, praying for the wider church body. Yet those who don't have others to pray for them need your prayers very much!!

Something else that has been helpful to me is, before I pray, to really prepare myself for what I am about to do, that is, prepare to come into the very presence of the Holy Creator. What would you say, what would you do, what would your prayers for others be like if you were right there, standing before the throne of glorious light, in God's presence? Pray accordingly, and, I can assure you, you will not be off track! Prayer is edifying to the one who prays, regardless of its content. I hope this helps.

Darlyn

*(continued on page 2)*

**Intercessory Prayer (cont.)****Dear John,**

Thanks for bringing up the subject of intercessory prayer. One way that I like to pray for others is to chant a simple phrase, "I pray for \_\_\_\_\_, God's beloved." I hold my palms up and imagine lifting them to God. If I am praying for a family, I start with the person I know the best, "I pray for \_\_\_\_\_, God's beloved, and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, God's beloved." The chant I use is very simple and I repeat it with each person. I'm not a good singer but that doesn't matter. It has changed intercessory prayer for me. I hope that others will continue to share about this important spiritual practice. We can learn so much from one another.

Pax, Francesca

**Dear John,**

The thing that has helped me most in intercession is from Michael Ramsey. I haven't got the exact quote with me, but he spoke of the word "intercession" in Hebrew as meaning standing before someone on someone else's behalf. So our intercessory prayer is standing before God with the other on our heart.

A while back, Judy Gillette brought up the point that part of our vocation as Franciscans is praying for those who have no one else to pray for them. She had a good point, and I think you're right on. It's so much easier to pray for those we know or have been asked to pray for, but those who have no one else need us more. We probably get lots less out of it, which means we're in it for God, and not for ourselves.

Peace, JaneEllen

**Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

Thank you very much for your responses re my questions about Intercessory Prayer. They have yielded much fruit in my prayer life. I still have a problem with it though. Could it be that Intercessory prayer aids us in our transformation into compassionate people?

When I hold up people to the Lord for Intercession it seems that after a while everything and everyone I know seems to be crowded in on me because they all need prayer; and when I stop praying I feel like a failure especially for those I have left out. Sometimes I feel more comfortable just in asking the Lord to apply my prayer to whomever he sees fit and to those who have no one to pray for them rather than for specific individuals because then, I think, what about these others.

Many people do not feel worthy or feel that they have the right to ask for prayer. In this case the squeaky wheel gets the grease, but what of those who are in need and are either not part or disenfranchised by the larger Church community and organized religion in

general? I feel disturbed very often during Intercessory prayer. Any help that you can give me regarding this will be greatly appreciated.

Peace and All Good, John Calabrese

**Dear John,**

I do not rule out the possibility that intercessory prayer generates or transforms some kind of physical energy. For example, when I feel heavily inclined to pray for someone, there is sometimes a release of sorts when I'm "through." And sometimes when one is on the receiving end of intercessory prayer, there is a palpable sense of being surrounded by prayer; a recent example would be Charlie's and my situation in the courtroom on Monday. The prayer of our loving parish and the "electronic" prayer partners was so close around us it was almost as if one could reach out and touch it. So, I think that some kinds of energy fields are affected in the physical world by prayer.

Being prayed for so intensely all these months has made me feel so humble and has fired my desire to deepen and broaden my own prayer life. I'm experimenting with ways of praying that I never did before, I pray about everything and everybody. I pray walking down the street, riding the bus, in the bathtub, and I also have my set-aside time (which I'm not as good at keeping) and my actual list. In God's eyes, I think it all counts as prayer. I guess it's like any kind of learning; the more we learn the more we realize how little we really know and the more we desire to know it. It sounds to me like God has given you a heart for the forgotten people, and that sounds like a calling to a specific type of prayer to me. Go with that and see where that obedience leads you.

In the end, prayer is a mystery. Father Seth, our rector at St. Richard's, is fond of quoting Archbishop William Laud: "I don't know how prayer works. I only know that when I pray, coincidences happen, and when I do not pray they stop."

Peace and Love, Susan

**Dear John,**

You raise some really good questions, John. Intercessory prayer is something that has captured my attention a lot over the years, too. I've never been quite sure about it. I know it works, but I don't have a clue why or how that is so.

I know I am personally transformed by praying for others. I become closer to them, I love them more deeply, and I feel more related to the world & its inhabitants as a result of it. I'm not as good about doing it as I'd like to be and I really understand your saying you felt guilty & a failure because of that—I also feel that way too often.

But I know we can pray now for the one we forgot to pray for before and in God's time (not linear, like ours) we're praying right on time. Still, the needs are so many, and I often just don't think to do it for some really obvious people - like my family! This is really awful. How can I forget to pray for my own husband & children, when I quite regularly put energy into praying for total strangers? I hear sirens nearby or horrendous news on TV and forget to pray for the victims & the helpers. It's a stunning deficit, and I can't imagine why prayer is not my reflexive response to these things. How can we ever know about and cover all those folks that have no one to pray for when we even forget to pray for those we do know about? It's overwhelming if you think about it.

But. That's not how it works. It's not on the squeaky wheel principle at all. God knows about all of those folks already. God's kind of like the US Congress (forgive the unfortunate analogy, Lord!)—no matter what the majority of the constituents call for, God acts as God wants to. I just can't accept the idea that God would ignore someone in desperate need just because no one prays for them. (I'm not advocating not praying for people, by any means!)

There are a lot of non-verbal ways to do intercessions. One is to dedicate all you do and everything that happens to you during a day as an offering - it can be for a particular individual, or for all those nameless people that have no one to pray for them.

I did coffee mug prayers for a while—I had a lot of coffee mugs various people had given me, and each

time I used one of those for a day, I dedicated that as a prayer for the person that gave it to me. I've also used the "place well prayed in" principle and tucked names, intentions, and holy cards people sent me and notes they wrote me into my prayer book (a place well prayed in) as a symbol of constant prayer for them. I've offered to carry for another a burden they couldn't always handle. That actually works! You can really feel it when they hand it over to you, too! I've sometimes taken people to Jesus in meditation and left them with him. That's a powerful form of intercession. I go to our parish's healing Mass and get anointed for people I'm praying for sometimes.

I never, never ask God for anything specific for anyone. I have no idea what they need. God does. I could be asking for something that would be really wrong for them. I pray something like "Lord, I pray for [name]." or "Lord, please be with..." or Lord, help..." It's all a mystery!

Some people have a real vocation for intercessory prayer & others have vocations for other things, like nursing or social justice advocacy or sacramental ministry. We don't each have to do it all—it gets shared around. Many gifts of the Spirit are spread around so it all gets covered. If God brings something or someone to your attention, that's the thing/person to pray for, right at that time. Intercession is certainly not my primary gift, but we all need to do what we can. I always pray for people when asked to. Love and blessings, MaryAnn

(continued on page 4)

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**The Franciscan Times**  
is a publication of The Third Order  
Society of St. Francis, American Province.  
Send Subscriptions Inquiries to Editor  
(\$10.00 (US)/Year)

**MINISTER PROVINCIAL**  
Anita Catron  
EDITOR

**EDITORIAL STAFF**  
R. John Brockmann  
Anne LeCroy, Jane Eillen Traugott  
Editorial contributions and all  
correspondence should be sent to:  
R. John Brockmann  
P.O. Box 277, Warwick, Md 21912  
jbrockma@udel.edu

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Dewi1944@aol.com

### Intercessory Prayer (cont.)

**Dear John,**

So much good stuff has come along, but I'd like to add one small thought. It seems to me that intercessory prayer (and maybe other kinds as well) is sort of like a faucet. What we're doing is aligning our wills with God's will, and thereby becoming open channels of God's love. Now when we're open to God's love, we'll be loving the person we're praying for in a whole new way, and we'll be open for God to use us in ways we never thought. I think that's some of what you're experiencing.

It sounds to me as if you have a vocation to intercession, so stick with it, even when it gets uncomfortable (and it will). And it's been my experience that when God lays someone on my heart, that's who I should be praying for at that particular moment.  
Peace, JaneEllen

**Dear John,**

Madeleine L'Engle has a story (I think it's in CIRCLE OF QUIET) about a time when it seemed the world was on the brink of nuclear disaster. The only way she could pray was to hold in her heart and mind the image of the world "whole and holy" the way she

wished it were. In other words, she held her silent intentions up to God, not trying to list specific intentions, but (in this case) truly global ones.

Maybe intercessory prayer is, indeed, a way to teach us compassion, just as the act of forgiveness is often more beneficial to the one forgiving than to the forgiven (who might not even know about it). Not all of the people we pray for know we pray for them; some might not even be too charmed by the notion that we are praying for them. None of that negates the prayer. God knows our intent; I doubt he needs an itemized list.

Just a thought, Betty Kay

**My dear John,**

A close friend of mine suggested that in my daily intercessory prayer I always pray for the sick— "those who have asked for my prayers and those who need them." That way we're not standing in judgment. God can use us, stir us to remember a special request, as well as those we have on our list.

(I keep a list of those sick that I've been asked to pray for, same for the dead, those who mourn and other special requests.) I include the "those who have asked for my prayers and those who need them" with every major section of my intercessory prayer. I always close with that wonderful prayer from the little blue booklet (can't recall it's name just now - TSSF publishes it, I believe) I may not have it verbatim, but I pray:

*For all those, wherever and whoever they are, who have no one to pray for them, grant them a share of my blessings and in your love, let them know they are not forgotten.*

I believe these prayers set the foundation for the rest of our day that is spent holding those we meet up in prayer - asking the Lord to govern our interactions with each one and blessing, comforting, strengthening and guiding each.

Love and blessings, Joy Antonio

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### *I am tepid water*

Francesca Wigle

I am tepid water, God.

Bring me to boiling point.

As I sputter and spit and evaporate  
into everywhere and nothingness.

Pour me into Your Own Expansiveness.

Infuse me with the tea of Your Essence.

Let me steep, filling with the delicate  
aromas of Your Wholeness.

Let me steep until I become part of You.

Let me steep until I become me.

### **Celebration of the Life of John Mothershead/p/tssf**

**From Treese Allen -**

Our own John Mothershead died in his sleep this past Sunday night. I attended his memorial service in McKinney, a rural community an hour's drive from Dallas. I was the only Franciscan presence there, since we only learned of his death late yesterday.

John had only recently joined us in fellowship here in Texas. I met him only once, 2 weeks ago, when I had the pleasure of giving him a ride to our fellowship meeting in Austin. He had just completed his postulancy and had done so in complete isolation from other tertiaries. For some unfathomable reason, we didn't know of his presence so near to us until just recently. He had tried in vain to make contact with those who had been in the now defunct Brother Sun, Sister Moon fellowship in Dallas. Only one returned his call—they got together once for coffee—and this other tertiary told John that there was little hope of reviving the fellowship.

John was an older man who was not in good health. He really was not up to commuting to South Texas to meet with our Heart of Texas fellowship. But after 6 months of effort to connect with TSSF'ers in Dallas, he finally contacted us. He was desperate for fellowship with other tertiaries. His health would not permit him to drive himself to Austin for fellowship meetings, so he and I arranged to meet and I gave him a ride. We spent an entire day together—from 6a to 8p—and that day was one of the most delightful I'd spent in a long time.

John had a true and clear vocation to the Third Order. I've rarely met someone who was so utterly open and non-judgemental. In the too few delightful hours I spent with him, I knew him to be a truly remarkable man. It was quickly obvious that here was a soul who loved God passionately and who yearned to serve Christ in anyone he encountered. And he'd spent 66 years doing just that.

He taught psychology in a Quaker college for 30 years. He was a Park Ranger in Arizona for several years. He was a volunteer chaplain to the homeless for some time. And he was a poet, a troubadour for the Lord, and a damn good one. He posted a couple of his poems on the AngFran list. I told him he should contribute more to the list, that all of us could learn so much from him. He was adamant that it was he who had a lot to learn from us. He said he feared offending others on the list with his posts. I just wanted to tell y'all a little about this fellow tertiary who embraced Sister Death two days ago.

This man who told me that if he was granted three wishes, these are what they would be: the first one was that he wanted everyone he met to know Jesus' love for them. The second was that he wished he could talk face to face with Francis because Francis seemed to know Jesus better than anyone he'd met or read about. And the third was that he just wanted to be a servant of the Lord.

This was a man who had a doctorate in psychology. Voracious in his passion for knowledge. And voracious in his passion for God.

I told his wife Pat today that he touched my life too briefly, that I wish there had been more time to learn from him. I wish that for all of you. In closing, I want to share with you part of one of his poems, reprinted in the service order bulletin for his memorial service:

#### **Airborn for Glory**

Caught up  
In His Beauty  
A trip to the Heavens  
And then  
Finally Home."

**From John R. Snyder,**

As Treese has already said, we here in the Heart of Texas TSSF fellowship are deeply mourning the passing of our compatriot John Mothershead. We only knew John for a short while, but his presence at our last fellowship meeting here in Austin was a most gracious one. It felt as though John had been part of the group his whole life—and in a sense he probably had. I, for one, was very glad indeed to have his grandfatherly presence in the mix. John was a gentle man, broad of mind and heart, a true Franciscan.

John was also a poet, and one of the prayers that Francesca and I prayed yesterday when we got together for a short memorial service was "God, send us more poets!" Here are some other poems he wrote.

#### **Heart of Texas**

Home again in the Heart of Texas.  
As a lad went with dad  
To Austin to give CPA exams.  
I got to draw on scrap paper.

Back again for seven years at U.T.  
Time in the Christian Faith & Life Community.  
One book says it was  
The first commune in the country.

Dove heartily into a mix of endeavors:  
Spelunking the grottos,  
Underwater salvage work,  
Geology field tripping,  
Working with the Longhorns,

*(continued on page 7)*

### ***Peace and Justice Action***

*Sent in by Sr. Pamela Clare, CSF*

Br. John George, SSF, was the initiator of this idea. He gathered a group of us after SSF Chapter last May, including First Order Brothers and a Sister (me) and TSSF folks—Anita Catron, John Scott, Masud Syedulaha, and Dee Dobson.

The P & J Group decided that we would focus our initial efforts on involvement with Franciscans International, the Franciscan Non-Governmental Organization at the United Nations. Several of us already were members and had previous involvement with that group. As a result of the formation of the P & J Group, I know that Masud has information regarding membership of individual TSSF Brothers and Sisters. (Ed. This information was published in the last issue of the *Times*).

The particular issue we chose to concentrate our efforts on at this time is Jubilee 2000 Third World Debt Cancellation. We chose this because it is so immediate, specific, very much in our Franciscan tradition, and was an important part of the business at the recent Lambeth Conference. We also were aware that our SSF Franciscan Brothers and Sisters in other provinces were already working on this issue. I was asked at the initial group meeting to be the "archivist" (that is, the person who is collecting any information that other people want to have in our central file as a P & J Group). So I am actively seeking info on the issue of Third World Debt, and I also have materials available for people who want to know more.

I have sent a copy of the Jubilee 2000 Petition that Franciscans International are circulating and some accompanying information. (Ed. Included in this issue on page 13). From my personal perspective, given the devastation in Central American due to Hurricane Mitch, it seems an especially good idea to work toward debt relief for Central America.

At the moment as a group, we are just trying to get the petition around and are still in the awareness raising stage. But I am sure that when John George returns from his time in England, he will stir up the group with some proposal or other. As to membership in this P & J Group, a couple of brothers and a couple of sisters from the First Order will probably be the most directly involved. The Third Order needs to figure out who and how many of TSSF will be involved in the direct working of the Group. We haven't organized ourselves in a formal way—we are a sort of ad-hoc task group, but I suspect that some sort of organization and communication system will be part of our agenda for this coming year.

Contact me if you want any clarification or further info.  
Pamela Clare, CSF

### **New Edition of the CSF Office Book Available**

A second printing of the CSF Office Book is now available for a donation of \$50 (which includes postage). You may order this from The Community of St. Francis, 3743 Cesar Chavez St., San Francisco Ca 94110-4316, by phone at 415-824-0288 or by e-mail at [csf@sfo.com](mailto:csf@sfo.com). The CSF Office Book is one of the approved versions of the office for TSSF. We are very pleased that so many TSSF Brothers and Sisters have found our inclusive language, larger selection of canticles and Franciscan touches to be an aid to their daily prayers.

### **New Electronic Resources Available**

A new program on the TSSF web site includes the appropriate daily reading from the *Principles within the Community Obedience*. I am also working on a program to display Saint of the Day information from the *Devotional Companion*.

Frank Boimare [fpb01@gnofn.org](mailto:fpb01@gnofn.org)

### **1999 Convocation Information Thus Far**

- **Southeast:** 9/10-12, Ignatius House (Atlanta GA). Contact Michael Shrewsbury (San Damiano Fellowship).
- **Western:** 8/13-15, The Angela Center (Santa Rosa CA). Contact Joan Kidd.
- **Midwestern:** 8/20-22, Divine Word International (Techney IL). Contact James Janiec.
- **Northern Mountains and Plains (NE-WY):** 7/15-19, Hastings NE. Contact Betty Wood.
- **South Central:** 5/14-16, St. Crispin's. Contact Sue Heinsohn.
- **Northeastern:** 8/27-9, Graymoor Friary (Garrison NY). Contact Diana Finch or Lynn Herne.
- **Trinidad/Tobago** 4/30-5/2. **Guyana:** ?. Contact Gloria Waldron on both of these.
- **Southwest:** 6/4-6, Canossian Spirituality Center (Albuquerque NM) Contact Becky Thomson.
- **Order of Ecumenical Franciscans:** 7/8-11, Palatine Renewal Center, St. Louis MO. Contact Fred Ball.

### **CONVOCATION NOTES**

#### **ATTENTION CONVENERS:**

The Franciscan Times will reach interested and/or isolated tertiaries in your region (and elsewhere) who might make plans to attend your gathering. Advance notice and a name of a person to contact will be helpful to them. Please send the details, to:

R. John Brockmann TSSF,

P.O. Box 277, Warwick, MD 21912-0277.

**Celebration of John Mothershead (cont.)**

Taking freshman English three times and  
Teaching water safety where  
I met my lovely wife.

And now thirty-three years later  
With joy and excitement, connecting with Franciscans  
in the

Heart of Texas Fellowship.  
Roaming central Texas' Umbrian-like hills,  
Looking for a wolf from Gubbio.

**God**

a really good friend  
who is always there.  
We have conversations  
often,  
and I'm always amazed  
with his caring concern.

*John Mothershead*

He lets me go my own way,  
make my own choices,  
but he does seem  
to be a very good mentor.

It's hard these days  
to find a good friend  
who has unlimited love  
and forgiveness  
for an  
off the wall  
guy like me.

Maybe you'd  
let me introduce you.  
I know He's  
got enough  
good stuff  
to go all around.

**Wake up my brothers**

Wake up my brothers  
Lighted one with wings is here.  
Warm penetrating light surrounds us  
and I have much fear.

Listen, it speaks,  
"Fear not:  
for, behold I bring  
you good tidings  
of great Joy,  
which shall be to all people."

The star was bright,  
The village small,  
And there in a manger  
lay Christ the child.

**Celebration of Betty Swinehart, TSSF**

*Sent by Stuart A. Schlegel*

Dear Franciscan Sisters and Brothers:  
Betty Swinehart, TSSF (professed 1988) died last  
Wednesday, and I wanted to share this news. The  
following post went out from her son:

**Subject: Betty Swinehart**

As you may already know, my mother passed away  
last Wednesday, January 20th. I have already notified  
several SSF folks, including Stu Schlegel, Brother  
Robert, Brother Justus, and Sister Cecilia. My father  
suggested contacting the rest of you via e-mail.

A memorial service is planned for Wednesday Jan. 27  
at Trinity Menlo Park, to be followed by a reception  
featuring the Magnolia Jazz Band, per her request.

My mother's spiritual life was very important to her,  
and her involvement with the Franciscans brought her  
a lot of peace and inspiration. Thanks to all of you for  
being an important part of that.

Some time ago she completed a questionnaire about  
death, which she updated just last year. Under the  
heading "My final message I would like to have read"  
she wrote,

*Life's purpose for us all is to learn to LOVE ONE  
ANOTHER— and thanks to our Great God for all the  
angels he sent enfleshed to guide, support, protect and love  
me. And thanks to those people for allowing God to work  
through them.*

There you have it! Thanks again for your prayers and  
kind thoughts.

Peace,  
Bruce Swinehart

## Norms

*Carol Tookey, Formation Director*

Questions have arisen lately about "the Norms" which have been discussed at the last few Chapter meetings. What are they? Where are they?

The development of Norms came out of discussions at Chapter about "standard operating procedures" that are followed by Chapter and throughout the Order but that are not codified in our Constitution or Statutes - kind of "the way we've always done it."

New people to Chapter (myself included) were puzzled about how things were done and what things had been decided in the past. There is and was a collective memory of old timers who knew the ropes, but unless something specific came up, the newcomers didn't know what had transpired before. So it was decided to follow the lead of our First Order brothers and sisters in establishing some common guidelines.

The procedure I used to begin this project was to contact folks who had held leadership positions in the Order and ask for their input as to what procedures and traditions it would be important to write down and keep. I also went through all of the Chapter minutes from the past 10 years or so and pulled out decisions that had been made which were not part of the Statutes.

At the 1998 Chapter meeting a committee looked at all this data and made recommendations about what things should be included in the Norms, what things should be added to the Statutes and what things should be deleted or changed. The Chapter accepted the recommendations of the committee about the overall structure, but decisions remain to be made on the content of many of the items in the material.

It is planned that at the next meeting of Chapter, this material will be put together in a standard format and adopted. When it has been approved, it will be distributed to the general membership of TSSF along with the updated Statutes. The content of the Norms includes such things as Chapter meeting procedures, pastoral issues of professed and those in formation, interpretations of the Rule, fiscal policies, and issues of active membership. It should be noted that the Norms will continue to be a work in progress. As changes are made in practice or procedure, the Norms will continue to need updating.

### From the Editor.

It is important to know our Norms as an Order! For example, during the recent year of diversity discussions in the Third Order, the following Chapter resolution of 1990 was sometimes overlooked:

*Resolved that the Chapter of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis, American Province, affirm that Christ indwells in all persons regardless of sexual orientation; we affirm that we welcome to our services of worship and to all occasions for fellowship all persons; and we affirm that we welcome and encourage full membership in this Order for persons of all sexual orientations. Further, we encourage those of use who would do so, to educate ourselves and others in the Church about the current pressing issues of lesbians and gay men in a society that is frequently hostile to them; and we commit ourselves to action to end ignorance about, prejudice toward, and discrimination against lesbians and gay men in the Episcopal/Anglican Church and in society at large.*

### Four Book and Movie Reviews

*The Chicken Conspiracy: Breaking the Cycle of Personal Stress and Organizational Mediocrity* Charlie Palmgren TSSF and Stacie Hagan. Recovery Communications. 1999 \$13.95 (or \$11.16 on Amazon.com). 128 pages

*Excerpted from Charles Palmgren's Fellowship newsletter.* As some of you know, my colleague, Stacie Hagan, and I just published a book entitled *The Chicken Conspiracy: Breaking the Cycle of Personal Stress and Organizational Mediocrity*. The book will not be in bookstores until sometime in the spring. It is aimed at the business/self help/spirituality audiences. It is really about the psychology of the Fall. We deliberately secularized the book in order to sneak up on those people who have a negative knee jerk reaction to spiritual books.

The essential message of the book is that we all have worth because God loves us. Unfortunately, most of us have lost our sense of that worth and have substituted a search for self-esteem. We, like the Pharisees before us, have made worth into something that must be earned by living up to the demands and expectations we set for ourselves and expect from others. We demand that we can live up to theirs for us. This takes a myriad of forms. We seek our self-esteem through many roles hidden behind many masks or personas. We find ourselves needing to be the perfect mom, housewife, professional, parent, employee, boss, Franciscan, artist, cook, clergyman, formation director, chaplain, hairdresser, Christian, scholar, you name it. For some young people it is earning gang membership by killing someone.

It also comes out in the kinds of houses we live in, the salaries we earn, the grades our kids get in school, the car we drive, the parties we get invited to, how fast our congregation is growing, and the degrees we have behind our names. The real worth we have in being made in the image of God is hidden in our frantic pursuit to achieve self-esteem. The pleasure of self-



esteem occurs when our constructed self-image gains approval from others. We experience our worth as conditional and dependent on the acceptance of others. We attempt to get from others that which can only come from God.

When we lose sight of our worth in the eyes of God, we rely on ourselves and others to fill the vacuum. Of course, it can't be done and we know that intellectually. Unfortunately, it doesn't easily translate into our hearts and souls. Paul assures us, "That nothing can separate us from the love of God." What we can do in our disobedience is tell ourselves, others, and God, that if they knew us, really knew us they wouldn't like us. This is the creature telling the Creator that who He loves is not really lovable. At that point we presume to know more than God does. We eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We decide that what God called Good is actually evil.

The Feast of the Incarnation reminds us of what God was willing to do so that we might discover anew who the Almighty created, loves, saves, redeems, transforms, heals and makes wHol(y)e. Thank you, Jesus, for loving us while we are yet sinners and thank you, Francis, for knowing how to accept that love.

*Franciscan Prayer Life: The Franciscan Active/Contemplative Synthesis and the Role of Centers of Prayer.* Ronald M. Mrozinski, OFM Conv. Franciscan Herald Press 1981.

*Sent in by John Calabrese*

Written in 1978 as a dissertation in Sacred Theology at the Institute of Spirituality of the Pontifical Gregorian Institute in Rome, this book is a scholarly work, but not for scholars only. Mrozinski traces the development of the active/contemplative synthesis as it exists in Franciscan spirituality from Francis's earliest call through the early life of the Friars Minor and down to the establishment of centers of prayer (centers derived from the centers of prayer movement which began in the late 60s).

The centers were an outgrowth of the unrest created in religious communities by the Second Vatican Council's call for renewal in religious life that noted that any renewal in religious communities had to be based and grounded in prayer. The theologian Bernard Haring wrote: "Let each active congregation set aside at least one house where the rhythm of life would be determined by the needs of prayer and not by the demands of an apostolate. This house can be called a 'House of Prayer' as suggested by Isaiah 56:7..."

Mrozinski stipulates that Francis's call was an encounter with Christ and a calling to perfection as outlined in the Gospel and that the Gospel was the most intimate point of contact between Francis and Jesus Christ. It

was while hearing mass in the restored chapel at the Portinucula that Francis received the revelation of his vocation in 1208. The primacy of the Gospel and the life of Christ became hallmarks of Francis's spirituality which was a call to personal repentance and to preach penance as well as a call to contemplative compassion. This contemplative compassion consisted in Francis's constant attention to his own poverty in relation to the person of Jesus Christ in His Passion and Death, and Francis's search for the presence of Christ in the poor to whom he ministered. This awareness of his own inner poverty was carried by Francis everywhere he went and in every situation he found himself in. This inner poverty led him to an orientation of receptivity and service to others as well as a love and glorification of God's creation in all its various aspects. As Francis wrote in his *Testament*: "When God gave me friars, there was no one to tell me what I should do, but the Most High Himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel."

Through the use of scholarly references, Mrozinski traces the development of the active/contemplative synthesis through various early documents authored by Francis from his earliest call to Gospel perfection to his *Rule of 1221*, *Rule of 1223*, his *Testament*, and the *Rule for Hermitages*. The *Rule for Hermitages* is central in this active/contemplative synthesis. This Rule dictated the eremical life for friars who needed to be revitalized in their vocation of active ministries of preaching, penance, service to the poor, love and joy towards all humankind, and joy in and glorification of God through reverent love of His creation.

This Rule was a gentle balance of solitude mixed with interdependence to foster fraternal love by designating the relationship between the friars who live in the hermitages. Only three or four friars could live in a hermitage at one time—two were mothers and two were children. The children depended on the mothers for their sustenance, and the mothers were charged with the protection of these children entrusted to the them. The dependence of the children on the mothers and the mothers' obligation to care for the children fostered fraternal love and charity and prevented the contemplation practiced by the children in the hermitage from becoming too self-absorbed and detached. The children were also bound to share the fruits of their contemplation with the mothers for the sake of the mothers' spiritual welfare. To draw on the Gospel example of the active/contemplative synthesis: the mothers were to be the Marthas and the children the Marys; this was reversed after a time. Francis's spirituality was based on this fraternal love and charity and his contemplative attitude reflected the active/contem-

*(continued on page 10)*

**Book and Movie Reviews (cont.)**

plative synthesis. Hermitages were a common occurrence in Franciscan communities for many years. The *Rule for Hermitages* was a balancing act between solitude and sharing, flexibility and structure.

Mrozinski goes on to illustrate the concept of sacred space: for Francis it was not so much a place as it was an atmosphere of contemplation based on fraternal love and charity. The spirit of fraternal love and charity had to be present in these hermitages in order to stay in tune with the spirit of Francis. The beauty of these relationships as outlined by Francis was that they were so interdependent proving Francis's faithfulness in following the example of Jesus who often withdrew for periods of prayer before preaching and serving others. After renewal and contemplation in the hermitages, the friars entered anew into their apostolates and were able to be more effective in sharing the fruits of their contemplation based on fraternal love and charity with those they came in contact with, both inside and outside their communities.

I recommend this book to anyone who feels the need to explore the roots of the active/contemplative synthesis which is the heart of the Franciscan vocation and its grounding in Jesus Christ.

*The Lessons of St. Francis: How to Bring Simplicity and Spirituality into Your Daily Life* John Michael Talbot with Steve Rabey. New York: Dutton, 1997.

*Sent in by Reilly Reagan Associate, the Community of St. Mary (Reilly Reagan pdr@multipro.com)*

The self-help genre has taken on a new cast: books calling for less materialism and more spirituality have become huge bestsellers, from *Simple Abundance* by Sarah Breathnach to *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff* by Richard Carlson. While the subtitle of *The Lessons of St. Francis* clearly aims to snare readers interested in the chic of simplicity, the book is much more than a compilation of insipid "inspirational" essays and platitudes. The book can be, and is, life transforming.

I first read this book while on a private retreat at an Episcopal convent, and it has made a profound impact on the way I live my faith. The authors discuss Francis' spiritual journey once he realized he was not living a Christ-like life, and show us how his "radical" approach to Christian living continues to challenge us. The authors show how Franciscan living means taking the Gospel literally—which is decidedly counter-cultural in our society.

For members of the Third Order, this information is not new. However, the presentation of Francis' lessons, featuring quotes ranging from Jesus to Buddha to the Bhagavad-Gita, with examples from Talbot's

Franciscan community and mainstream secular life, makes this book a very enjoyable read. The authors have arranged the book according to themes in Jesus' and Francis' lives; chapters have names like "Humility," "Service," "Solitude," "Joy."

Because the book is such an excellent introduction to St. Francis' life and teachings, members of the Third Order should make sure that local public libraries have a copy. This one small volume will bring people more spiritual enrichment than a crateload of bestselling "inspirational" books.

Reviews of *The Apostle* starring Robert Duvall (also written and directed by him)—now out on videotape.

*Collected from an AngFran-L Discussion*

Since seeing it several weeks ago, I haven't been able to get it out of my mind. I wrote to a friend about it telling her the many times I have voiced a desire to hang out where music and preaching are coming from a depth of soul. Lily-white I have yearned for black soul.

The friend I had shared with about *The Apostle* and the way I connect to black gospel wrote back that she had just returned from seeing *The Apostle*. She agreed that for her, too, the film was incredible. Doubly interesting for her was that she had at one time been one of only two white people in an all black full gospel fellowship church. At the same time she had been practicing kundalina yoga. She said that the similarities between the two were wondrous, and that while ultimately the church had too many literal interpretations of Truth for her, she nevertheless remembered the time warmly.

My point? After seeing the movie, I keep asking myself, why are we, why am I so afraid to give way to Spirit? To let Spirit flow? Lately every time I read the *Venite* there is a sense of something wanting to bust loose: "Let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation. . . . Let us raise a loud shout to him with psalms." Peace and love to all, Ann

Dear Ann,

I saw the movie, *The Apostle*, a couple of weeks ago. What amazed me the most about the film was how the main character was so willing to allow the Holy Spirit to guide him in so many circumstances. I am specifically thinking about the interaction with the crew of angry men who came to destroy his church and then ended up being converted. It gave me chills. It reminded me of "Jesus Third Way" in Walter Wink's "Engaging the Powers."

I was also amazed how he started a new church even as he knew that the police would be there to arrest him when they found out where he was. And, then, at the end, he let God work through him in prison to bring others to Christ.

He affected so many people's lives so meaningfully, but he harmed his family. What a paradox! It reminded me of my own father, who was a wonderful physician. He made such a difference in so many lives. For my mother and myself, it was a different story. He couldn't seem to handle any true intimacy, and so he withdrew from us and chose, instead, to have one affair after another. I was sent away to high school because my parents were fighting so much that I was "in the way." I was astounded to see that he so easily substituted a more distant "uncle" relationship with neighborhood kids for any real relationship with me. It was odd. Others loved him. I was hurt, cut off and estranged. At my last meeting with my father before he died, we had the best sharing ever. We went out to the geriatric unit where he worked, and I pretended to be his "patient" as he shared with me what he did. That was the only relationship in which my father could share and be available. I had to pretend to be his patient. I saw parallels with the "apostle," and I grieved for his family. His wife stated that her knees were worn out from praying and yet there was no communion of Christ between them. His children in the end were afraid of him. What of their wounds while those in prison were ministered to?

One of the best parts of the movie had to do with experiencing the vibrant worship in the Black churches. It was great and so healing for our culture. We have so much to learn from one another. Thanks for starting a discussion about this film. I hope others will see it and share.

Love, Francesca

I have a lot of mixed feelings about what was said about the movie. On the one hand, I love charismatic churches, no matter what the denomination, as long as the Gospel doesn't become something that people use to judge each other.

The other thing is the fact that the main character seems to do well "acting out" the kind of life Jesus calls us to, but can't seem to really "live it" with his family. I guess in my opinion if you aren't living the Gospel in your family the "act" with strangers is a sham. I am assuming no "abuse" of any kind on the part of the family members. The tension for me from time to time is that sometimes it seems easier for a celibate to love greater numbers of people initially, and to share the journey of life.

The challenge of living the Gospel, a life of love, in a committed relationship, is that the relationship must come first, to share the journey of life. The challenge of living the gospel, a life of love, in a committed relationship, is that the relationship must come first, and sometimes it's more than what I even asked. I

sometimes long for, what "seems to be" a little more freedom to be and do more in general, for more people. For this reason I can see the need for celibate clergy. On the other hand I can see the need for married clergy who can really be role models for those of us who are in committed relationships. Anyway, it sounds like an interesting movie I would like to see.

Love, Eunice

My husband and I went to see *The Apostle* two weeks ago. We were definitely touched—I, especially, got hit at a gut level of dreaming of leaving seminary and going out to do what I feel called to do—spread the gospel. Our choir at St. Barnabas does a lot of Black Gospel music and three weeks ago, Dr. Horace Boyer, one of the editors of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" was at the seminary for a workshop in Black music. The first evening, after singing a rousing chorus of *Soon and Very Soon*, he commented that we'd better be careful, "People out there are gonna hear you and think there's "church" going on in here." I even saw clergy professors practically dancing as they sang that night!

We were taken with the opening scene where he allowed the Spirit to lead him to the one person that truly needed him. I also appreciated the Apostle E.F.'s human weaknesses. He reminded me of King David who was not the best example of moral behavior, but David's faith, love of God, and true repentance has been held up as an example of what to do and how to behave when we do fall. The way the Apostle E.F. accepted the penalty for his deviation could be held up as a positive example, and the Apostle E.F.'s faith remained ever as strong as he still led others to Christ. Peace, Nan L. Doerr

### ***Proclaim the Year of God's Favour:***

#### **A 1999 Prayer and Study Guide to Prepare for the Millennium and Jubilee 2000**

A 50-page guide to help the Brothers and Sisters of the Society of St. Francis prepare for the new millennium through a year of prayer in the spirit of the biblical Jubilee is now available (courtesy of Brothers Justus and Colin Wilfred of New Zealand) on the World Wide Web at the following address: <http://www.societystfrancis.org/newpage22.htm>. The various aspects of Jubilee are divided over the months, and each of the 12 section includes: a thematic verse for the month; various biblical readings; discussion questions; a piece of Francis's writings appropriate to the month's theme; and a final prayer of thanksgiving or intercession. There is also an introduction and short bibliography. Our hope is that those with Internet access could download and print sufficient copies for those without access in each fellowship and for isolated tertiaries..

## And What Are You Going To Give Up For Lent?

### Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"And what are you going to give up for Lent?" I asked only half-seriously.

Celia smiled at me with the twinkled eyes that octogenarian ladies reserve for presumptuous questions from their clergy and said:

"I'm going to give up time. I'm going to make some spaces in my life. I'm going to listen to see if God wants to talk to me and I'm going to speak to him. It is quite probable that both of us have lots to say!"

I smiled as I let myself out of Celia's tiny retirement home. I was thinking about what she had said. Time is very much a part of our lives. We try and cram so much into it.

We talk about time as though it were a live thing. We say "How time flies"; "Time is running out"; "How time passes"; "We must keep track of time"; "I mustn't lose time."

Or as a rare treasure: "Time is money"; "Time is precious"; "Don't waste time"; "Can't spare the time"; "I might spend time".

In our lives we ration out our time. We dole it out: so much for ourselves; so much for our families; so much for our friends; so much for our community; so much for our hobbies.

But how much for God?

We are always being tempted to take the easy way, the so-called short cuts. We put off and explain away the things we know we should be doing:

"I haven't got the time...to listen...to talk right now...to play with you...to say my prayers." We say "In time I will get around to it...all in good time".

Well, Lent is a very good time (40 whole days and nights more or less). Time that is nearly upon us. Lent can be for us the time to give up time...time to set time aside...to call time on all those temptations to waste time...and to spend some time in the company of The Lord of Time Himself.

Good old Celia!  
Pax et Bonum  
Tim TSSF  
Bristol, England

### Dear Ones,

During my first year in formation, my very wise spiritual director (who incidentally was an Episcopal priest and Jungian analyst) suggested another ap-

proach to Lent. He suggested that I consider not "giving up something or adding something," but that I "not do what I should do." What glorious freedom!

I found that I used that word "should" an awful lot and that during those 40 days of Lent I gave serious thought to anything and everything I did. I learned a lot about myself and gave myself the freedom to not do what I always thought I should. I believe I am a better person because of that experience and it was probably the first real act of self-denial I had ever done.

Love and Prayers for a Holy Lent,  
Cheryl, Woodward, Oklahoma

## Raissa's Rule

*Excerpted from Fiddlesticks, the quarterly publication of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, used with permission.*

Raissa Maritain, wife of the religious philosopher Jacques Maritain, was a woman of profound spiritual and philosophical discernment. At her death in 1960, she left behind a number of journals and fragmentary writings published under the title *Raissa's Journal*. In 1923, she composed a short "Rule of Life" which included the following:

"Jesu mitis et humilis corde. Fac cor nostrum secundum cor tuum." (Jesus gentle and humble in heart, Make our heart in accordance with Your heart.)

Living in the world,  
deprived of the help that monks and nuns find in their rules and their vows—deprived as well through a very special dispensation of Providence, of the poverty in which we lived for years—and which God loves—we must make up by inner fervour and by poverty of spirit for what we lack in outer supports.

So let us set ourselves diligently to practice a deep and universal humility, to make constant acts of thanksgiving for so many blessings received, to live in utter trust, wholly abandoned to God's mercy. Let us be kindly to all creatures. Let us refrain from judging the innermost of souls, and let us open our heart wide enough to admire everywhere, and understand as much as possible the liberty, the breadth and the variety of God's ways.

Return petition to: Franciscans International, 211 East 43rd St. Room 1100, New York, New York 10017-4704

**The Third Order, Society of St. Francis  
American Province  
4001 S.W. 5 Terrace  
Miami, FL 33134-2040**

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## Coming Next Issue

**Please send in your contributions on the following topics as soon as you can!**

- The Answer to Last Issue's Franciscan Anacrostic Puzzle
- A Discussion of the Office
- Reactions to *Proclaim the Year of God's Favor*
- A Profile on Peter Funk, TSSF—New Deacon
- ANGFRAN-L On-line Discussions/Musings on (a) Following Jesus and Following Francis; (b) Franciscans and Benedictines