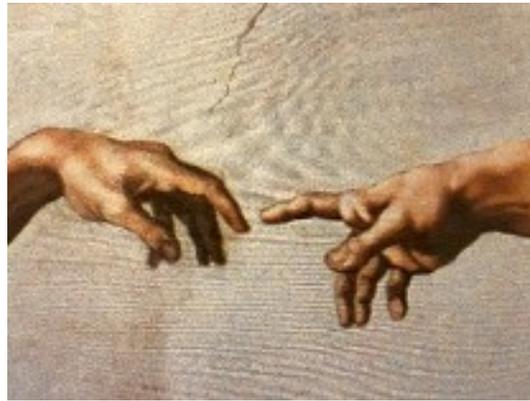


1 July 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the Lord Give You Peace. We are blessed that our region is located in such a richly spiritual part of the world. We are blessed with missions, mountains, beaches, and borderlands. How wonderful it is to journey with others from the northern part of our region in Santa Barbara to the southern most tip at Border Fields on the U.S./Mexican Border. While we journey, together, physically and/or spiritually, let us remember the words of St. Clare, as she taught us, her spiritual grandchildren, to meditate by Gazing, Considering, Contemplating, and Imitating our Lord and Savior.



Gaze and Contemplate

On June 17 I traveled to Santa Barbara to see the Sistine Chapel exhibition at the Mission Museum. I stopped in Los Angeles to meet Barbara Courtois, OFS, of the St. Francis of Assisi fraternity, and she drove us the last half of the journey. Soon after we arrived we were greeted warmly by some of the members of the St. Louis the King Franciscan Fraternity. Members there had either seen the exhibit or had plans to see it at another time. But, nonetheless, they greeted us and we had a wonderful Franciscan gathering, celebrating our shared love of St. Francis.

The exhibit was amazing. It features thirty-nine frescos from the Sistine Chapel. I am hard pressed to explain the way they were produced. I can only say they were large and duplicated clearly the originals. I, as many of you, have seen the Sistine Chapel and I am certain you were as moved as I was by the glory and majesty of the work in praise and glory to God. My journey there was now a few decades ago but I remember as if it were yesterday the powerful feeling that overcame me as I entered, looked up, and saw the hand of God reaching out for the hand of Adam. I was so overcome that I fell to the ground to gaze. I was quickly lifted out of my reverie by the guards but remember still the sense of how our Lord wants to reach out to us, be with us, guide, direct, and love us as we try to follow the path he has set for us on this earth. The memory continues to inspire me as I attempt to walk in the footsteps of St. Francis to the feet of our Lord.

Now that the fresco was right in front of me and I did not have to look 60 feet up and “keep moving” as the guards at the Sistine Chapel in Rome instructed us, albeit kindly, I could contemplate the beauty and power of the painting. I was able to sit quietly and follow the instruction of St. Clare to engage in a mystical seeing, a prayer of silence, and empty myself of everything to fill myself with the Spirit of God.

Let us join our Franciscan hearts, sisters and brothers, and gaze on our world with our Franciscan mystical lens, invite God to fill us with His Spirit, as we move through our lives, following our Rule to be rooted in Christ and carry His love into the world.

The exhibition will continue to be at the Santa Barbara Mission Museum until September 4. If possible, sisters and brothers, I encourage you to plan a wonderful day there.

For a short summary of contemplative practice of St. Clare, you may find the summary at this website helpful. <https://contemplativevision.wordpress.com/>

Many blessings.

Peace and All Good,
Patricia Grace, OFS
JPIC Animator, St. Francis Region



(Barbara Courtois, not pictured)

