


# Franciscan Times

EASTER TIDE, 1986

Dear friends:



It is the beginning of Easter week. The sun is shining and the sky is blue. It is chilly and windy, which is more typical of March than the weather we've been having lately. Montana Lents are usually cold and nasty; perhaps conducive to a penitential mood. This year, we had warm weather and sun, with leaves beginning to bud out and a few hardy flowers in bloom. Perhaps this is a better way to think of Lent -- as a growing, budding, waking, stretching time. I spent Holy Saturday raking in my yard with my two-year-old grandson. Cleaning out the old garbage; the leaves of last fall and the litter of winter -- putting it all into bags and hauling them (with Thaddeus along for the ride) in the wheel barrow to the garbage pick-up site. A satisfying job; one of my few jobs that seems to stay done for a while. And a good sort of thing to be doing, I thought, on that day. A good metaphor for clearing out the old and making room for the new, the joy of Easter.

I'm not much of a gardener, or I could extend the metaphor -- and maybe I will anyway -- to include putting the old leaves into a compost pile. Then the old garbage of my life can turn into a material that promotes new growth; can become humus -- a root word which gave us the word "humble -- capable of supporting life."

Here is your new Franciscan Times. Later than I'd hoped. If you don't see news of your Fellowship here, it's because no one sent it to me. Do let us know what you're doing as Fellowships, as individuals, as followers of Francis in this beautiful, ugly, happy, and scary world we live in.

Remember to send your news to me at: 2020 Hauser Blvd., Helena, Montana 59601.

*Peace & good.* Joanne  
Joanne Maynard

The Second Annual South Central Convocation of the Third Order will take place April 25-27 at Our Lady of Sorrows Convention in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Sister Cecilia will give three meditations, and Br. Robert Hugh will address the group. Group discussion leaders will be The Rev. Masud Syedullah, chaplain; Dee Dobson, Guardian; Marie Webner, Fellowship Coordinator; and Mary Ann Jackman, Women's Formation Director.

Along with this announcement came the announcement of the Austin Fellowship Meeting on April 5 at the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest, with Fr. John Price speaking on spiritual direction.

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Of interest to Tertiaries: The Scriptorium, All Saints' Convent, P.O. Box 3127, Catonsville, MD 21228, has superb cards for all occasions, set out in an attractive catalog which can be had for the asking. Cards, with envelopes are 15¢ each. #377-382 are based on the Canticle of the Sun. I've often used the cards to decorate the Times.



THE GEORGIA FELLOWSHIP prints a good newsletter every month. It sometimes features hand-colored designs. Paddy Kennington has been working hard at the Night Shelter in Savannah. Their February newsletter, under the heading Mything the Point? had these two quotes: "War isn't the good life, but it's life." (Capt. Kirk, Startrek) "Nothing's worse than a dishwasher full of spots." (TV ad)

Paddy was honored as "Citizen of the Year" by the National Association of Social Workers, Local Chapter. She was presented the award by former TO postulant Wayne Welch, who as names Social Worker of the Year. Jacqui Belcher and her dog Souki have started a "Pet therapy" at local nursing homes.

THE "LAND OF THE SKY" FELLOWSHIP had some new people present at their December meeting. One antipodal couple has joined them: Ted and Rae Witham. They are in this country from Australia. Fr. Witham is attending classes at Duke University. (This Fellowship is in Western North Carolina, by the way.)

Their January meeting was held at Grace Church in Asheville. An adult class focusing on Franciscan spirituality was discussed, to be held at the church. David Nard and Heber Peacock presented the program, which included Heber's slides of Assisi. The film "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" was also shown at the church.

David Nard has been appointed area chaplain for Kentucky and Tennessee. The Annual Fellowship Retreat will be held at Living Waters Reflection Center in Maggie Valley, NC in the first weekend in May. In March, they held a joint meeting with St. Francis of the Hills, Roman SFO fraternity. The meeting began with luncheon, then the film, "Troubadour of God's Peace." Then they prayed the Stations of the Cross. Then Carole was received as a novice.

HELEN WEBB WRITES:

I've found another treasure of a book; The Prayer of COSA -- Praying in the Way of Francis of Assisi, by Cornelia Jessey. (Winston Press -- paperback, 1985)

She writes a series of meditations on the hands of St. Francis for each day of the week. Although her thoughts are personal, time and again she tries to see how St. Francis might have reacted to present-day life. I found the result interesting and thought-provoking.



THE PHILADELPHIA AREA FELLOWSHIP continues to struggle along -- sometimes triumphantly, sometimes limping. There are three new aspirants/postulants who have called us to greater accountability, and we thank God for them. That accountability in 1986 looks like quarterly meetings with prayer, study, and sharing -- plus a corporate celebration of Francis' and Clare's feast days. Still many of us (continued page 3)



The Resurrection, Albrecht Dürer

who love our Lord and Francis deeply and are committed to the Third Order, find fellowship meetings one of the most costly forms of obedience given other priorities. It is a continual quest for simplicity! Please pray for us to be faithful, write Jean Carr and Katharine Watt, co-convenors.

Jean and Katharine also commend to us the book Money, Sex and Power, Challenge of the Disciplined Life, by Richard Foster (Harper & Row). These are the "big three," to which poverty, chastity, and obedience is one response. As followers of Christ in the Third Order, we are asked to deal with the many ethical choices in these areas daily. It has been bread for our journey; and we invite you to share the feast.

#### BOOK REVIEW:

*The Admonitions of Saint Francis of Assisi* by Lothar Hardick, OFM. With an appendix by Sister M. Ethelburga Hacker, OSF. (Translated by David Smith. pp 316 + xxiii. Franciscan Herald Press. Cloth. \$15.00)

Among the accepted writing of St. Francis, The Admonitions have a special place. Hardick suggests that they are a "collection of short admonitory addresses given at various times by Francis." (p. viii) Here we have a genuine "mirror of perfection" held up to his followers by the saint himself. This book contains a revised version of the reflections on The Admonitions which were published between 1959 and 1969 by Kajetan Esser, OFM.

The Appendix gives a valuable guide to the use of The Admonitions so that they can become a living reality for all lovers and followers of Francis in our times. The superb commentary unfolds the deepest meaning of the texts and is a sure sid to understanding the mind of Francis. For all Christians, this is a challenging guide to spirituality and discipleship. There is ample material for reflection, meditation, and prayer.

-- Brother John-Charles, SSF

LORD  
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SERVE YOU  
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Jean Carr sent this photo of a banner in her room.



#### OUT OF AFRICA

Two newsletters have arrived from Laura (Adamski) Zeeman and her new husband, Zane, who are now back in South Africa and busily working at Africa Enterprise, under David Bliss and the Society for Frontier Mission. They were married on November 2 of last year. In January, they participated in a month-long "Perspectives on the World Christian Movement." They are co-cordinators-in-training of this course and will be putting on subsequent I.I.S. (Institute for International Studies) courses all over South Africa. Laura sends "A special thanks to the Franciscan tertiaries for their generous support of my research and ministry!"

In her letter of February 25, Laura asks for prayer for the Lord's guidance in preparing future I.I.S. courses. She hopes to be professed at either their July or November retreat weekends. Zane is now considering becoming a postulant. Their address is: P.O. Box 647, Pietermaritzburg 3200, South Africa. (U.S. Support Office, Africa Enterprise, P.O. Box 988m Pasadena, CA 91102.



## THE MUSTARD SEED FELLOWSHIP

...of New York state appears to be one of the most communicative and active of the Fellowships. In this communication, Dave Wilbur shares "where we are as a community in Upstate New York..."

There are between 5 and 20 of us, depending on how you define your count. We are scattered across a healthy-size state -- from Albany to Buffalo is something like 350 miles. There are no concentrations -- except for married couples, we are all from different counties.

We met four times in 1985 and hope to get a schedule of 5 meetings annually -- omitting winter -- plus whatever we can work out in terms of retreats and similar critters. However, a lot of our membership, counting the high value, cannot make it to meetings at a given time and central place.

We decided, for that reason, to launch a newsletter to keep in contact. This, like Tolkein's work, "grew in the telling," and we produced a philosophical apologia in a recent issue. What we are doing in a somewhat different way from the Canterbury round-robin group is to attempt a "fellowship meeting by mail." That is, just as a fellowship meeting includes something of study, common prayers, and time for personal sharing, so Seedling Tidings will contain sharings from members -- brief biographies that answer "who am I and how did I get involved with the Third Order?", and also insightful pieces from our life experiences and our common life as Tertiaries -- intercession requests and collects for use in our Daily Offices, as well as fellowship news and plans. We avoid controversy but not controversial issues, trying to take an editorial viewpoint, so far as is possible, of being comprehensive, reconciling and expressive of the Notes of the Order.

We met December 1 at Thornfield Conference Center, Central New York's facility for retreats, Cursillos, meetings of all kinds. Fr. Joe Byrne gave a talk that covered a broad range of expression of Franciscan spirituality in secular life. We had some time for sharing with Liz Davenport, who has become a postulant with CSF. We dealt with several issues of our life as a fellowship in business meeting. There was a "meeting by phone" January 2, to formalize authorizing a bank account for fellowship funds. We are meeting again at St. Mark's Church, Newark, NY (not New Jersey) on Palm Sunday, and then having a fellowship retreat at St. Margaret's House in New Hartford, outside Utica, on April 11-13.

In communications through the winter, there has been a strong sense of God's nurturing hand on all of us. We're looking expectantly to our second year as a fellowship. I'll close this letter as Jean Carr often does hers: "God is so good!"

*Dave Wilbur*

Their newsletter, "Seedling Tidings" is very attractive, and a good deal more elaborate than the Times. They must devote much time, energy, and caring on such a fine production. Their Christmas issue even had a real mustard seed attached!

The Fellowship is planning a retreat for April 11-13. Retreatmaster is Fr. Dan Jerzog, rector of Christ Church, Morristown, New York.

I wish I could print more of their good newsletter. It's a monthly mailing, and every issue has so much in it! This page, and the one following will have to suffice for now. If you're interested in receiving it, I should think that a donation to cover the cost and a request to Dave and Barb Wilbur, 208 West Lynde Street, Watertown, NY 13601, would bring it to you, for your inspiration and interest.

## CONVENER'S CORNER

### Of Times, Space, and Fig Trees

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven." Eccl 3:1 (NKJV)

A few Sundays ago some things came together for me that gave me a much needed and renewed sense of the presence and power of God in my life, as well as a feeling that perhaps I ought to rethink some of my opinions and attitudes.

I was really shaken by the news of the exploding spacecraft late last month. I said my noonday office the day it happened on behalf of the crew and their survivors. I didn't realize how deeply it had affected me until the following Sunday. It was the feast of the Presentation in the Temple. The sermon made mention of the recent tragedy. One of the points made was that Jesus is Lord over life — and death. Whether our lives end quietly and peacefully as we suppose happened to Simeon of the presentation story, or death catches us unawares as it did the seven astronauts, God is very much in control. The loss of "Challenger" and its crew saddened many Americans. It brought us up sharply to a very real awareness of our smallness and helplessness. It has shown us that we're fools if we allow us to think even for an instant that we're safe from tragedy. We must not let ourselves become complacent and presume that death is far down the road yet. We never know what God has for us, but it's up to us to "be prepared."

As I listened to this, I'm not sure how, but I found myself thinking on the story of the fig tree — remember the story in Mark? Where Jesus comes to this fig tree and sees it all a-leaf and expects it to be laden with plump, juicy figs — and it turns out to be bare except for the leaves. So he curses it: "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." (Mark 11:14) The next day Jesus and the disciples pass that way again and Peter sees the dead fig tree. He points it out and Jesus proceeds to give them a lesson in faith. "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." (Mark 11:24)

This passage has always confused me. I could not see what a dead fig tree had to do with faith. In a Bible study group I was in a year or so ago we drew the conclusion that perhaps it might refer to outward show but no real bearing of fruit. For instance if someone were to wear a profession cross without fail and then deny a helping hand to someone in need, he or

she would be very much like that fig tree. But that day a few weeks ago I saw something different — and began to make the connection between cursed fig trees and faith. It wasn't that Jesus cursed the fig tree — that actually had very little to do with it. What Jesus was trying to show is that what happens in the here and now is not important — but how we enter from life through death into Life. And that is where faith comes in. Jesus could just as easily have called forth figs from that tree. But he chose to kill it instead, to make a point. That fig tree's existence didn't matter then. What mattered was how the disciples would deal with the real issues of death and resurrection.

I have been much troubled lately by stress — from work, from a tendency to overcommit myself, and from general "burnout," and also by a feeling of abandonment by God and the world in general. This expressed itself in depression, rebellion, self-pity, fruitlessness in prayer, negative feelings toward almost everyone. I'm not free from these yet. But I think the sequence of events during the week that led up to that Sunday were sufficient to shake me out of myself and cause me to face what I was becoming and come to grips with it.

Of times: "There is a time for throwing all past stones away." This is a quote from a song by the Rev. Carey Landry. (©North American Liturgy Resources 1975) It's a paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. It seems appropriate in the wake of the recent NASA tragedy. The song itself speaks to me as a warning to get my life in order: to get rid of resentments and recommit myself to Christ. I'm going to need your prayers on this because I've let myself backslide much too far. With your love and support I know I can make it.

Of space: God's love reaches out beyond ourselves to the very stars. He is in control and it's not for us to question but to believe. Of fig trees: What happens here on earth is of little account if God holds us in eternal life. In that we've got to believe.

Oh God our King, by the resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, You conquered sin, put death to flight, and gave us the hope of everlasting life: Redeem all our days by this victory; forgive our sins, banish our fears. make us bold to praise You and to do Your will: and steel us to wait for the consummation of Your Kingdom on the last great Day; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# St. Paul woman enters Anglican convent

by Kathleen Staggs

*On September 30, Kathleen Staggs, a former parishioner of St. Paul's on the Hill, St. Paul, entered the Community of St. Clare at St. Mary's Convent in England. The convent is on a five-acre piece of land. If everything works out, Staggs will stay there, with rare forays outside, for the rest of her life. Following is an "interview," conducted by Staggs herself.*

**Q. What is a day like in the Community of St. Clare?**

A. The rising bell rings at 5:00; the lights-out bell at 9:30. The daily schedule includes five offices (Matins, Lauds, Noonday, Vespers, Compline), the Eucharist, two hours of personal prayer, recreation, three meals (eaten while reading spiritual books on holders in front of each nun's plate), some free time, and, in between, many hours of work. The sisters do their own housework and cooking, maintain the guesthouse, raise most of their own food, and earn their living by making altar bread and religious cards and by operating a small printing shop.

**Q. Are you allowed to speak in a cloistered convent?**

A. Normally, talking is held to a minimum, with free social discussion only at the daily forty-five minute recreation periods. The human contact of discussion is valued; recreation is talking, not checkers or volleyball.

Fridays are totally silent, and, to celebrate, restrictions on silence are lifted on Sundays and feast days.

**Q. Was joining an easy decision to make? Are you "called?"**

A. No, it was not easy to decide, and yes, I guess I am called. I was raised in a nonreligious family. When I responded as a teenager to a strong religious impulse and tried to determine which church to join, I was fascinated with nuns and read many standard books on the subject. However, when at seventeen I was baptized in the Episcopal church, I had no idea there were Episcopal religious communities.



Kathleen Staggs

When I was twenty-five and in graduate school, I married one of my nicest fellow students. Before the wedding, I was obsessed for a couple of weeks with the idea of being a nun. By that time, I had discovered that there were Episcopal sisters.

I read extensively again and prayed, confiding my thoughts to only the closest of friends. One of these, a philosopher of religion, had been a Roman Catholic Poor Clare for five years. She told me she had left the community because her intellectual preoccupations were too strong and distracting.

I thought, "Well, I'm certainly an intellectual, too, so the same thing would happen to me." And so I pushed the thought out of my mind. At the same time, I imagine, I was greedy for all the "good things" life offered, and I was not secure enough to do something so radically out of the ordinary.

After five years, my husband and I were sadly but amicably divorced. I moved to Minnesota to teach religious studies at Macalester. After a satisfying first year, while I began to settle down and buy furniture, God came to shake me up and offer his invitation again.

Even this time around, the idea of becoming a nun was deeply disturbing and horrible. I didn't want to give up the ordered life and salary (modest but steady) that I had achieved. I didn't know if it were a genuine call or some weird product of my mind. After a long struggle, I grudgingly and desperately accepted it in obedience to God. Now, finally, I am

quite happy and serene about the decision. Still, I must confess, I occasionally wonder about my future should I find myself unsuitable for the convent.

**Q. Why are you going to England?**

A. I don't feel I have a choice. After I determined that I should be a contemplative nun, I discovered that the only place for women in the U.S.—the Poor Clares in Mt. Sinai, New York—is unable to give me the training I need. I then spent many months coming to grips with the fact that I would have to go so far away from my family. I even seriously considered becoming a Roman Catholic, since there is a Carmelite monastery in Seattle, but eventually decided that the intellectual freedom of the Episcopal church is precious to me.

**Q. How did you join?**

A. I wrote to six or seven communities in England for information. All responded, but, since at the time I was a member of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis, I wanted to remain in the Franciscan family. I wrote the Reverend Mother of the Community of St. Clare a long letter and spent a week visiting the community in March 1984. By the middle of that week, I felt no need to visit another community. This was the right place.

About three weeks after returning home, I wrote, saying I would like to join. To my relief, the Reverend Mother wrote back, "We are all delighted with your decision."

This article is borrowed from Soundings, the magazine of the Diocese of Minnesota. Kathy Staggs is a former tertiary.

