



The Franciscan Times

Advent 2001

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER HELPING MEMBERS OF
THE THIRD ORDER OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. FRANCIS SHARE
THEIR COMMON JOURNEY THROUGH NEWS FROM
FELLOWSHIPS AND INDIVIDUALS, REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND
TAPES, POETRY, STORIES, ESSAYS, REFLECTIONS,
MEDITATIONS, GRAPHICS, AND WHATEVER THE HOLY SPIRIT
MIGHT BLOW OUR WAY.●

In Remembrance By Patti Noel

Dearest Lord, in the midst of this traumatic day,
open our hearts to hear the cries of your people,
to hear their pain and be touched by their tears.
We lift to you the victims, the survivors and their families,
the rescuers, medical personnel, the good Samaritans,
and those in all positions of authority.
Remembering them in our prayers,
and in our actions as an offering to our God.
Help us to act with your mercy,
with a prayer on our heart
as we make a stand against the enemy,
but not matching evil for evil or hate for hate.
Act in justice and not with revenge,
not with an eye for an eye or a life for a life,
but with mercy and justice, especially on the innocent.
Let us learn to give thanks for each minute of our life,
not forgetting how short it can be.
Living each minute not in fear
but in gladness for the gift of our lives.
Let us reach out to those who are separated from us,
because of anger, bitterness, jealousy,
and make peace at the end of each day,
because tomorrow may be too late.
Let us reach out to those we share our life with,
because of our love for them
give them an extra hug while there is still time today.
Let us reach out to our neighbor, all neighbors near and far
because it is asked of us by our common Father.
The hand extended today is a heart shared tomorrow.
Lord, in your mercy, teach us the gift of mercy.
Lord, with your great love, teach us to love unconditionally.
Lord, in your sorrow, teach us the pain of sorrow in others.
Lord, in our shared pain, teach us to be healers.
Lord, in our lessons in love, teach us the ability to sacrifice.
Lord, in our lesson in sorrow, teach us to pick up the sorrowful.
Lord, in this time of anger and pain,
teach us how to let it go and be one with you.
Lord, in the time of loss and sorrow,
teach us to reach out and embrace you and each other.
Lord, in this time of fear and uncertainty, teach us to be guided
by you and walk the path of righteousness.
In Jesus' name. Amen

September 15, 2001 by Emmett Jarrett

Finally the images
Of the Boeing 767
Slicing into the World
Trade Center tower
Have faded from television
Sets, replaced by pictures
Of the President praying
At the Washington
National Cathedral
For the technological
Capacity as well as
The bloody-mindedness
Needed to bomb the
Perpetrators in Afghanistan
Into some other age
Or place or time.

It's a cool autumn
Morning in New England
I reach into my closet
For a woolen vest
Untouched through the
Summer months
On the lapel is the anti-
Death penalty pin
I wore when we rang
The chapel bells at
Connecticut College
Last spring every time
An execution took place
In the United States
It says: "Why do we
Kill people who kill
People to show that
Killing people is wrong?"

The following two pieces were originally prepared for the Episcopal-Muslim Relations Committee of the Diocese of New York Ecumenical Commission; our Asst. Provincial Chaplain, Masud Syedullah, has been a member of this committee for some years. In this time of great tension between the West and Islamic fundamentalists, it is perhaps a good time to remind ourselves of Francis's journey to Islam and exactly what it is that Muslims believe.

Francis of Assisi and Islam*

Mary O'Shaughnessy

What is the connection between St. Francis of Assisi and Islam? In 1219, St. Francis traveled to what is now northern Egypt and paid a visit to the Muslim Sultan al-Malek al-Kamil. This was at the beginning of the Fifth Crusade, but Francis and his brothers did not make this trip as part of the battle to regain the Holy Land. Rather, they went in opposition to the mainstream theological and political orthodoxies of the time, to meet the Muslim people, and to live among them as "lesser brothers."

Francis and his brothers went to be present among this people who were being portrayed as evil enemies of Christ, and, in his evangelism of presence, Francis found the spirit of God to be alive and at work within the Muslim people, then called "the Saracens." Francis admired their public, repeated acknowledgment of God and call to prayer, and he appreciated the deep reverence they showed to their holy book, the Quran.

While the main trend of the time was for Christian preachers to deliver strident, inflammatory sermons against Islam, Francis forbade his brothers to take part in these exercises. He demanded that his brothers be present first and foremost, living with and among the Saracens. They were to preach only if they felt that it would "please the Lord."

Francis worked to prevent the brotherhood from becoming embroiled in the grasp for civil and ecclesiastical offices and power, and kept the community's focus on serving their neighbors for the glory of God only.

*Based on *Francis and Islam* by J. Hoerberichts. Franciscan Press, 1997—reviewed by Terry Rogers in our last issue.

The Hadith of Gabriel*

Lucinda Allen Mosher

Umar ibn al-Khattab (the second Rightly Guided Caliph) reported:

One day when we were with God's messenger, a man with very white clothing and very black hair came to us. No mark of travel was visible on him, and none of us recognized him. Sitting down before the Prophet, leaning his knees against his, and placing his hands on his thighs, the stranger said, "Tell me, Muhammad, about submission [*islam*]."

The Prophet replied, "Submission means that you should bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God's messenger, that you should

perform the ritual prayer, pay the alms tax, fast during Ramadan, and make the pilgrimage to the Kaaba if you are able to go there."

The man said, "You have spoken the truth."

(We were amazed at this man's questioning the Prophet and then declaring that he had spoken the truth.)

The stranger spoke a second time, saying, "Now tell me about faith." [*iman*]

The Prophet replied, "Faith means that you have faith in God, His angels, His books, His messengers and the Last Day, and that you have faith in the measuring out, both its good and its evil."

Remarking that the Prophet again had spoken the truth, the stranger then said, "Now tell me about virtue [*ihsan*] (that is, about doing what is beautiful)."

The Prophet replied, "Virtue—doing what is beautiful—means that you should worship God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you."

Yet again the man said, "Tell me about the Hour (that is, the coming of the Day of Judgment)."

The Prophet replied, "About that he who is questioned knows no more than the questioner."

The stranger said, "Then tell me about its marks."

The Prophet replied, "The slave girl will give birth to her mistress, and you will see the barefoot, the naked, the destitute, and the shepherds vying with each other in building."

At that, the stranger went away.

After I had waited for a long time, the Prophet spoke to me: "Do you know who the questioner was, Umar?" I replied, "God and His messenger know best." The Prophet said, "He was Gabriel. He came to teach you your religion."

What we have in the *Hadith of Gabriel* is an ingenious teaching device, spelling out the basics of Islam in memorable story form. It teaches us that Islam:

Has three essential aspects: *islam*, *imam*, and *ihsan* (submission, faith, and virtue);

Rests on Five Pillars of praxis: witness, daily ritual prayer, charity, the annual fast, and the pilgrimage.

Demands belief in six key doctrines: belief in God, the angels, the revealed Books, the Prophets, the Day of Judgment, and God's Decrees regarding the

ultimate destiny of each individual.

Understands history as culminating in a cataclysmic restructuring of the natural order.

If we understand even this much, we know quite a bit about Islam. We have learned that, essentially, Islam is a religion of submission to God's will, thus of obedience to God's commands. Islam is a religion of faith in God as absolutely One and as absolutely the Real (in a way nothing else can be). It is a religion of faith in God's emissaries (the angels), in the prophethood of Muhammad and the many prophets who preceded him (including Jesus, who is highly revered), in God's Word (available now most authentically in the Quran. It is a religion of faith in ultimate divine judgment. It is a religion in which virtue (that is, striving for beauty or excellence) is to be the governing principle in all behavior.

The Quilt—*anononously contributed*

As I faced my Maker at the last Judgement, I knelt before the Lord along with the other souls. Before each of us laid our lives, like the squares of a quilt, in many piles. An Angel sat before each of us sewing our quilt squares together into a tapestry that is our life. But as my Angel took each piece of cloth off the pile, I noticed how ragged and empty each of my squares was. They were filled with giant holes. Each square was labeled with a part of my life that had been difficult, the challenges and temptations I was faced with in everyday life. I saw hardships that I had endured, which were the largest holes of all.

I glanced around me. Nobody else had such squares. Other than a tiny hole here and there, the other tapestries were filled with rich color and the bright hues of worldly fortune. I gazed upon my own life and was disheartened. My Angel was sewing the ragged pieces of cloth together, threadbare and empty, like binding air. Finally the time came when each life was to be displayed, held up to the light, the scrutiny of truth. The others rose, each in turn, holding up their tapestries. So filled their lives had been.

My Angel looked upon me and nodded for me to rise. My gaze dropped to the ground in shame. I hadn't had all the earthly fortunes. I had love in my life, and laughter. But there had also been trials of illness and death, and false accusations that took from me my world, as I knew it. I had to start over many times. I often struggled with the temptation to quit, only to somehow muster the strength to pick up and begin again. I had spent many nights on my knees in prayer, asking for help and guidance in my life. I had often been held up to ridicule, which I endured painfully,

each time offering it up to the Father in hopes that I would not melt within my skin beneath the judgmental gaze of those who unfairly judged me. And now, I had to face the truth. My life was what it was, and I had to accept it for what it had been.

I rose and slowly lifted the combined squares of my life to the light. An awe-filled gasp filled the air. I gazed around at the others who stared at me with eyes wide. Then, I looked upon the tapestry before me. Light flooded the many holes, creating an image. The face of Christ. Then our Lord stood before me, with warmth and love in His eyes. He said, "Every time you gave over your life to Me, it became My life, My hardships, and My struggles. Each point of light in your life is when you stepped aside and let Me shine through, until there was more of Me than there was of you.

May all our quilts be threadbare and worn, allowing Christ to shine through.

Tuned in to God

abstracted from William Haynes's *A Physician's Witness to the Power of Shared Prayer* (www.backprint.com)

About 18 years ago, I had the good fortune to spend several days at St. Norbert's Seminary in Green Bay, Wisconsin doing a directed retreat with Bishop Robert Morneau. This was my first experience at this type of personal retreat. I was assigned each day a verse of scripture and was to meditate on it for 24 hours. The following day we would discuss the meaning this passage had for me. I was very surprised to find how profound this simple exercise could be.

One area of the dining hall was reserved for the clergy while a separate area was reserved for the laity. While having lunch one day, a man sat down next to me. After some general conversation, he mentioned that he had just returned from coronary by-pass surgery done in Milwaukee, and though he lived only a few miles from St. Norbert's, he remarked, "The Lord led me to this place before returning home." He then related that his surgeon was to meet with him and to answer any details about his heart surgery, to go over his diet, level of activity, medications, and a host of routine instructions. He then continued, "But he was called away for emergency surgery and had to cancel our visit." The stranger then turned to me and asked, "What do you do for work?" He gasped when I told him I was a cardiologist. For the next couple of days I attempted to answer most all of his questions, and toward the end of stay, he seemed to be reassured. He would soon be

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Tuned into God (cont.)

under the care of his local doctor, who seemed very competent. We both agreed that God places people and events in our lives for his purpose. After praying for each other, we parted.

How many times have each of us ignored the inner voice and thereby the crucial opportunity to act that has been forever lost leaving us in dismay and regret? On the other hand, how great the joy and relief when we did listen and responded in time!

Another example of being nudged by that still inner voice comes to mind. It has been my custom to visit hospital patients even when under the care of a different specialty, and this would mainly be a "social call" to see how they were progressing. On this particular morning, while seeing my patients, I was running late having experienced a number of unforeseen problems among some of my patients. An oncologist colleague was treating a lovely 75 year old patient, Elaine, who was suffering from leukemia and receiving intensive chemotherapy.

My inner voice said, "Visit Elaine now. I realize you are pressed for time and trying to get to the office, but go anyway." My response was, "It would be better to see her at noon or at the end of the day." Still, the voice came back with, "Go now!" This dialog went on for several minutes before I finally relented and made my way to her floor in the hospital. As I entered the room, Elaine disarmed me with her warm, friendly manner, and she remarked how happy she was to see me. She was a very spiritual woman and over the years frequently had quite openly discussed how much God had done for her. We stayed together, holding each other's hand, and having a good conversation; it was truly a prayer visit and lasted about twenty minutes. I was happy to see that she was alert throughout this time, and although she was not feeling well, she did not appear to be critically ill. At the conclusion of our visit, she mentioned how much the visit had meant, and once again thanked me for stopping by. When she asked if I would visit her again, I reassured her that I would stop by every day during her hospital stay. As I left the room, she waved, and reflecting a certain inner peace, she smiled once more and laid her head back on the pillow. While hurrying to the office, I seemed to be enveloped by a warm feeling and felt glad I had listened to the inner voice. Fifteen minutes later, the floor nurse called my office to say that Elaine had quietly passed away, quite unexpectedly. I thanked God that I had not waited to visit her later in the day. We don't always listen to the Lord when he tries to speak to us, or we may hear him but fail to act. As James said, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

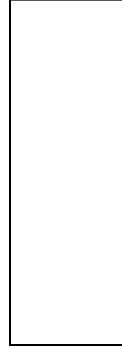
Please Note.

The TSSF Directory is not to be used for solicitations of any kind that are unrelated to Third Order, American Province, issues.

About Our Former Provincial Minister**Dee Dobson's Funeral***From Our Chaplain, Julia Bergstrom*

There were expressions of grief at the service, but Dee's family and friends, especially her children, made the open house a joyous occasion. This was the first time I had met her children, and I think they're wonderful. As we know, Dee had many children besides the six biological ones. In fact several people who were friends of her children in high school flew in because Dee was their mother, too. In her honor, her children made her lasagna and key lime pie recipes, enough for 75, for the open house.

At the funeral, Br. Robert Hugh celebrated the Eucharist, and Br. Dunstan preached, using the last chapter of Proverbs. We sang: "All creatures of our God and King," "Joyful Joyful we adore thee," and "Lord make us servants of your peace." The readings were Lamentations 3:22-26, 31-33, Corinthians II, 4:15 - 5:9, and John 14: 1-6. *The Canticle of the Sun* was printed on the back of the program. Her obituary, written by Bill, Jr., talked about her participation in TSSF. We thank you, God for Dee's life and witness. There is rejoicing in heaven!

**In Memory of****Jean Acona Goldberg**

The Reverend Jean Acona Goldberg passed away on Monday, Sept. 10, 2000. She was 89 years of age. Jean was active with St. Marks on-the-Mesa Episcopal Church for over 35 years, was the first woman elected to the Standing Committee of the Diocese of the Rio Grande, and, in 1983, was ordained an Episcopal priest. She ministered:

- as Area Chaplain for the Third Order for New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah
- on the boards of St. Martin's Hospitality House and the Hospice of the Rio Grande

Jean devoted her life to serving the community with love and compassion. She was beloved by many. Through her work, she exemplified unconditional love, understanding and humility. She will be dearly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Joanna Kate Hindes*by Mary Wills*

Jo had a loving and nurturing spirit that shone through the many difficulties of her life. She had a sense of humor that going through the tough times we shared and enlivened the good times. As a nurse for 27 years in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Jo's loving care to all the babies was a tremendous expression of her selflessness.

She loved music and played guitar, piano, flute, violin, and dulcimer, and sang until one physical limitation or another made it difficult. Her other hobbies over the years included collecting dolls (babies, of course!), building miniatures for doll houses, knitting, needlepoint, and crossstitch. She also enjoyed being a "Trekkie" and watching the Star Wars movies. And then there's TV's "JAG."

She was a big kid at heart and loved sharing her toys—from Mickey Mouse to Furbies—with her special kids: Kimmie, Katie, and Kristie (Jo's goddaughter).

She had a devotion and generosity to her friends that was endless, and always a good listening ear.

Jo had a big-as-nature-itself love of all animals, and, of course, her own dogs and cats over the years. This and her love of the Lord, their Creator, made her a natural to be a Franciscan, following in the way of St. Francis. If it were up to her, we would have had every stray dog or cat in Vermont at our house!

But most of all, it was the love of the Lord that shone through her in all she did that made Jo so special.

T S S F Publications

The Principles of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis for Daily Reading (\$2.50)

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All are available from John Tolbert
4503 Grace Drive
Kingsport, TN 37664-2913.

Homily for Elsie Ireland

by Joan Verret, Provincial Fellowship Coordinator

"In my father's house are many rooms-if it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"

All of us gathered here today to celebrate the entrance into the nearer presence of God by Elsie Louise Ireland, know how ready she was to go to her room. She had spent her life drawing closer and closer to God by chasing after Francis who is chasing after Jesus. She sought to follow "The Way and the Truth and the Life" in the Spiritual path of Francis and Clare. Therefore, it is especially appropriate that we have gathered together on this day, the feast day of St. Clare.

As my sister in the Order, Elsie lived by a Rule of Life that, of course, included self denial. But rather than negating herself and the world and becoming nothing, her Franciscan way approached God through joyously embracing all of his creation. In *Forming the Soul of a Franciscan* (our formation material) we are shown that self denial is a way for us to get out of God's way, to put aside our limited concept of "self," in order to embrace a more complete selfhood in Christ. It calls us to Let Go and Let God. It comes by grace. To live "Thy will be done" is not a denial of the self, but rather a denial of what we think the self must have, and a realization that God knows and gives what the self truly needs. It's a means of constant mindfulness of our dependence upon God and our not "being" god. It's detachment from all clinging from those beliefs that "I need" a particular thing or person to be happy. Self denial proclaims MY GOD AND MY ALL. It involves the interior life, and relationship to God, others, and oneself.

One by one her material possessions and her physical abilities were stripped away. With each apparent loss she saw an opportunity to grow closer to God. She learned to graciously accept the gifts of time, service and material goods from others.

As she became increasingly restricted to her apartment, she saw this as an opportunity to be available to others. Elsie knew that we don't get to choose the cross we get but we do get to choose whether or not we'll pick it up. She picked hers up with joy.

I remember an evening when Elsie read the story of how St. Francis taught Br. Leo that perfect joy is only in the cross. After reading it, we both became very quiet, and then she said, "I'm really not sure I'm ready for a lot of joy."

As the years progressed and her losses increased, one of us would always say "Here's another opportunity for joy!"

On my recent Assisi pilgrimage with two dozen other Franciscans, I and others who knew Elsie were struck by the similarities of acceptance of bodily illness by both Elsie and St. Clare. Both realized that they had been called to servanthood to serve the Lord as He willed it not as they themselves would have chosen.

One of the joys in Elsie's life was shelling along the beaches of the west coast of Florida. She had stacks of containers of carefully sorted shells from which she made earrings, lamps, and figurines and decorated her apartment. I never had the chance to tell her that I learned in Assisi that shells form the border of the San Damiano cross. They are symbols of eternity, beauty and endurance.

Elsie's favorite service was the queen of feasts, The Great Vigil of Easter. Each year she looked forward to that service and especially to hearing the Easter homily of St. John Chrysostom. Chrysostom's homily expressed the faith that inspired Elsie and that assured her that her room was waiting for her.

How Elsie affected others can be best seen in this hospice article written by the staff member that attended Elsie while she was dying.

...and the teaching goes on

Reprinted from *Choice: A Quarterly Publication of Good Shepherd Hospice*, Fall 2001.

"What exactly is your job description?" Elsie directly questioned Nolleen, a five-year hospice staff member. From that very moment, Nolleen knew she was not dealing with a frail, helpless woman. Elsie Ireland, a 73-year-old cancer patient, was an independent woman with a mind sharp as a tack. What a story her life made. It could have been her appearances in USO Camp Shows in WWII or her occupation as a Rockette at Radio City Music Hall that made Elsie so intriguing. Or, could it have been her missionary work in Puerto Rico or the vows she took as a Sister in the Third Order, Society of St. Francis, that made her a natural teacher and counselor? Whatever it was, Elsie impacted many lives. Working with Good Shepherd Hospice allowed Nolleen the pleasure of being one of the many whose lives Elsie touched.

While working in the Grief Center of Good Shepherd Hospice, Nolleen visited Elsie every Wednesday. But when Elsie was admitted to the residential center, they visited on a daily basis. "She could read people so well and her spirituality was her calling card," says Nolleen. "I was also constantly amazed by her quick sense of humor. Belly laughs were frequent as we conversed."

Elsie was happy to be surrounded by hospice staff. She said, "I feel like I have come home." Her positive attitude toward hospice was infectious, especially when she educated her friends about hospice philosophy. "She was ideally one of our staff," jokes Nolleen. Elsie's spirituality shone through her words and actions. She viewed death openly and she wanted to take an active part in her journey. Elsie wanted to die. Fear was never a factor.

Elsie taught well beyond Death 101. Nolleen asked, "What is it that a dying person needs?" and Elsie responded, "Rigorous honesty. Don't dance around the word death, don't say passed away, say death because that's what it is." That's why she loved hospice so much because the word is not avoided.

Often, Elsie used a term called "skin hungry." This was the need for someone to touch her, hold her hand or give her a kiss. So, for the last time, two days before her death, Nolleen asked, "Elsie, what is it that a dying person needs?" Emphatically, she said, "Love me, love me, love me." Good Shepherd Hospice staff did love her and showed her that with many caring touches.

Elsie always said, "The bottom line is that my death is between God and me." Nolleen saw her for the last time and once Elsie was alone, she continued on her journey. "I think she planned it that way," says Nolleen. Not only was she independent throughout her life but in death as well.

Elsie helped Nolleen more deeply reflect on her own death spiritually, intellectually and emotionally. "She didn't necessarily do it with words but by the way she was. Talking to cancer patients and the terminally ill is one thing, but reflecting on our own death is a whole other ballgame," says Nolleen. One lesson she taught was to actively take part in our death process. It's our journey and we need to make choices regarding care. Elsie left Nolleen with a deepening understanding of people, death, grief and dying.

Nolleen realizes that after Elsie died, she had a greater understanding of what she meant and what she was teaching even more so than when she was alive. "I believe in the last line of *Tuesdays with Morrie* when the student says 'and the teaching goes on.'" She did teach and she is teaching because the teaching does go on, says Nolleen.

Nolleen's running journal of her work with Elsie keeps the memories fresh. She often glances at the picture of the two of them, placed on the bookshelf of her home. But, the life lessons Nolleen has learned will keep the memory of Elsie alive forever.

I Have Enough

by Lindsay Warren

I have enough.
 I have enough money
 to pay my bills and buy
 a cup of cappuccino now and again.
 I have enough clothes
 to stay on the safe side of the law
 with a bright necktie or two.
 I have enough food
 to keep my tongue amused and
 my belly from feeling abandoned.
 I have enough house
 to keep my beloved warm and dry and
 our pets in place.
 I have enough car
 to get from here to there and back, and
 keep up with the speed limit.
 I have enough time
 to do what I can if not what I want.
 I have enough books
 to fill my shelves if not my head.
 I have enough because
 I say I have enough.

Sacrificial Servant

By Gerald Sevick (reprinted from the *Living Church*)

October 4 is the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi. Throughout the church there will be gatherings of people with their pets for the traditional Blessing of the Animals. This is how most of the church will remember Brother Francis — the blesser of domesticated animals.

It is the custom of the church to recall and commemorate certain brothers and sisters in Christ who have, through their life and witness, taught us what it means to be Christian. Through these commemorations we retell the stories of those who have been, who we are now, and who we are to become. The saints in our liturgical calendar lift up before us the vision and depth of our faith. These saints challenge us to strive for a greater union with Christ and one another.

I am not opposed to the blessing of the animals. I celebrate it in the parish I serve and at the Episcopal school next door. I bring my own pets to the liturgy. It is important to remind ourselves that we are stewards of creation, and that our pets and all of creation are given into our care for love and protection. My concern is not with blessing domesticated (or not so domesticated) animals. My concern is that through this practice we have domesticated Francis and the way he lived the Christian message. How difficult it is for us to celebrate the Francis who was called by God to embrace Lady Poverty in order to rebuild the church. How much more difficult it is to join in and celebrate the Francis who holds a skull, contemplating Sister Death.

Francis did love creation. He understood that humanity is kin to the sun and the moon because the one God created all things. He rejoiced in the way the created order worshiped God simply by doing what they were created to do — birds fly, sun shines, fish swim. Francis understood that we are fully human only as we find ourselves united with Christ and serving others.

He found his call through the words of holy scripture and prayer during an intense time of discernment. He loved the psalms and the gospel stories. Most of all, he wished to join Christ in his holy passion. He gave up position, wealth and inheritance as a response to God's call. Ultimately, he gave up his position as head of the Order.

As one reads the stories of St. Francis, one discovers that no one joined him because of a practice of blessing animals or even his preaching to animals. Those who chose to join him did so because they heard his call to sell all, deny self, seek humility and join Christ in his passion. They responded to a message that

called for intense self-denial, holy poverty and obedience. Francis was far from the garden decoration he has become.

The message proclaimed by Brother Francis was always one of sacrifice and service. It was a message of sharing in the suffering of others and the need to bring that suffering into union with the sacrificial work of Christ. Francis reminds us that the sacrificial work of Christ was the source of true life.

Francis understood that to seek God one must seek the passion of Christ. He knew that to join our sufferings to that of Christ meant healing. Francis understood that seeking God meant sitting at the lower place at table but being willing to go higher if asked. Francis was just as willing to enter the house of a wealthy family as he was to enter the cave of the leper. He loved those who were lost to society but he also loved those who had lost their way spiritually. Francis understood that to seek God one must accept the hospitality of all and give all hospitality. He sought to judge all alike — rich and poor, powerful and weak, loved and unloved—through the eyes of Christ.

The desire to join in the sufferings of Christ made him, I believe, more connected to the suffering of others. I believe it made Francis more willing to embrace the leper and seek to serve those who were not seen as "good enough," even to be servants. His desire to share the passion of Christ stirred his soul and informed the life he lived.

Francis learned that the church, in order to be rebuilt, had to become a community of prayer and sacrifice. He understood that in order to rebuild the church, he and the friars minor had to be missionary minded — going to those who had not heard or who had "lost" the good news.

Francis ultimately understood that to find God one must be willing to die.

This is the Francis we commemorate Oct. 4. What could the church learn if she listened to Brother Francis?

Have we domesticated Francis and the way he lived the Christian message?

Echoes of the Massby Dr. Péta Dunstan, *Companion*, SSF

Reprinted by permission from the *Saint Mary's Messenger*, a quarterly of the Community of St. Mary, Eastern Province, June 2001.

The religious life developed over the centuries in four places:

- the desert,
- the skete,
- the monastery, and, finally,
- the city.

If, instead of looking at this development as a sociological development, we were to reflect on the trends in a theological way, we would see that this development is not just about the religious life but the whole Christian life. The religious life is the life of the Church in a prophetic and intense way. The vows of a religious are the commitment to be the heart of the Church, calling the rest of the Church back to the intense relationship with Jesus Christ. That is why the religious life will always survive. The tension then is that the religious life must be loyal to the Church and conform to the expectations of the Church while, on the other hand, the prophetic nature of the religious life challenges the Church to return to its faithfulness. Thus, monastics struggle with the Church and their own way of life in a creative tension. Out of the struggle comes much wisdom.

The desert is the place of individual prayer. Historically, Christians went out of the cities to the desert alone to find God, to learn to pray, to repent and cleanse their souls. It is the beginning; like the Introit of the Mass. The religious life as a movement did not stop there.

The skete was the next development of the religious life. It is the place of learning, a mentoring place of spiritual master and disciple, a place for dialogue and the exercise of the vow of obedience. Even as the skete was the place of learning, the Mass of the faithful continues with the Ministry of the Word with a collect and selections of scripture and a homily to apply the scripture to today's context.

The monastery is the growth of the skete beyond the simple and direct relationship of master and disciple to a place of community with many brethren living under a Rule of Life. Its parallel in the Mass is the Offertory and gathering of the people around the altar in participation of Christ's sacrifice.

And lastly, the religious life is found in the midst of the city, the place of witness, mission and apostolic work. The city or the world is where one meets the stranger

and welcomes Christ. It is the "Ite missa est" of the Mass. Go out into all the world and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

For a religious community to flourish and be balanced, it must have activities at each of the four points of desert, skete, monastery, and city. A person or community too much in the:

- desert is self-absorbed,
- skete becomes ineffectual and dependent,
- monastery becomes too obsessed with the detail of the Rule and community life, and
- city becomes a workaholic and loses religious life values of prayer and relationship with God.

With the revival of the religious life in the Oxford Movement, many of the women's communities were founded on the line between the community and the city. Socioeconomic forces of the Church and secular society, then and even today, push religious from one extreme to another. Today government regulatory control of social services has pushed monastics toward the desert and the skete just at a time when people are looking for deeper spirituality and relationship with God. So, in taking the long view of the religious life, it will always exist in some form as outside forces are countered.

*Dr. Péta Dunstan is the Librarian of the Divinity Faculty of Cambridge, St. Edmunds' College Fellow in Modern Church History, beginning with the French Revolution and with a specialty on modern religious life. Continuing her deep interest in Anglican religious life, she is the editor of the Anglican Religious Communities Yearbook (ARC YB) published annually in Great Britain. **Please do not copy without the permission of the author.***

CONVOCATION NOTES**ATTENTION CONVENERS:**

The Franciscan Times will reach interested and/or isolated tertiaries in your region (and elsewhere) who might make plans to attend your gathering. Advance notice and a name of a person to contact will be helpful to them. Please send the details to:

R. John Brockmann TSSF,

P.O. Box 277, Warwick, MD 21912-0277.

Finding a Spiritual Director

By Terry Rogers, Assistant Provincial Chaplain

In the last ten years I have really fallen in love with Irish traditional music and dance. About four years ago I began to learn how to play the Anglo concertina (picture a small accordion or "squeezebox"), which is used in this musical tradition. I had someone get me started, but soon I needed a more advanced teacher. The more I came to love the instrument, the more I longed for both a companion, someone to share my enthusiasm, and a guide, someone with years of experience, knowledge of repairs and maintenance, technical expertise, and musical gifts.

I remember the energy I put into finding such a teacher. I asked all my musician friends, many of my dancing friends, people who worked in music and instrument shops. I got a name, which led to a contact, which led to a teacher.

I think about this process when someone asks me, "how do I find a spiritual director?" The most important tool is the LONGING of your own heart for a companion and guide who loves Jesus and can show you the way into rooms in the house of the Lord that you have never seen. It is simply true that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. For me it was finding a music teacher. For you it might be buying the best sound system, just the right Christmas present, the most gas-efficient new car. Or finding the right babysitter for your children, choosing your parish's new rector, evaluating an investment possibility. We know how to do our homework, to gather information, to think of all possibilities, not to give up when we really want something. That's how to find a spiritual director.

If you want it this much, you simply won't be happy until you find someone. You'll ask every person you know who might possibly have a lead, you'll call the diocesan office and the nearest seminary, you'll find out about nearby religious communities, you'll seek out clergy for their advice. You'll ask God in your prayers every night, "Please help me to find a good spiritual director. I know I need help to love you and to pray to you the way I really want to." And if you have tried all this, to no avail, then you will be open to spiritual direction in writing.

Some of the greatest saints gave and received spiritual direction this way and we shouldn't think of it as "second best." There's a list of tertiaries in the back of our Directory who do spiritual direction and it's by no means complete. It is a good idea to consult other tertiaries whom you respect and trust, and ask for suggestions of those in the order that they would recommend. If this option seems the only one, and

since you have promised to keep the rule, which includes having a spiritual director, then this option may be PRECISELY what God has in mind for you. Even if it is not what you think you prefer, it may be full of unexpected grace.

Terry just sent me email saying that she had just read the following in the most recent issue of *Episcopal Life*:

Spiritual Directors International, an ecumenical association of colleagues founded in 1989. Membership includes directors in 119 regions in 50 nations and represents many social, ethnic and cultural traditions. Contact SDI at 1329 Seventh Ave., San Francisco CA 94122-2507. (415)566-1560. Email office@sdiworld.org. Web site www.sdiworld.org.

Who's Dorothy Hawkins on Her Seventh Anniversary of Profession?

By Dorothy Hawkins

I am a native Californian, born in Glendale. I went to school in Long Beach and college at the University of Redlands, both in California. I did spend two years (my junior and senior years of high school) in a small town in Kansas. My father died suddenly and my mother thought it would be good to move to the town where she was born. It was a great adventure for this city girl; I had never seen snow fall, and was charmed by bon-fires on the football field, a high school class of 32 total, etc. When I graduated we returned to city life and college for me in California.

Neither of my parents were serious church attendees, but they wanted me to go to Sunday School and would take me, along with a neighbor girl, to the Congregational Church. While in the small town in Kansas I became more active in the church, especially with the busy youth group. University of Redlands was a Baptist college, and there were many church related activities there in those days. However, my spiritual development was in fits and starts for years until I found the Episcopal Church. It fed me and inspired me, and along with that came the awareness that something was missing in my life, and I was led into a "new place" (that's what I called it in my journal.) Prayer and meditation became very important to me, along with Bible study, and there was a gradual shift of my interests. Some years later the Third Order became one of the most important parts of my life, and my Rule became a challenging and humbling experience.

One of my frequent prayers was for God to open doors to allow me to grow, and it seemed that doors were opening with great regularity! I was spending more and more time in study and prayer, and in being involved with retreats and prayer groups. My husband

and I led a house group in our home for many years and now periodically have home study groups here. Looking back at those early years of my spiritual journey I think that God was strengthening me for some difficulties that lay ahead, one of which was a diagnosis of cancer, with surgery and radiation to follow. The doctors didn't agree on the treatment, and I got second, third and fourth opinions, finally to realize that I would have to make the decision myself. After much prayer I knew what to do, and best of all, during this time God was so close to me that I never was fearful; in fact, it was a joyous time for me.

In our church I was involved with the vestry, and at one point was Senior Warden for three years; during one of those years we didn't have a priest, and our struggling church was my constant concern. Since then I have gradually pulled away from those kinds of jobs so as to have more time for a personal and growing relationship with God. I took a three-year course in Spiritual Direction, and my husband took the same course a few years later. I also trained to become a leader in a contemplative prayer group and became more regular in personal retreats in a near-by monastery.

Our children are grown now, and I have more time for ministries in the community along with activities in our church. Dearest to my heart is my weekly day at our local hospital as a chaplain. The most amazing things happen when one walks into the unknown of a patient's room! I also drive for Meals on Wheels. For many years I taught Lamaze classes (prepared childbirth) and would go to the hospital with my students who didn't have a partner to be with them. That was so rewarding, but I gave that ministry up when my husband and I began to travel more, since babies can't be (or shouldn't be) scheduled. Among our most cherished trips have been those to Assisi where we stayed in a guest house run by Roman Catholic Franciscan sisters. Next fall will be our fourth stay with them.

My husband and I live in a small college town, an hour east of Los Angeles, and we have a little mountain cabin not far from our home. My hobbies include reading, walking, doing research on my Swiss family, gardening and above all, our dogs. I never cease to be amazed at how God works in our lives and how we are led to minister to others in unique ways.

On Taking Novice Vows, A Reflection

By Cheryl Cullion

**Reprinted from the TSSF-Juniper Community Newsletter.*

December 2 is a day that often goes unnoticed no matter what the year. It is a nameless day caught

between the brief exhale of Thanksgiving and the long preparatory inhale of Christmas. This year December second was a serene and sunny day. It was a day that could have been easily spent warming one's hands and insides with a steamy mug of hot chocolate wistfully staring out the window and admiring the cold clear crispness of the winter air.

It was however a day spent folding a seemingly endless pile of pamphlets, pamphlets printed with the words of the Holy Eucharist, destined to be used by members of the American Province of the Third Order. It was a day spent sharing a hearty meal and absorbing the chapter's history quietly recounted by some of the fellowship's more seasoned members. And finally it was a day that I vowed to try on the cloth of my Third Order Rule for 1 year. I was and am struck by the quietness of the experience. Somewhere deep inside I think I expected and perhaps secretly hoped that such an undertaking would be punctuated by some sort of cataclysmic event; the sea to part, the earth to tremble or at the very least a few bars played by a band of heavenly angels. None of this happened, obviously, and it was only quiet wonder that accompanied me on my drive home from the Fellowship meeting that day.

It is has been over a month since Dec. 2., and Christmas has come and gone and a new year has begun. I have had time to think and reflect on what this year will mean to me. I realize that the quietness, the silence, the lack of fanfare is an essential part of my experience. Some famous person, Gandhi I think, said that goodness moves slowly and that is how I believe conversion occurs, at least for most of us. I am coming to realize that this conversion into the way of St. Francis is slow, quiet almost glacial in its movement. Its methods often seem foggy, vague and sometimes without purpose. I struggle daily with what I sometimes consider the drone or routine of the Daily Office and my own capriciousness in attempting to "personalize" Personal Prayer. I am often disappointed and frustrated with myself as I fail to live up to my Rule. And I am sometimes plagued with doubt as to whether the Third Order is right for me or my faith worthy of it.

But then there are the days when I experience the victories of some new insight in my relationship with God and I realize that God is changing me, slowly and imperceptibly. It is like the gradual lengthening of winter's light or the daily change of the earth's watery tides, it is slow, quiet, unnoticeable and often unnoticed. And so as I consider the coming year I will try to be patient with myself and God as the brown threads of the Franciscan way are slowly woven into my life. Each small fine thread slowly, silently and imperceptibly changing the color of my existence.

In the Steps of St. Francis

By John Michael Fox

I went on the pilgrimage from May 30-June 11, 2001. It was a splendid two weeks which included three days in Rome, two in the Rieti Valley, and five at Assisi. A pilgrimage differs from a tour in my opinion because taking the steps of a pilgrimage triggers the following occurrences tow feelings

As Brother Justus observed: "One's spirituality moves from the peripheral to the forefront of one's existence." We see, smell, taste, feel, and think in a Grace-given, heightened state of awareness. For example, the food we ate, the amount of walking we did, listening to children singing at the Temple of Minerva, the sights we saw and so on brought us to a closer state of at least awareness of God's unfolding story of creation. Our senses were elevated throughout the trip.

The pilgrimage permits deeper interiorizing of our own story and encourages meditation even once we are home from the trip. Seeing with my own eyes the churches and sights of what I studied for years previous to the trip, was magic! Praying at the San Damiano Cross, at the tombs of St. Clare and St. Francis, seeing LaVerna where the Stigmata occurred, and studying the numerous Giotto frescoes serve as excellent examples. I was most focused on my emotional responses. At numerous times on the trip, I was moved to tears such such as when we stopped at the Portiuncula. Seeing the tiny church within the huge basilica was breathtaking, and almost more than I

could visually have anticipated. Feeling the true depths, in my opinion, of the vastness and power Assisi has, reminded me of our innate humility. Singing at St. Paul's Inside the Walls Church in Rome during the Sunday Eucharist was quite moving also. (St. Paul's is the Episcopal Church in Rome.)

Upon my return to Tennessee, it was easy to "slip" into meditative reveries going back over those magic moments. A trip like this is life changing, and it stays with one as one's journey continues at home.

I was more aware of the barrier between our spiritual life and the "real world" a trip such as this points out. My re-entry back into my daily work was most felt and this was a rather bumpy ride. Once upon the ground again, I knew that it was a matter of time when I would start processing the whole trip. I have started giving workshops on this subject. The day I gave my first workshop I was depressed about a family matter. However, I received a call that afternoon from the convener of a men's group asking if I would do my presentation again at that night's program. My mood changed dramatically as I prepared at the last minute the finishing touches of my program. My energy level increased dramatically.

Finally, as a depressed person in general, my energy level during the pilgrimage and afterwards as I meditate on it seems to be increased more than usual. It was a splendid trip and I highly recommend an undertaking of this nature.

On pilgrimage one's spirituality moves from the peripheral to the forefront of one's existence. Br. Justus

At San Damiano Church

Front: Debra Porter, Diana Finch, Judy Schmidt, Gloria Goller, Amory King

Second Row: Jean Messmer, Marilyn Brandenburg, Marsue Harris, Mark Barwick, Kale King

Third Row: Joan Verret, Connie Hoffman, Robert Carlson, John Michael Fox, Brother Robert Hugh

Fourth Row: Caroline Benjamin, Lynn Herne, William Breedlove, Mary Catherine Coon, Robin Porter

Fifth Row: Michael Tiernan, Carolyn Scott, Janet Wakefield, Brother Justus, Calvin Hefner



Melanesian Brotherhood Members awarded Solomon Islands Medal

by the Anglican Communion Office, London

The Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare, awarded the Solomon Islands Medal (SIM) to 22 members of the Melanesian Brotherhood, Society of St Francis and their chaplain.

The award was Solomon Islands Independence Honors and Awards announced during the country's 23rd Independence anniversary celebrations on July 6th.

The award was in recognition of the role played by the Brothers during the two-year ethnic conflict, which has crippled the Solomon Islands's economy and law and order until today.

The Brothers have been instrumental in mediating and calming the two warring factions (the Isatambu Freedom Movement - IFM from Guadalcanal, and the Malatia Eagle Force - MEF from Malatia) in bringing them to the negotiating table which has led to the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement between the two parties and the National Government in October last year at Townsville, Australia which the Archbishop of Melanesia, the Most Reverend Sir Ellison Pogo, KBE, was the only member of civil society to be represented.

This is the first year since 1998 that the Solomon Islands celebrated its independence anniversary and the Queen's Birthday because of the ethnic crisis, which claimed about 100 lives of the country's population of just over 400,000.

Midwest Convocation

By Julia Acker (Convener)

The convocation of the Midwest fellowships was held at Marytown on August 17-19. Marytown is a retreat center run by the Roman Catholic Conventual Franciscan brothers in Libertyville, Illinois, and we like it so well that we decided to go there again this year.

Our speaker from the First Order was Brother Jude from the San Damiano Friary in San Francisco. He gave two excellent two-hour presentations: "Who am I, God?" and "Who are You?" These were not purely in lecture format, having a good deal of experiential learning involved. We used clay and other materials to express our ideas and feelings about God and our spiritual journeys.

At 3 p.m. we halted the proceedings in order to pray for Dee Dobson, whose funeral service was taking place at that hour in Florida.

From the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans and Their Newsletter *Fiddlesticks*

The Worst Franciscan in the World

by Al Mascia

Many years ago, when I was a young Franciscan in the Order of Friars Minor, I remember there being a solemnly professed friar in our Province I did not understand. He kept to himself, rarely attended provincial gatherings, and appeared, to my idealistic eyes, to misrepresent all that I believed to be Franciscan. He worked as a hospital chaplain, had permission to live alone, drove a Cadillac and carried a cell phone years before they became commonplace. Though I never had an opportunity to talk with this man or, more accurately, never took the opportunity, I judged him fiercely *This must be the worst Franciscan in the world*, I thought to myself. Somehow the arrogance of my youth permitted such unbridled fraternal criticism to coexist with what I felt was a true Franciscan calling. Unfortunately, in my uncharitableness, I was not alone within the Province.

To say that my understanding of Franciscan spirituality at the time was shallow would be an understatement. Like an adolescent, who thinks he knows it all, I believed there was little more to learn about what it meant to be a Franciscan than what I already knew. I had read all the hagiographic writings about the life of St. Francis, kept a big red copy of the *Omnibus of Sources* by my bed and, of course, had seen *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* countless times. Indeed I felt as though I knew it all. Who was this fraud running around in a habit, I remember thinking to myself of the aforementioned friar? And how dare he complicate the beloved, if simplistic and naive, image of Franciscan religious life I held so dear?

Today I remember this man fondly and, in fact, particularly because he complicated my image of Franciscan religious life. But how could I have known back then that one day my own life would seem to me a contradiction in Franciscan terms? That, for a while at least, I would feel as though I had become the *Worst Franciscan in the World*?

For the past year and a half, in terms of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, I have been keeping to myself. The reasons for this are many and, not surprisingly, have to do with a vast constellation of issues. But, essentially, I've been struggling with reconciling the incidentals of my life with a Franciscan mythology long overdue for an overhaul. I have been preoccupied with judging my Franciscan vocation based on that familiar old standard I'd judged the Cadillac-driving,

(continued on page 14)

The Worst Franciscan in the World (cont.)

cell-phone-using hospital chaplain and, not surprisingly, found myself woefully lacking. In so doing I have successfully denied both the spaciousness of God's grace and an addiction to the romantic Franciscan self-image I've been holding onto for years. An *all-or-nothing* attitude further complicated matters and, for a while, I contemplated requesting release from my vows. A few frank, caring and well placed words from our Minister General have helped me to hang in there reminding me that there is far more to being a Franciscan than even Franco Zeffirelli could have imagined!

I regret missing last year's Chapter but, God willing, will be there this year. It is time for recommitment on my part and time, once again, to share in our Order's responsibilities. Needless to say it is also about time that I finally stopped judging Franciscans by externals even when the only one under scrutiny is me.

SFO Called to Build a More Fraternal and Evangelical World

Like us, our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers in the Secular Franciscan Order meet nationally every five years. Next year will be their 16th Quinquennial Congress, throughout the week, interspersed with recreational activities, small groups will explore the Secular Franciscan's role in transformation, apostleship, diversity, and unity. While Msasud Syedullah will officially represent TSSF, the SFO National Minister, Bill Wicks, has extended an invitation to all tertiaries. The Congress will be held July 2-7, 2002 at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana. For more information contact Bill at sfowicks@aol.com.

Don't Forget! 2002 Provincial Convocation: 6/25-30, 2002 (Santa Barbara California).

Get those proposals ready for talks, art, exercises, plays, etc. that you would like to offer to the rest of the TSSF community at the 2002 Provincial Convocation. Remember that our theme for the Convocation is **Discernment in Community** and that Susan Farnham, author of *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (Morehouse, 1-800-877-0012) will be our keynote speaker.

To Best Anticipate What Will Go On in Santa Barbara...

Consider these comments from those who participate in the last Convocation in New Orleans—we hope to make your Convocation experience in a mission overlooking the Pacific even better!

One New Orleans participant wrote this:

Brief assessment: IT WAS FABULOUS!

Several of us were powerfully affected when we realized that we prayed regularly for each person there—and all of them prayed for us. Actually being with all these people gave us a stronger sense of community, and made "praying the directory" a true joy.

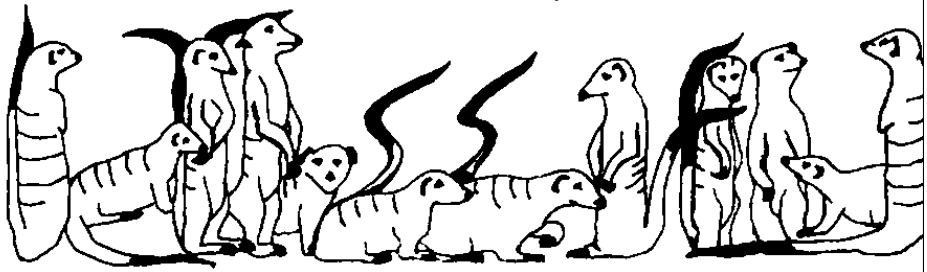
And what a wonderful group! The diversity was truly inspiring. I tried to spend time with as many different people as possible, and feel I gained a lot from each one.

The accommodations were comfortable, the food varied and good. The liturgies also had great variety, and were all quite meaningful. My only complaint was that I could only attend four of the small groups—I wanted to get to them all.

If this sounds like a rave review, it is. I have never yet been to a Franciscan gathering that wasn't a joy, and this one, by virtue of its size and duration, tops them all.

Meercat Convocation Logo

A Meercat Is One of the Most Community-centered Animals



Short Comments from Past Convocation Participants

- Now I know this community is real and there. I had not felt it and was so isolated.
- Just knowing how we are all connected with one another—to know that we are of one heart if not always one mind. The wonderful spirit-filled and varied worship was great!
- I wanted to meet living, breathing people in the TSSF to help me decide whether or not to pursue Postulancy. My expectations were more than fulfilled.
- Meeting all those people I have been praying for and who have been praying for me.
- [My vocation was supported] by the presence of so many “old timers” and so many “new folks.” I know that the T.O. is very healthy across the Province.
- I was called back into a renewed commitment after a period of being somewhat lackadaisical.
- The variety of worship and music was greater than I have ever experienced.
- The overall atmosphere of prayer and worship; the rhythm of liturgies and music throughout each day were an obvious central focus, and this set the tone for the Spirit of love and inclusiveness which I encountered here.
- Very impressed by the many gifts and talents of the members.
- The liturgies did become a seamless garment! Wise and wonderful sermons while being funny, full of tears, and hugs, but deeper and more mature than some meetings have been.
- Being among this multi-cultural and multi-ethnic groups. Loved having Romans Catholic Franciscans, Ecumenical Franciscans, and a variety of other related brothers and sisters.
- To learn how others integrate their vocations as Franciscans with secular interests—I found most had positive attitudes.
- I really liked the fact that we relied on our own people for the Convocation instead of speakers from the outside!
- [I feel challenged] to further simplify my life—to take serious the commitment to community obedience—to take more personal responsibility for staying connected in years ahead.

Send in your contributions to the Lenten issue of the Franciscan Times! The deadline is January 15.

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