

Dear Brothers & Sisters



October 2015

Newsletter of the

Northwest Franciscan Community of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Palatine, Illinois

Secular Franciscan Order

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Submission deadline is the **last Tuesday** of each month.

For privacy, all personal addresses, phone numbers, email, prayer intentions, and (for non-council members) last names are removed from this web version.

From the Minister

On behalf of the entire fraternity, I would like to express our gratitude to Sister Lisa for ministering to us for the past six years with joy, grace, efficiency, patience, and humility. Thank you also to Sisters Jackie and Kay for their service on the council.

For those unable to attend our elections in September, please see the left sidebar for the list of officers.

We are blessed to have the continuing spiritual guidance of Brother Patrick and his awesome knowledge of fraternity life on all levels. And I would like to thank Sister Sue G. and Brothers Tom and Marc for their willingness to serve on the council and share their experience with a very new minister and vice-minister. Please pray for the council as we guide and support our fraternity over these next three years:

Most High and Glorious God,
bring light to the darkness of our hearts.
Give us right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity.
Lord, give us insight and wisdom
so we might discern Your holy and true will. Amen.

Thank you to Brother Dcn. Lou for celebrating a Word and Communion Service commemorating the Exaltation of the Cross at our September gathering, and also to Sisters Jackie and Mimi for helping with hospitality at the gathering.

■ **Transitus this Month.** As we've been mentioning since January, we will celebrate the Transitus of our Holy Father Francis on **October 03 (Saturday)**, which counts as this month's gathering. There will be no ongoing formation. **Everyone, please bring a snack or dessert to share.** If you're unable to attend, please call me.

■ **Sister Delphine.** Our Sister Delphine passed away on September 07. With heavy hearts we bid her good-bye, but with our Franciscan joy we rejoice, for Sister Death has led her to God's everlasting embrace.

■ **Franciscan Outreach Project.** We will meet at my home on **November 22 (Sunday)** to work on our Franciscan Outreach bags for the homeless. Once again, we are fortunate to have Mass celebrated by Fr. Johnpaul. ALL fraternity members are invited to gather for Mass, hospitality, and socializing while we complete our project. There will be sign-up sheets at social time after the Transitus. ☒

Our Apostolates

■ **Bingo.** Meets one night per month at 6:30 p.m. in St. Joseph's activity room. Everyone, please see the sign-up sheet at our gathering and pick one month for which to volunteer. For more information, call Sisters Kay or Mary Kay.

■ **Franciscan Outreach.** We collect items for delivery to the guests at Franciscan Outreach's Marquard Center. Call Sister Stephanie for more information.

■ **Prayer & Praise Ministry.** For our brothers and sisters unable to attend our gatherings due to poor health or transportation issues. For more information, or if you're ill or know of someone who's ill, please call our Infirmarian, Sister Jackie.

Next Monthly Gathering:

Saturday, October 03, 2015

St. Joseph's Home
80 W. Northwest Hwy., Palatine

6:30 p.m.: Start of our Gathering

with Transitus liturgy in the Chapel, followed by a business meeting and social time.

All welcome!

* * *

You must call Stephanie if you cannot attend.

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Our gatherings are *normally* at 7:30 p.m. on the **second Monday** of each month.

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■ **Prayer Shawl Ministry.** We interweave prayers along with God's love, care, and warmth into the stitches as we knit or crochet shawls for others. For more information, contact Sisters Sue or Cyndy.

■ **Support (Money, Materials).** Quarterly donations from our Common Fund of any excess funds available *after* fraternity costs go to the following: Franciscan Missionary Union, Franciscan Outreach, Poor Clares (Palos Park, IL), Amazon Relief.

■ **Youth Prayer Partners.** Coordinated by Brother Tom, this apostolate matches up fraternity members with children preparing for First Communion or Confirmation. We last prayed for Confirmands at St. Thomas of Villanova (Palatine), and will pray again for a new group of students when we have more details. For more information, call Brother Tom. ☒

Directory Updates & Corrections

Please make the following **changes** to your copies of our Member Directory:

- [PRIVATE]
[PRIVATE]
- [PRIVATE]
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- [PRIVATE]
[PRIVATE] ☒

The Spirituality of St. Francis

by Stephanie Heavey, OFS; Minister

The spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi can be summed up in two sentences:

*Bring the Gospel to Life and Life to the Gospel.
Live simply so that others might simply live.*

At the time of Francis, cardinals were often not only princes of the church, but also princes of the multiple kingdoms that comprised each of the countries that made up Europe; they had wealth and power. Often they put on armor and went to battle "in the name of the church".

Wealthy women going into convents would bring their maids with them. The convents and monasteries often owned considerable property and could be quite powerful.

For hundreds of years, the spirituality of most Catholics was focused on an Almighty God who wielded power and vengeance and ruled with an iron rod. A Santa Claus type of God who kept lists of whose naughty and nice and checked them twice. The average Catholic was expected to expend all his/her energy striving to become "perfect" **before** approaching God. It was a futile effort and most people gave up trying.

As Francis pored over the Gospels, he read about the Father who ran to meet his prodigal son (not a word about the father waiting in majesty to chastise his son and mete out a severe punishment for his misdeeds). Rather the father embraced his lost son, clothed him, fed him and rejoiced that he "had been found".

Francis read about Jesus approaching Levi, the tax collector and saying "Come, follow me." Not a word of castigation about his job.

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Anniversaries This Month

11: **Sue B. and Cyndy**, Professed in 2010.

12: **Marc**, Professed in 2003.

n/a: **Kathleen**, Professed in 1986.

*God's blessings for your years of
Franciscan living!*

Calendar

October

03: Transitus

TBD: Council Meeting

November

09: Monthly Gathering

TBD: Council Meeting

Remember in Your Daily Prayers

- All infirm, shut-in, and deceased fraternity members.
- All Candidates, Aspirants, and their formation instructors.
- Our entire Franciscan Family, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd (Secular & Regular) Orders: For strength in commitments, increase in vocations, and the work we do, especially for Franciscan Outreach, Franciscan Missionary Union, the Poor Clares in Palos Park, and Amazon Relief.
- The guests of Franciscan Outreach's shelter and soup kitchen: That they know God's loving care and overcome the difficulties that keep them homeless.
- Little Sisters of the Poor and the residents of St. Joseph's Home.
- Our families and loved ones.

Please pray that our fraternity and all Franciscans:

- Live the Holy Rule we've professed,
- Bring the Gospel to Life, and Life to the Gospel in the spirit of Francis,
- Live simply so that others may simply live, and
- Are active and participate in the Franciscan apostolates.

Francis read about Peter denying Jesus three times. Not a word about Jesus giving the "keys of the kingdom" to someone else because Peter couldn't be trusted, even though he repented.

Francis read about Jesus' last words, among them "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." After scourging and mocking and untold abuse and the horror of crucifixion, not a word of reproach.

Francis read, "Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Not a word about high intelligence and college degrees and powerful connections.

Francis read, "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest."

Francis read, "If you can give your children such good things, how much more will your father who is in heaven give to you."

Francis read about Jesus healing the lame and the blind and the deaf and lepers.

Francis read the advice to the rich man "Go, sell what you have and give to the poor. Then come and follow me."

And Francis understood...

God was Love, and Love was Everything.

He realized that that was what made the early Christians ready to die for their faith. After centuries of slavery to religion as well as to the political powers of their day, the people heard Jesus speak of a God who loved them; they saw how Jesus lived that love in His own life. This was a new saying! And there was hope. Wasn't it said of the early Christians, "See how they love one another"? To preserve that life of Love was worth dying for.

And Francis was hooked. That was what he aspired to do with every fiber of his being. He would live as Jesus lived.

He realized that God was our creator and as such we were part of God. God was not a **noun**, a venerable old man with a flowing white beard. God was a **verb**, a force that penetrated into and around and through all of His creation. The goodness of God fills all the gaps of the universe, without preference or discrimination. The space in between everything is **not space at all but God's grace. Each person was in God and God was in each person.** Therefore, **ALL** were created equal and the presence of God in each person needed to be addressed in Francis' interaction with that person.

Francis recognized that acknowledging God in everyone would demand much sacrifice of him. For quite often, the God present in the person was obscured by human frailties and failings. He needed to treat that person as if

he saw only the God in them and he also needed to help them in any way that he could to relieve their frailties and burdens. He needed to give them the hope that Jesus gave to those whom he encountered.

Francis embraced conversion and transformation in his own life. He recognized that conversion was not a once-in-your-life happening, but a necessary part of everyday living. If he was in God and God was in him, all he needed to do was to allow God to carry him where God wanted him to be. He didn't have to make elaborate plans or schedules. All he needed to do was *rest in God* and allow God to carry him. If he could do that, each day his life would be transformed from what it was the day before so that slowly and surely he would become more and more like the God who was in him.

Franciscan communities strive to live as Francis did. The Gospels are the basis for all Franciscan spirituality. If one wants to know how to live a life pleasing to God, read the Gospels. See how Jesus lived. He took one day at a time.

Nowhere do we read about Jesus' itinerary. Capernaum on Monday, Caesarea Philippi on Wednesday, home to Nazareth on Friday for the Sabbath, leave on the third day planning to arrive in Jerusalem by the following Sabbath, with, a note penciled in, "If time allows, a brief stopover in Bethany to see Lazarus and his sisters."

Our modern lifestyles make total day-to-day living difficult. We must adhere to the schedules that our work and family life demand. Yet, we must always be open to the Spirit guiding us in a direction that isn't part of our schedule for that is where God wants us to be.

And Francis did it as Jesus did.

Day by day, person by person. ☒

Excerpt from U.S. Congress Address

by Pope Francis, 24-Sep-2015

[T]here is another temptation which we must especially guard against: the simplistic reductionism which sees only good or evil; or, if you will, the righteous and sinners. The contemporary world, with its open wounds which affect so many of our brothers and sisters, demands that we confront every form of polarization which would divide it into these two camps. We know that in the attempt to be freed of the enemy without, we can be tempted to feed the enemy within. To imitate the hatred and violence of tyrants and murderers is the best way to take their place. That is something which you, as a people, reject.

Our response must instead be one of hope and healing, of peace and justice. ... We must move forward together, as one, in a renewed spirit of fraternity and solidarity, cooperating generously for the common good. ☒