

Immaculata Fraternity Mission Statement:

As members of the Secular Franciscan Order we seek to live the Gospel so as to inspire others to share love in Jesus in the spirit of St. Francis.

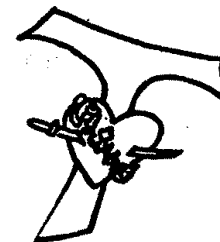
(Ratified at our Council Meeting on Sept. 11, 2017)

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Immaculata Vision ~ ~ May, 2018

Immaculata Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order

Riverside, CA / Editor: Lisa M. Boebinger, OFS ~ ~ lisa.sfo@att.net



***“Alleluia! Love is alive;
conquered the grave and defeated the night. Alleluia!
Love is alive!
The Son has arisen for all.
Your people sing alleluia!”***
*(Excerpt from the song “Alleluia! Love Is Alive” by Steve
Angrisano, Jesse Manibusan, and Sarah Hart. © 2012)*

Calendar of Events for May, 2018:

- 4 – First Friday Adoration, Queen of Angels small church, 6 pm.
- 7 (1st Mon.) – Council Meeting @ Lorraine’s @ 2 pm
- 8 – The Franciscan Christ-Centered World View with Fr. Johannes Freyer, OFM @ Mission San Luis Rey @ 7 pm. (leave @ 4 pm from Ray’s house)
- 10 (2nd Thurs.) – Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich Brigade, 4 pm @ St. Thomas’ KDC.
- 13 – The Ascension of the Lord
- 13 – Mother’s Day

19 (3rd Sat.) – Fraternity Gathering @ 9:30 am @ St. Thomas’s KDC (3rd Sat. due to 4th Sat. being a holiday weekend for Memorial Day & OFS Retreat)

- 20 – Pentecost Sunday
- 25-27 – Annual Region Retreat @ Serra Retreat in Malibu
- 27 – The Most Holy Trinity Sunday
- 28 – Memorial Day – Holiday
- 31 – The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Looking Ahead to June, 2018...

- 1 – First Friday Adoration, Queen of Angels small church, 6 pm.
- 3 – The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi Sunday)
- 8 – The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 9 – The Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 11 (2nd Mon.) – Council Meeting @ Lorraine’s @ 2 pm
- 14 (2nd Thurs.) – Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich Brigade, 4 pm @ St. Thomas’ KDC.
- 14 – Flag Day
- 17 – Father’s Day

23 (4th Sat.) – Fraternity Gathering @ 9:30 am @ St. Thomas’s KDC – Fraternity Visitation.

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Birthdays & Profession Anniversaries:

- May Birthdays: -- 2nd – Gloria Torres
- 5th – Jim Neuffell

- May Profession Anniv: -- 4th -- Raul Bosque, 2003
- June Birthdays: -- (none)
- June Profession Anniv : -- 22nd – Lorraine Cardin, 1978

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Minister’s Letter
From the Desk of
Lorraine Cardin, OFS

Dear Franciscan Brothers and Sisters,
Happy Easter! May the Risen Christ be ever present in your everyday activities. What would be a sign of that? I think that it would be a life filled with love and joy. See how the birds are singing and praising the Lord. Keep that same attitude. Alleluia!
Remember Council members to complete your paperwork for our visitation which is in June. Be prepared to bring up any concerns or questions you have. This is the time to air whatever bothers or concerns you. The purpose is to make the Fraternity one that Francis would be proud of. That goes for the other Fraternity members. too. Remember we are to bring the gospel to life and life to the gospel. Love and prayers, Lorraine

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For Our April 28th Fraternity Gathering
On-going Formation by: Lisa Boebinger

- Topic:** St. Francis and His Approach to Divinity
Discussion Questions for the first part:
1. What type of relationship do I have with the Father?
 2. Look at your prayer life, to whom do you most often pray?
 3. How would you currently describe your own spirituality?
 4. Describe your feelings when you hear God is poor and humble!
 5. What does the Incarnation and Eucharist express to you about God?

(To continue with the second part of St. Francis and His Approach to Divinity, please see page 7, article titled Basic Franciscan Theology.)

- Agenda of our Fraternity Gathering:**
At: St. Thomas’ KDC @ 9:30 am on April 28th
Opening Prayer: Liturgy of the Hours & Divine Mercy Chaplet
Ongoing Formation: by Lisa Boebinger, OFS
Break: Fellowship & Refreshments by (whoever wants to bring something to share)
After Break: Sharing on what’s been going on and prayer intentions
Closing Prayer: by Bruce McAdams, OFS

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From the Formation desk of Ray Hardwick, OFS
TRANSFORMATION

RACISM: AMERICA'S ORIGINAL SIN

OFS Rule, Art. 13—As the Father sees in *every* person the features of his Son, the first-born of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.

Have you ever asked yourself, “Am I a racist?” I mean seriously asked yourself. This a question that deserves serious consideration because racism is serious.

Racism is aggressively in our society today and far too often white people have downplayed the pervasive and aggressive nature it has on our culture. They have accused people of color of making mountains out of molehills. But racism does not care whether or not we as individuals think it exists, in fact it thrives in such situations of denial.

We are all sick from racism. The Bible would call it hardness of heart, eyes that do not see, and ears that do not hear. It is moral confusion that we as oppressors (read white people) are unable to comprehend.

Everywhere we look we can find people who insist that they are not racist. Some may even claim to be “the least racist person you could ever meet.” Just because we say racism is not a big deal or does not affect us as individuals does not make such statements true let alone relieve us of the responsibility of challenging racist systems and structures.

White people definitely benefit from racism, often despite our best intentions, and that necessarily includes our Order and it’s white members. This fact does not change though we may have been good accomplices in the fight against racism here and there, now and gain.

It is impossible for us to overestimate the problem that is oppression. Liberation is the concern of Gospel. Knowing that it may cost us power, prestige, or ourselves, let us pray that God—who is love, who brings people out of slavery, who is good news for the oppressed, will guide us away from fear and the comfort of complacency to a new earth where every tear is dried. And yes **all** lives matter to God, both unborn and living. So it should matter to us.

May God bless you with a restless *discomfort* about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy *anger* at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of *tears* to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough *foolishness* to believe that you really can make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God’s grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

~~ Peace and all Good, Ray

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Spiritual Assistant’s Letter

From the Desk of **Bob Murray, OFS**

Our Goals - 10 April 2018

According to the dictionary a ‘goal’ is the result or achievement toward which effort is directed; it is the aim; it is the terminal point in a race. We do not achieve a goal by accident or by haphazardly arriving there without effort. As St. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.” One must take planned steps to achieve a goal, steps that must be followed with deliberate actions that focus on a desired achievement.

That’s how the United States was able to send men into space and later to the moon with Neil Armstrong becoming the first,

but not the only one, to walk on the its surface in 1969. That achievement was not by his effort alone but a national effort that took years of planning and action, action that required many ‘baby steps’ ... many steps of trial and error... learning experiences. Many astronauts had taken dangerous and deadly steps that eventually led to Neil Armstrong being the man to first sink his boot into the moon’s dust.

But there is much more to the story. He had not traveled there alone on this famous mission but with two other astronauts who did their part to achieve the goal President Kennedy had placed at the nation’s feet on September 12, 1962... to land a man on the moon and return him to earth before the end of the decade. Nor did these three men do this by themselves. Achieving this mission, this goal, took careful planning and a concerted effort by an unknown great multitude of people across the nation performing tasks large and small that each contributed to achieving the goal.

What goals do you have in your life today? If you want to visit the 9/11 Memorial in New York City or several National Parks or the Canadian Rockies this summer you will have to make some plans and take some action if you really want to do these things. Perhaps you would have to buy a car, however that would only be one step toward achieving your goal. What about making reservations and checking your bank account? OH! Will you need a passport?

As Secular Franciscans we have taken on several goals: to deepen our relationship with the Trinity, to live in fraternity life, to be servant-leaders as we strive to rebuild the Church as Francis was directed... and ultimately to live in eternity with God. But how will we achieve these goals? Do we have a plan? Do you have a plan? We must take action to carry out our plans, so what will that action look like? It cost a fortune to send a man to the moon during the 60’s. What will our actions cost us? Money? Time? Effort? Community involvement? Commitment? What?

Are we up to the challenge of taking on a goal or will we sit back like the man in the parable who built a bigger barn to hold his harvest... but wouldn’t live long enough to enjoy the harvest. Or, as in another parable, are we like the man who buried his masters talent rather than investing it because he knew the master was a hard man? We don’t have to reinvent the wheel or re-imagine how to get to the moon. We need each other for ideas, support and action to achieve the goals set before us. Yes, we have to pray about what our goals should be but we also must take action to create our goals and follow through.

So, have we become like the man with a bigger barn or the one who was afraid of risk, or are we truly servant-leaders? What part are you called to take to achieve the goals before us?

~~ Bob Murray, OFS

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Pope: Present in the Eucharist, Jesus transforms those who receive him



Pope Francis laughs after losing his zucchetto to a gust of window during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican March 21. At the audience the pope confirmed that he will visit Ireland Aug. 25-26 for the final days of the World Meeting of Families. (CNS/Paul Haring)

Vatican City — Despite the chill and gusts of wind in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis welcomed the beginning of spring with an impromptu lesson about gardening and how to grow into being better Christians.

"Does a tree or plant that is diseased bloom well? No! Does a tree or a plant that isn't watered ... bloom well? No. And does a tree or plant with no roots bloom?" he said before delivering his general audience talk March 21.

Christians can learn from what makes spring flowers flourish, the pope said, because for Christians, their root is Jesus and the water that replenishes those roots are the sacraments and prayer, which makes lives bloom with Christian virtues and good works.

"I wish that this spring would be for you a spring in bloom" and an Easter that blossoms, he said. Offering a saying that is well-known in Argentina, the pope said, "'The flowers a tree puts forth come from what it has underneath.' Never cut off (one's) roots with Jesus."

In his main talk, the pope continued his series on the Mass, focusing on the rite of holy Communion.

This rite is a continuation of Jesus' offer at the Last Supper, where he said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him," the pope said. The priest or deacon distributes to the faithful "the bread of life and the chalice of salvation" in Jesus, he said.

After the celebrant breaks the consecrated bread, the people reflect on the words spoken at the altar, proclaiming Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," he said.

This moment is an invitation, "calling us to experience the intimate union with Christ, source of joy and holiness," the pope said. It is also an invitation to an "examination of conscience, enlightened by the faith," he said.

On the one hand, "we see the distance that separates us from the holiness of Christ; on the other, we believe that his blood was shed to take away the sins," he said.

Just as baptism washes away sin, he said, "we are all forgiven or will be forgiven each time we approach the sacrament of reconciliation."

"Do not forget! Jesus always forgives. Jesus never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness," he added.

When St. Ambrose wrote, "I, who sin continually, must always have a remedy," he was reflecting on the salvific power of the blood shed by Christ, the pope said.

The same faith is at work, he said, when the assembly looks to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, and beseeches, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul will be healed."

When the people process toward the altar to receive Communion, the pope said, "in reality, it is Christ who comes toward us to assimilate us in him."

Receiving the Eucharist means letting oneself be transformed by what is received, he said.

"Every time we take Communion, we resemble Jesus more," increasingly being transformed in Jesus and stripping away one's selfishness by uniting oneself closer with Christ, he said.

Just as the bread and wine are turned into the real body and blood of Christ, he said, so too are those who receive the gifts, transformed into "a living Eucharist," becoming "body of Christ."

"We become what we receive," he said.

The pope said receiving Communion can be done standing "with devotion" or kneeling, whichever has been determined by each bishops' conference, and Communion can be received on the tongue or, where it is permitted, in the hand. He encouraged people to use the time after receiving Communion to pray more deeply, silently speaking with Jesus from the heart.

"The Eucharist makes us strong, to give us fruit, flowers of good works," he said. Receiving the Eucharist is receiving Jesus, who "is so good and so great," he transforms people.

(Submitted by Ray Hardwick, OFS)

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Most of us aren't likely to betray anyone to a death squad. But as we meditate on the events of the Passion, we might reflect on the times we've betrayed a trust, the times we've talked about someone behind their back, the times we've stayed silent when a friend has been ridiculed. Resolve to keep silent when tempted to gossip and to speak out when others are gossiping. That sounds like a challenge, doesn't it? It is. Pray for the grace to meet it. —from the book *The Hope of Lent: Daily Reflections from Pope Francis* (Submitted by Ray Hardwick, OFS)

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Feast of Dazzling Light
By Joan Chittiser, OSB

"The true division of humanity," Victor Hugo wrote in *Les Miserables*, "is between those who live in light and those who live in darkness." Victor Hugo, it seems, understood Easter.

We love to think of Easter as the feast of dazzling light. We get up on Easter Sunday morning knowing that the sorrow of Good Friday is finally ended, that the pain of the cross has been compensated for by a burst of brilliant victory from the gates of the grave, that Jesus is vindicated, that the faith of the disciples is confirmed for all to see, and that everyone lived happily ever after. We love fairy tales. Unfortunately, Easter is not one of them.

On the contrary, Easter is raw reality. Easter stands in stark witness, not to the meaning of death, but to the meaning of what it is to go on despite death, in the face of death—because of death. To celebrate Easter means to stand in the light of the empty tomb and decide what to do next. Until we come to realize that, we stand to misread the meaning not simply of the Easter gospel but of our own lives. We miss the point. We make Easter an historical event rather than a life-changing commitment. We fail to realize that Easter demands as much of us now as it did of the apostles then.

Most of all we miss the very meaning of the Easters that we are dealing with in our own lives, in our own time.

Easter is the feast that gives meaning to life. It is the feast that never ends. After Easter, the tomb stands open for all of us to enter. If Jesus is risen, then you and I have no choice but to go into the tomb, put on the leftover garments ourselves, and follow Jesus back to Galilee where the poor cry for food and cripples cry to be taken to the pool and the blind wait for the spittle on their eyes to dry. All the fidelity in the world will not substitute for leaving the tomb and beginning the journey all over again. Today. Every day. Always.

That's what Easter is really about. It is the "division of humanity" to which Hugo refers in his dramatic rendering of the struggle between light and dark. Yes, Easter is about dazzling light—but only if it shines through us.

(Submitted by Ray Hardwick, OFS)

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Pope Francis and hell

by Thomas Reese by Religion News Service

Social media has been going crazy with reports that Pope Francis has denied the existence of hell. Even some mainstream media have picked up the story supposedly based on an interview by an Italian journalist.

Anyone who has followed the pope's talks and sermons would immediately know that something does not smell right here. The pope has in fact spoken of hell in the past in a way that clearly indicates that he believes in it.

In 2014, the pope mentioned hell when calling the Mafia to conversion. In 2016, he said that people who do not open their hearts to Christ will end up condemning themselves to hell. The same year, he referred to hell as "the truth" and described it as being "far away from the Lord for eternity."

The most extensive papal explanation of hell came in response to a 2015 question from a female scout who asked, "If God

forgives everyone, why does hell exist?" Francis acknowledged that this was a "good and difficult question."

The pope spoke of a very proud angel who was envious of God, reports Catholic News Service.

"He wanted God's place," said Francis. "And God wanted to forgive him, but he said, 'I don't need your forgiveness. I am good enough!'"

"This is hell," explained the pope. "It is telling God, 'You take care of yourself because I'll take care of myself.' They don't send you to hell, you go there because you choose to be there. Hell is wanting to be distant from God because I do not want God's love. This is hell."

Most contemporary theologians would agree with the pope. Hell is not about fire and brimstone; it is about our freedom to say no to God, our freedom to reject love and choose loneliness. If you believe in freedom, you have to believe in hell.

When we close our hearts and tell the world to go to hell, we are in fact choosing hell for ourselves. Hell is the absence of love, companionship, communion. We are not sent there; we choose it.

God did not create hell; we did.

On the other hand, some theologians think that hell is empty because once we meet God, we will choose him.

So why the confusion about Francis and hell?

The confusion came from Eugenio Scalfari, the 93-year-old co-founder and former editor of *La Repubblica*, an Italian daily, who in a March 28 story claims the pope told him "Hell does not exist."

This is not the first time Scalfari has caused a sensation by reporting his conversations with the pope. Scalfari is an atheist friend with whom the pope enjoys talking. Scalfari presents detailed quotations of the pope despite the fact he does not record their conversations or even take notes. Every reporter in Rome knows that you cannot take Scalfari's reports seriously, but his stories are just too sensational to be ignored.

The Vatican press office has issued a mild statement indicating no quotation in the article can "be considered as a faithful transcription of the words of the Holy Father." What it should have said is that the article was absolute nonsense. It could then have given reporters the pope's 2015 explanation of hell. That would have saved everyone a lot of confusion.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a columnist for Religion News Service and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*.]

(Submitted by Ray Hardwick, OFS)

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Against the values of the world, Jesus gave up his power in heaven to live as a poor outcast on earth. Loving his people as a shepherd loves his sheep, he led with mercy over judgment, justice over greed, reconciliation over exclusion, and humble service over heavy demands. He associated with the weak and the lowly while criticizing the rich and haughty, announcing a kingdom turned upside down in which the last shall be first and the first shall be last. In his final act of humility, he laid down his life so that others might live, telling his disciples to do the same.

Against the values of the world, Jesus Christ came preaching and showing that greatness is not found in power, wealth, and prestige, but in weakness, poverty, and humble service to the lost and forgotten. —from *Called: What Happens After Saying Yes to God*
(Submitted by Ray Hardwick, OFS)

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Many years ago there was a movie called the "Seventh Seal." In one scene, death takes the form of a human person and appears to a man. A conversation followed: The man said to Death, "Why does God hide Himself? Why doesn't He reveal Himself? Why doesn't God stretch out His hand and touch us? Why doesn't He at least say something to us?"

To which Death said, "God doesn't do this, does He? He doesn't reach out, He doesn't speak, He just remains silent." Then the man said, "That's right, He doesn't do a thing. He doesn't speak to us, and sometimes I wonder if He is really out there." And Death went on, "Well, maybe He is not there, maybe no one is out there. Maybe we are here all alone, did you ever think of that?"

Did you ever think of that? Ever feel as if there is no God? That there was no one out there, that you are alone? Many of us, I am sure, can relate to the conversation between death and the man. There are times when we seem to be all alone in the world. There are times when we wonder if God is really out there, during loss, illness: we long for some sign that He is out there, and that He cares about us. And we, like Thomas, begin to doubt.

While I was in Catholic University many years ago, I was asked to teach a high school religion class. It went well, except for Tommy. Tommy turned out to be the Atheist in residence. He constantly objected to or smirked at the possibility of an unconditionally loving God.

One day, as he was leaving, he said to me, "Do you think I will ever find God?"

I decided on some shock therapy. "No," I said, "but I am absolutely certain He will find you."

Just a few years later, Tommy was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He came to see me, I was at a loss as to what to say. Tommy sensed this and said, "What would you like to know? How I feel about dying? It could be worse. Like being fifty and still thinking that booze and making money are the main things in life.

When I was told that I did not have long, I got serious about locating God. But God did not show Himself, so I quit trying. Then I remembered something we read in your class."

"The essential sadness is to go through life without loving, but it would be equally sad to go through life and leave this world without ever telling those you loved that you had loved them. So I began with the hardest, my dad.

He did two things he never did before: he cried, and he hugged me, and we talked all night, even though he had work the next day."

"It was easier with my mom and younger brother. I was only sorry about one thing: that I had waited so long. Here I was in the shadow of death and I was just beginning to open up to my family. Then one day, I turned around and God was there. He did not come to me when I pleaded with Him. I was like an animal trainer, holding out a hoop, telling God to jump through. Apparently, God does things in His own way and time. But the important thing is that He was there.

He found me, even after I stopped looking for Him."

Tommy was saying something very important. He was saying the surest way to find God is not to make Him a private possession, a problem-solver or an instant consolation in time of need, but by reaching up to His love and then reaching out to those around us. Isn't it interesting that only when Thomas in our Gospel returned to the community, only then was he able to say, my Lord and my God?

It was when young Tommy was reconciled with his family that he was able to let God in. That is why, even if we doubt, we should stick with the community.

If your diet is People magazine, HBO, and pop culture, if you hang around skeptical, unbelieving people, then you are in trouble. Your faith is not fed, belief does not do well in faithless company any more than resistance to drugs rarely survives well among drug-taking friends. Faith is like a muscle in the body: if you do not use it, it begins to weaken. If you do not exercise your faith, it too dies.

The way you exercise your faith is by living it. First and foremost, you have to talk to God. We call that prayer. You have to talk to God because you cannot have a relationship with anyone unless you communicate with them. When Death asks the question, "Is there anyone out there" the answer is a firm "Yes!"

If you are a person of faith, hold on to it. Exercise it, use it, it is a gift more precious than gold. You are indeed fortunate when you can say, and *believe*, the words of St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Father Bob Warren, S.A.

Fr. Robert Warren, S.A.

Franciscan Friar of the Atonement

(Submitted by Ray Hardwick, OFS)

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Maybe we should all do this every day.

A Trusting Soul

"Pray as much as you can for the dying. By your entreaties, obtain for them trust in My mercy, because they have most need of trust, and have it the least. Be assured that the grace of eternal salvation for certain souls in their final moment depends on your prayer. You know the whole abyss of My mercy, so draw upon it for yourself and especially for poor sinners. Sooner would heaven and earth turn into nothingness than would My mercy not embrace a trusting soul".

Words of Jesus to St. Faustina

(Submitted by Ray Hardwick, OFS)

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Secular Franciscan Saint/Blessed of the Month Club:

(Catholic saints are holy people and human people who lived extraordinary lives. Each saint the Church honors responded to God's invitation to use his or her unique gifts. God calls each one of us to be a saint.)



**Blessed Gerard of Villamagna
(Beato Gerardo di Villamagna)
Feast Day – May 23**

About the year 1200, Gerard was born of poor parents at Villmagna, not far from Florence. The parents were tillers of the soil and managed the fields of a wealthy family living in the city of Florence. As Gerard lost both his parents early in life, this family took the boy into their own home and taught him to live a pious and Christian life. The boy pleased his benefactors as much with his natural gifts as with the practice of every virtue.

Gerard had just about reached the age of young manhood, when a son of the family, who belonged to the Knights of Jerusalem, chose him as his companion for his journey to the Holy Land. In an encounter with the unbelievers, both were taken captive, and they were not ransomed before they endured much tribulation.

When his master died soon after, Gerard visited the holy places in Palestine and then returned to his country. There he lived in the cabin of his parents near Villamagna, in order to lead a humble and retired life. But not long afterwards Blessed Gerard of Villamagna heeded the request of another Knight of Jerusalem, and joined him on a voyage to Syria. The ship on which they sailed with some twenty other knights, was pursued by pirates with far superior power, but through Gerard's earnest prayer, they were saved by a miracle.

When Gerard had been in Jerusalem for some time, the superiors of the knight offered him, because of his virtue and piety, the privilege of joining the order as a brother servant, which he gladly did. In his new vocation he rendered the sick and the pilgrims so much charity and was withal so devout at prayer, that he was quite generally called the holy brother. But that

wounded the humility of unassuming Gerard, with the result that he obtained the consent of his superiors to return to his native town in Italy.

There Blessed Gerard of Villamagna was invested with the habit of the Third Order – it is said that St Francis himself gave it to him. Then Gerard withdrew to a hermitage near Villamagna. Here he led an extremely austere life, and received the gift of profound contemplation on the divine mysteries. But his charity urged him to devote himself also to the sick and the poor. He himself went from door to door and begged for them. In distributing the alms, he admonished them to lead a truly Christian life.

Gerard also proved his love for souls by visiting week after week three churches situated at a great distance from one another. At the first, he prayed for the holy souls in purgatory. At the second, he pleaded for the remission of his own sins. At the third, he prayed for grace and enlightenment for all believers and unbelievers. St Leonard of Port Maurice in his day cherished one of these churches, located on Mt Incontro, so highly that he built a friary there dedicated to holy retirement.

In his hermitage Gerard applied himself so continually to prayer upon his knees, that the latter were covered with thick calluses, as is recorded also of St James the Apostle.

Rich in merits and regarded by all as a saint, Gerard died in the month of May, 1242, on the day he had previously mentioned to his confessor. Many miracles occurred at his grave, for which reason his hermitage was converted into a church. The veneration paid to Blessed Gerard of Villamagna steadily accorded him for more than six hundred years was sanctioned by Pope Gregory XVI, in 1833.

from The Franciscan Book of Saints, edited by Marion Habig, OFM

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***(From the Word Among Us Catholic Magazine –
Daily Meditations for Easter, 2018)***

Saturday, April 28, 2018

Saint Peter Chanel, Priest and Martyr (Optional Memorial)

Acts 13:44-52

They shook the dust from their feet. (Acts 13:51)

Has this ever happened to you? You try hard to do what you think God wants, but things don't turn out the way you hope. You offer to pray with a co-worker for healing, but he politely declines. You dive into a parish ministry, only to find that your help isn't needed after all. Despite your persistent praying, a family member still won't return your phone calls.

Even the apostles Paul and Barnabas encountered disappointments in their journeys. But instead of giving in to frustration or discouragement, they "shook the dust from their feet" and moved on (Acts 13:51). This might sound like a gesture of condemnation, but perhaps we should look at it as a way of separating themselves from a volatile situation. Rather than staying mired in a fruitless conflict, they commended the people to God, and moved on to the next town.

What would shaking the dust look like for us? After all, we can't always move from town to town! Here are three suggestions:

First, *forgive*. Let God's mercy cover the past. Don't let resentment or bitterness weigh you down. Instead, trust that God will take care of whatever situation you could not resolve.

Second, *let go*. Be careful not to replay the situation over and over in your mind. You have left it in God's hands, and now you are free to take the next good step.

Third, *move on*. What is God asking of you now? Maybe he wants to show you a different path. Maybe you need some time away from the situation to regroup and let the Lord step in.

Spend a few moments reflecting on a recent disappointment, and walk yourself through these three steps: Forgive. Let go. Move on. But always in a spirit of patience and love. Remember that like Paul and Barnabas, it's your job to plant the seeds, and it's God's part to give the growth. Some seeds take time. Some seeds remain underground for years before they sprout and

grow. Keep praying, and trust that the Lord will work out his plan according to his wisdom in his own good time.

“Lord, help me to shake off the ‘dust’ of resentment, disappointment, and frustration. Jesus, I trust in your timing.”

- Psalm 98:1-4
- John 14:7-14

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Please keep in your prayers:

(If you are in need of prayers, please email me at lisa.sfo@att.net and I'll add your intentions to our list below:) and please add to your Prayer List the following:

Please continue to pray for comfort, consolation and strength for Jim Neufell.

Bob Murray's wife Diane is having leg problems, please pray for her health concerns. Update 4/19/18: Finally heard today the tumor is benign but they will schedule surgery to remove it anyway. Once done my wife can decide if to have back surgery. Thanks for asking. Peace, Bob

Please pray for the health of my husband Bob Boebinger, he has a lot of pain and several health issues. We're hoping he can go back to work soon. Thank you kindly! (Lisa)

Update 4/18/18 on Brenda's son Joseph who was in a pretty bad motorcycle accident on Sept 2nd 2017: Hi Lisa, Joseph is still recovering but doing well. His PCL, one of the ligaments that connects the femur to the tibia was severed. The doctor says he will always have pain and trouble with that leg. A thorn in the flesh you might say. He has been back to working full time since January and has recently started going to the gym. Thank you all for your prayers and concern. God is good! Peace and all good, brenda

Please continue to pray for Georgia Zepke's Mom Ruthie King who is still not doing very well with dementia. Please keep the family in your prayers. Please add Tiffany Maskew to our prayer list. She is only thirty years old and she had a stroke. Thanks, Carol

Please continue to pray for Ken Wilde for emotional reasons and migraines and pneumonia. Ken also had surgery on his right hand. **(Ken is very lonely! He would like his fraternity brothers and sisters to call him, or come by to visit if they can, but please call him first.)**

Please continue to keep Jo-Ann Hardwick in your prayers. She is now home from the hospital. And Ray who has a lot of pain in his knees, lower back and hip and also has the flu.

Updated 1/13/18: Donna Baylor's daughter Beth is in need of prayers, she suffers from intermittent anxiety. She's fine most of the time but every now and then it pops up.

Updated 4/21/18: Please also keep Donna in your prayers. She is still sick, she had a pneumonia from hell – really bad, had to take special, really strong pills from scar tissue on her lungs. Has skin cancer on her ear and had to have surgery to take off part of her ear. It

finally stopped bleeding, weeping, scabbing – going through that cycle. Getting better now.

Please pray for Sekoia Spencer's sons Darius and Jason. Please continue to pray for David Burrola and Aarne Lozano.

Please continue to pray for Lorraine's beau Edward Watkins, still recovering from pneumonia. Edward also had an auto accident and is home recuperating. Please continue to pray for Stella Pacifica Caywood's sons Mark and Paul.

And please continue to pray for George & Barbara Molchan. Got a call from Lorraine, she left a message saying that our brother George Molchan is back on a feeding tube and has a new pacemaker. Please pray for all those unemployed in our fraternity who are looking for a job, along with those who have lost their healthcare coverage. And who are in great financial problems due to being unemployed and other problems.

And please continue to keep your Fraternity brothers and sisters in your prayers along with their intentions. **AND ... Have you hugged & prayed for your Franciscan Prayer Partner lately?**

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Your Monthly Pearls of Wisdom:

You can't always choose the path that you walk in life, but you can always choose the manner in which you walk it.

~~ John O'Leary

Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.

~~ Gandhi

You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life.

~~ Winston Churchill

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The Daily Extras:

Unscramble the following letters to reveal this May word:
agutrade

100 Years Ago on This Date: May 2, 1918: General Motors Corp. purchased Chevrolet Motor Co.

Wacky Weather: Did you know that lightning strikes about 100 times each second, with about 1,800 thunderstorms in progress over Earth's surface at any given time?

Riddle: It can be cracked; it can be made. It can be told; it can be played. What is it?

From the Book Bag: Mark Twain was not a fan of fellow novelist Jane Austen, at one point writing in a letter, "Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice* I want to dig her up and hit her over the skull with her own shin-bone."

Green Clean: Instead of buying air fresheners, purchase fragrant flowers, such as lilies, or grow fragrant flowers in your garden to cut and bring indoors.

Spelling Bee: Choose the correct spelling of this frequently misspelled word: privilege privileged privelege

World Traveler: Did you know that the Eiffel Tower leans as much as 7 inches (18 cm) in really hot weather because the portion of the structure that's in the sun expands more than the parts in the shade?

(Answer to scrambled word: graduate)

(Answer to Riddle: a joke)

(Answer to Spelling Bee: privilege)

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Preserving the Sanctity of Marriage:

“The family is threatened by growing efforts on the part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage, by a lack of openness of life.”

Leaning on the Lord:

“We have a Lord who is capable of crying with us and capable of walking with us in the most difficult moments of life.”

Every Child is a Gift:

“We need to see each child as a gift to be welcomed, cherished and protected.”

The Misery of Vanity:

“Those who give in to self-absorbed vanity have the most misery hiding inside them.”

~~ Pope Francis

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(Second part of St. Francis and His Approach to Divinity)

BASIC FRANCISCAN THEOLOGY

The first concept we need to understand is “kenosis” meaning self-emptying (self-giving). It is essential for all Christians and especially for us Franciscans to understand this idea. As an aside I want to insert the meaning of kenosis as understood by Bonaventure, as I think it more to the point and understandable for us today. Kenosis is the complete total and unconditional “self-giving” of all God is (and by extension it is our challenge also) for the good/well-being of the other. (Remember that the highest “good” is defined as love). “There is no greater love than this: to give His life for his friends.” (John 15, 13). The keywords are: “to give His life” and “friends”.

What greater sacrifice or gift can one give than life itself, that the other, the one who is loved might thrive?

Giving your life is in fact the gift of everything. God has revealed to us that we have been created in His image and likeness and that our fundamental nature is created to love and be loved. All are called to love everything and everyone completely, also our enemies. (John 13, 34; 15, 17; Mt 5, 44; Luke 6, 27 and 35; Romans 5, 8).

From St Paul in the beautiful hymn at the beginning of Philippians we hear the following: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in his very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing (kenosis = emptied himself), taking the very nature of a servant, he appeared in human form. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Phil 2, 5-8)

Pope Benedict XVI amplifies St Paul’s words by saying: “The love of God for us, initiated with the creation, became visible in the mystery of the Cross, in that kenosis of God, in that emptying and humiliating debasement of the Son about whom we have heard proclaimed by the apostle Paul in the magnificent hymn to Christ in the Letter to the Philippians.

Yes, the Cross reveals the fullness of the love of God for us. A crucified love, that does not stop with the scandal of Good Friday, but culminates in the joy of the Resurrection and Ascension to heaven and in the gift of the Holy Spirit, Spirit of love through whom sins will be forgiven and forgiveness and peace will be granted. . . In fact, while it is love that offers to man everything that God is (...), it is also a love where the very heart of God, the Omnipotent one, awaits the yes from his creatures (...).”

St. Francis knew well and understood this self-giving on God’s part, extending to all of us an eternal unconditional love: the self-emptying we call the Incarnation where Jesus descends from the heart of the Trinity and takes on our complete humanity; the self-emptying on the cross where Jesus gives up the precious gift of life so we might know just how consumed God is for love of us. There is nothing God would hold back (of Himself, for Himself) out of love for each one of us.

And lastly in the Eucharist, God continues to stoop down even lower that we might be able to see and respond to His great love for us. As Francis put it:

Oh admirable Highness, oh wonderful condescension! Oh sublime humbleness! Oh humble sublimity, that the Lord of the universe, God and Son of God, lowers himself down so much even to hiding himself, for our salvation, under the tiny piece of bread! Admire, brothers (and sisters), God’s humility and open your hearts to Him! Be humble, as well, and you will be exalted by Him. Therefore, hold back nothing of yourselves, so that you are completely received by The one who completely offers himself to you.” (St. Francis, Letter to the whole Order)

This self-giving is God’s eternal action of offering everything He is to be in a loving relationship with us, His creatures. We are, each one of us, the apple of God’s eye, the object of His love, the one God has called into being to be in relationship with Him for all eternity. This is kenosis!

Francis identified this self-emptying of God on our behalf as the “poverty of God,” discussed by St. Paul in 2Cor 8, 9, and adopted by Francis as a motivation for his choice of radical poverty for himself and for his followers. The poverty of Francis, then, is first of all “conforming to the poor Christ.” This expression was his way to understand and respond to the fullness of the love God showers on us without reservation. A God, who in His Son became humble and poor out of love for us. Radical poverty became Francis’ solution to be able to respond to God’s love as fully as he was humanly able, to remove any and everything that might come between himself and his ability to respond to the Love of the Father.

This experience of the humble and poor Jesus Christ, the revelation of humility and of poverty, of the love of God and the road to a humble and poor answer to such love on the part of man, is the insight and response on which Francis’ life is based, and that will guide everything he does up to the end of his earthly life. It is this that constitutes the typically Franciscan characteristic of the experience of God, of man, of the world.

The encounter of love between God and Francis (God who loves without condition, and who desires to be loved back, and Francis who loves Him back with all his being in the astonishment of being loved by the Highest God) is the living representation of the realization of God’s eternal plan for every man and woman, as it was for Francis.

As mentioned before, there are many spiritualities fully accepted by the Church. Most have their focus on the action of God through Jesus’ actions as expiation for sin [Doctrine of Atonement]. This is contained in the writings of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his writing “Why the God-Man?” and it forms the basis of many schools of theology. This over the centuries became the primary theology of the Church. But there is a fully accepted alternate theology, just as old, that survives today in the Franciscan Family.

For Francis, instead, Jesus in his humble, poor kenotic form of existence, is the revelation of the humble God. The alternate theology of the Franciscan school kept alive the radical love-centered image of God. In his work on the Primacy of Christ, Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus firmly rooted the Franciscan Family in understanding that God’s plan is based solely on Love and the Incarnation was always God’s plan [desire] to share Himself with us. This is the reality intuited by Francis.

The ultimate result of this movement away from the primary theology in the Church defines the Incarnation as the original intention/plan of God for all creation. The Incarnation is too

important an event to suggest that something man has done or failed to do could influence God's intent to love and be loved. Original sin is not the reason for the presence of God-with-us in human reality and history (Incarnation), God's love and free choice is!

The focus of all of God's self-emptying actions is to draw us into a freely chosen relationship with the Trinity, cooperating with the Spirit to lead us to Jesus, imitating Jesus who is our elder Brother and the beloved Son of the Father, and to allow Jesus and the Spirit to lead us into relationship with the Father.

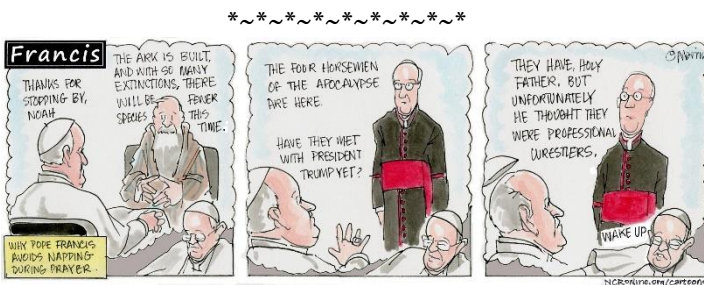
Yet there is a challenge here, especially for us Secular Franciscans. In coming to understand this great love and invitation to share in it, we are charged to live in the world in a way that reflects this great love. Love is only love when it is given away and the more love that is shared, the greater abundance we will receive. It is a hard challenge, because as people we often refuse to see the image of God in the "other" and therefore we refuse to love [think "take up our cross"]. We are not called to love just family and friends or maybe God, we are called to be love, and to live so that love shines in the darkness.

This is the insight that Francis came to understand, to believe and to live with every fiber of his being. Did he fail sometimes? I am sure he did, being as human as the rest of us. But the important thing is the desire to live our lives in constant conversion (metanoia), day after day trying to be just a bit more open to receive love and to respond with love.

The first article of our Rule charges us to follow Jesus in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi, making present our charism in the life and mission of the Church. How do we make this consecrated lifestyle present in our world today?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR SECOND PART (to reflect on at home.)

1. How does Franciscan theology differ from other theologies within the Church?
2. What do you feel about it?
3. How is our focus different?
4. How might this difference alter our perception about God?



Feel free to use the rest of this page for your notes from the Fraternity Gathering ...