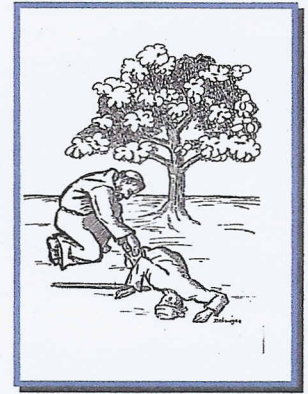


ECHO of ASSISI

FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

March 2010 Vol. 24



That They May
Become ONE Even
As We Are ONE.

Friends, for centuries, Christians have observed the season of Lent as a time to deepen their awareness of the presence of God in their lives, grow spiritually and renew their commitment to their Christian faith. As we begin another Lent let us use this time wisely to open ourselves to the One whose love knows no bounds and become more aware of those things that lessen our awareness of God and hinder our personal and spiritual growth. By taking an honest look at our lives, praying quietly, doing works of charity, fasting, and through other Lenten devotions, we will make Lent a holy time and grow in grace. With this in mind, let us pray:

Heavenly Father, it is you alone who knows us fully and can change us into the people you have called us to be. As we enter into this holy season, may we be filled with your hope; as we receive your gifts, may our hearts be opened to others; as we begin our journey with you, may we put no roadblocks in the road ahead. With the help of your Spirit, we will leave this season of grace changed and renewed. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Lenten Reflection

- Give up complaining--focus on gratitude.
- Give up pessimism--become an optimist.
- Give up harsh judgments--think kindly thoughts.
- Give up worry--trust Divine Providence.
- Give up discouragement--be full of hope.
- Give up bitterness--turn to forgiveness.
- Give up hatred--return good for evil.
- Give up negativism--be positive.
- Give up anger--be more patient.
- Give up pettiness--become mature.
- Give up gloom--enjoy the beauty that is all around you.
- Give up jealousy--pray for trust.
- Give up gossiping--control your tongue.
- Give up sin--turn to virtue.
- Give up giving up--hang in there!



WELCOME! We extend a warm Franciscan welcome to our newest Candidate: **ALBERTINA (Tina) MOROTTI** from New Jersey. She enjoys helping others and doing volunteer work at the local hospital and senior center. Tina began her candidacy in January, fulfilling a life-long yearning for consecrated life. Her address is: 719 S. State St. Vineland, NJ 08360; (856) 692-2188; Birthday: January 27. Tina will be in the St. Francis Local Mission.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fr. Jogues Constance, OFM Cap., R.I.P.

Local Ecclesiastical Assistant and Spiritual Director for F.M.J.C. in the Detroit, Michigan area, died December 19, 2009. He was 82 years old and had been suffering for some time with a brain tumor.

Fr. Jogues was born in 1927 in Marquette. He was invested in 1945, perpetually professed in 1949, and ordained in 1953. He taught at St. Anthony Seminary in Marathon, Wisconsin, before ministering with the Secular Franciscan Order in Detroit, MI (1970-1992). He then ministered at Monte Alverno Retreat Center in Appleton, Wisconsin, and finally as Chaplain at St. Francis Home in Mount Calvary., Wisconsin, until his retirement in 1997. He is survived by three brothers, Donald (Rose), James (Joyce), and H. Robert, all of Marquette. Father Jogues Funeral Mass was

December 22, 2009 at the St. Bonaventure Monastery Chapel, in Detroit, MI. May he rest in peace.

We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way.

ST. FRANCIS
OF ASSISI

"Life is no less beautiful when it is accompanied by illness or weakness, hunger or poverty, physical or mental diseases, loneliness or old age. Indeed, at these times, human life gains extra splendor as it requires our special care, concern and reverence. It is in and through the weakest of human vessels that the Lord continues to reveal the power of His love... We can never yield to indifference or claim helplessness when innocent human life is threatened or when human rights are denied."

Terence Cardinal Cooke, shortly before his death on October 6, 1983.



LOCAL MISSION'S TREASURERS ARE UP AND READY TO GO!

Members of Local Missions are now asked to send their monthly contributions to their elected Local Treasurer. **St. Clare LM: Sonja Steele** and **St. Francis LM: Kathleen Kaney**. We thank Sonja & Kathleen for setting up the necessary accounts and serving us in this ministry. The General Mission accounts are currently being set-up and on-going training for using Quicken financial software is in progress.

CONGRATULATIONS TO **FR. REGINALD REDDY**, who celebrated the 49th Anniversary of his Ordination on February 25, 2010. Blessed is he, who in name of the Lord, plants seeds, waters those that thirst, nourishes those that hunger, and patiently trusts in the Lord to make them grow. For someday he shall see all the fruits of his labors.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

2010 FMJC ANNUAL RETREAT will be the week of June 6 - 12, 2010, at Siena College Loudonville, NY.



Our Retreat Master will be Fr. Raphael Bonanno, OFM from Boston, MA. If he looks familiar you are right. Fr. Bonanno was our retreat master in 2005, his conference was on, "Desire for God" which were very inspiring and gave us a lot to reflect on. This year his conference will be on "Saint Francis and the Theology of the Body, using the writings of Pope John Paul II.

**If God brings you to it,
he will bring you through it.**

Thank You Bill Watts for serving as General Minister of the men's community. A letter recently went out to the community explaining the decision of the General Council to reunite the women and men as one community under the Association of the Faithful, in order to strengthen and ensure the unity of the Institute. This decision is no reflection of Bill's good leadership skills for being self motivated, and a person not shy in taking risks. The men will continue to work closely together and serve in other leadership roles within the community.

**ONGOING FORMATION IS ESSENTIAL
FOR KEEPING ONE'S FAITH AND VOCATION
ALIVE AND GROWING.**

The following was taken from Echo of Assisi Newsletter dated Dec. 1996/Jan. 1997 by Louise Principe, FMJC

"Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62)

**Volunteers
Needed...**

**TO TRY OUT
CONFERENCE CALLING**

Samuel Horton may have found a new way for us to connect with one another - and it's free! *Skype-to-Skype video calls* - All you need is a computer.... Anyone willing and able to try it out for us please give Samuel a call.



Ongoing Reminder! If you know of someone in the community being in the hospital or in need of our special prayers, or if word on a matter has to get out quickly, please contact our Local Mission Contact persons, so they can get word out to the whole community. When and if Lena or Debbie is feeling under the weather or are away from home, please don't hesitate to volunteer and make the calls for them. St. Francis LM = Lena Celano, FMJC
St. Clare LM = Debbie Martinez



Please mark your calendars for our
**FMJC Community Conference Call
to pray Evening Prayer together on
Easter Sunday, April 4 at 8:15 PM.**

The Dial-in phone number is
1-800-393-0640

After dialing in you dial your participants
pass code 1 4 2 4 8 3 #

**LET OUR VOICES BE ONE IN PRAYER
ON THIS GLORIOUS DAY!**

"Be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." (1 Cor. 15:58)

In December continuing our series on perseverance, we considered the vow of obedience and some of the sacrifices involved in living it. This month I would like to consider our vow of chastity.

I am quite certain that we are all very much aware of the sacrifices involved in living "perfect continence observed in celibacy" and to avoid sins against the sixth and ninth commandments. However, every Christian must observe the commandments and many people remain celibate for personal or professional reasons. Consequently, our vow of chastity must go further than this.

Our Constitution is very enlightening on this matter:

CHASTITY

Article 12

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35)

By committing themselves in consecrated chastity, Missionaries answer to the call of grace and give themselves to God with total and undivided love. In and with Jesus Christ they love, without distinctions or conditions, all members of the human family.

Aware that God's gift of consecrated chastity is

given for the common good, Missionaries place themselves at the complete disposal of the Father, conforming themselves to Christ and being open to the love which the Holy Spirit infuses in their hearts. In this way they acquire that interior freedom which begets spiritual fruitfulness. They appear in the world as a prophetic sign of the reign of God.

By their vow of chastity, Missionaries undertake the obligation of perfect continence observed in celibacy; the moral intention of this consecration is for life, even though the juridical bond is renewed annually during the period of temporary incorporation.

By our vow of consecrated chastity, we commit ourselves to **love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with our whole mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.** (Mt. 22:37-39) It is in our commitment to **unconditional, undivided, and non-exclusive love** that we find the greatest struggles to be faithful. It is in failures to love that the greatest sins against chastity lie.

To **love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with our whole mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves** requires proper relationships between three persons: God, ourselves and our neighbor. But what is the correct relationship?

Our Constitution states very simply that, in responding to God's "call of grace," Missionaries "give themselves to God with total and undivided love." Very simple... We must be able to say with St. Francis, "My God and my All." God must be sufficient for us. All our wants, needs, and desires must be met in God. All our hopes, dreams and goals must be fulfilled in him. God must be sufficient for us.

Our Constitution states further that "in and with Jesus Christ" we "love, without distinctions or conditions, all members of the human family." In this way the gift of consecrated chastity, "given for the common good" bears fruit apostolically.

Thus our priorities must be oriented so that God is first in all things, and so that in him we love others

and ourselves. Such chaste love must be **unconditional, undivided, and non-exclusive.** To love this way – to love as God loves – is humanly impossible. Only with the grace of God can we do so.

What are some of the greatest difficulties in being faithful to our vow of consecrated chastity? I believe the greatest difficulties lie in a failure to put God first and a failure to love unconditionally and non-exclusively. Let me explain.

There are many ways in which we are guilty of **failure to put God first**, but all involve putting either ourselves or our neighbor first. Obvious examples include selfishness, self-centeredness, inconsiderateness, meanness, lack of charity, revenge, gossiping, and calumny.

Less obvious, and therefore more dangerous, are getting so involved in our apostolate, ministry or work that we neglect prayer; using others to satisfy our need for affection or attention; putting our families and/or children ahead of our community and our religious responsibilities. These are all ways of putting our neighbor ahead of God.

At times of illness or other stress it is very easy to fall into the temptation of withdrawing into ourselves, feeling sorry for ourselves, and even giving into self-pity. At such times it is easy to make excuses for not attending daily Mass, neglecting our prayers, or skipping a DOR. These are all ways of putting ourselves ahead of God.

It is in failure to love unconditionally and non-exclusively that we are most often tempted to unfaithfulness to our vow of chastity. To understand this, we must appreciate the fact that consecrated chastity is vowed within a community, for the common good. The purpose of the Vow is to lead to the virtue of charity, to openness to the love of the Holy Spirit and to interior freedom.

By our vow of chastity we freely give up marriage and a family – that is, we give up all claims to exclusive love of or for any human being. Our hearts are reserved for God alone and for all our brothers and sisters in him.

On a human level this can lead to **loneliness**, especially in those who are not closely united to God by a strong prayer life. In times of trial, we do not have one human being who will always be there for us such as a devoted spouse. We do not always have family to help and support us in time of need.

Loneliness is part of the cross of the vow of chastity and is to be expected. How we deal with our loneliness will often determine whether we persevere in our vocation.

The appropriate way of dealing with loneliness is to turn to God in prayer and to our neighbor in service. No one who has God at the center of their lives is every truly lonely. No one who can say God is sufficient for them will ever feel lonely.

However, it is often easier to deal with our loneliness by giving our hearts and our love to creatures rather than to God – to fail to love non-exclusively.

There are many ways we can fall into this, and it is very easy to do so. The most serious way is obviously to seek and intimate and exclusive relationship with one person. This is very dangerous and can easily lead to sin and loss of vocation. Other rather obvious failures to love unconditionally and non-exclusively are racism, sexism and ageism.

Less obvious ways include particular and exclusive friendships, failure to treat others equally, playing favorites, putting others down so as to build ourselves up, and manipulating and using others to suit our purposes, failing to love ourselves and take proper care of ourselves, making inconsiderate and/or unreasonable demands on another's time, and becoming excessively involved in work. In all these situations we fail to love non-exclusively and unconditionally.

Profession day is always an experience of Tabor, a spiritual high which is undescrivable. We truly and sincerely intend to dedicate ourselves to God wholly, completely, entirely and unconditionally for his greater honor and glory and the love and service of our neighbor. But gradually and insidiously, the flame of love can flicker and burn less brightly. We

may be choked by the cares and concerns of the world. We may turn in on ourselves in sin or selfishness.

At first there are little infidelities, but if they are not checked bigger falls, outright sins and a loss of vocation will surely follow.

Faithfulness to our vow of chastity will eventually lead us to perfection of the virtue of charity. In imitation of the Love who became incarnate in Jesus, we will be the world's greatest lovers. We should strive for nothing less.



from Bonnie

Jesus took three of his disciples and went up the mountain to pray. There they saw Jesus in all his glory. Having received more than they could of ever imagined, the disciples wanted to pitch tents and stay on top of the mountain, to hold on to the moment, leaving the world below. It was enough for them, their life was now complete, so they thought. However, their mission wasn't to find self-fulfillment. Rather, it was to follow in the footsteps of Jesus; whose mission it was to carry the cross, suffer and die, before he was to rise again.

So often we want to avoid the cross and all the suffering and opposition that comes with it, holding back from total involvement and self sacrifice. Like the disciples on the mountain of the transfiguration we want the hold on to what gives us comfort and self-fulfillment, but, that is not always possible. Before we can share in the resurrection, we must follow the way of the cross. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." *Luke 9:23, 28-36*

Peace to all and a meaningful Lent. Bonnie.



TAU CROSS



The first recorded reference to the TAU is from Ezekiel 9:4, "Go through the city of Jerusalem and put a TAU on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it." The TAU is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and looks very much like the letter "T".

At the Fourth Lateran Council, on November 11, 1215, Pope Innocent made reference to the TAU and quoted the above verse in reference to the profaning of the Holy Places by the Saracens. It is widely accepted that St. Francis was present at the Fourth Lateran Council and that he heard the words of Pope Innocent III when he said, "The TAU has exactly the same form as the Cross on which our Lord was crucified on Calvary, and only those will be marked with this sign and will obtain mercy who have mortified their flesh and conformed their life to that of the Crucified Savior. From then on, the TAU became Francis' own coat of arms.

Francis used the TAU in his writings, painted in on the walls and doors of the places where he stayed, and used it as his only signature on his writings.

St. Bonaventure said, "This TAU symbol had all the veneration and all the devotion of the saint: he spoke of it often in order to recommend it, and he traced it on himself before beginning each of his actions."

Thomas of Celano, another Franciscan historian writes, "Francis preferred the Tau above all other symbols: he utilized it as his only signature for his letters, and he painted the image of it on the walls of all the places in which he stayed."

In the famous blessing of Brother Leo, Francis wrote on parchment, "May the Lord bless you and keep you! May the Lord show His face to you and be merciful to you! May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace! God bless you Brother Leo!" Francis sketched a head (of Brother Leo) and then drew the TAU over this portrait.

Due, no doubt, in large part to Francis' own affection for and devotion to the TAU, it has been a well recognized and accepted Franciscan symbol among Franciscans of various denominations and of all orders within those denominations for centuries. It remains so today. The TAU carries with it all of the symbolism of the Cross of Christ as well as Francis' ideal of life and dream for himself and his followers. *Credit: Ken E Norian, TSSF from <http://www.tssf.org/tau.htm>*

SPIRITUAL ASSOCIATION

Please keep in prayer all persons enrolled in our Spiritual Association/Memorial Fund especially on your Day of Recollection offering that Mass for all those who have been enrolled in the Association. This is a serious obligation binding on all FMJCs.

FMJC PRAYER INTENTIONS

1. **Fr. Stephen Hartdegen, all our benefactors, all who have asked our prayers, those for whom we promised to pray, and those who have no one to pray for them.**
2. **For the bishops of all the dioceses in which there are FMJC members, and especially for Bishop Hubbard of the Diocese of Albany.**
3. **For those who are considering FMJC vocations, that they may be open to the Holy Spirit and know the will of God for them, and for those who have been part of our community.**
4. **In gratitude for the graces bestowed upon us as individuals and as a community.**
5. **For members of the Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, the Poor Clare Nuns of Roswell, NM, the Poor Clare Nuns of Andover, MA and the Sisters of Jesus Crucified.**
6. **That the vocation to consecrated secularity be better known and understood.**
7. **That we may be of one mind and one heart, insuring peace and unity within the community.**
8. **For each other and for all Community Intentions and for the members of our Spiritual Association/ Memorial Fund.**
9. **For deceased Franciscan Missionaries of Jesus Crucified.**