



The Franciscan Connection

A Publication of The Third Order,
Society of St. Francis, Province of the Americas



Winter 2019



From The Chaplain

Spiritual Tools

In our worship of God, our rich Anglican tradition can use all of our senses. Beautiful music awakens our souls, architecture reminds us to look up and see beyond ourselves, and incense can remind us that the Church is a Holy Space in which we can breathe. The colors of the seasons match a message of sacrifice (Red), resurrection (white), everlasting life and new growth (green), penance and opening our hearts to God (purple). Likewise, there are spiritual tools that can aid, enhance, and enrich our personal prayer lives. The Holy Rosary is one such tool, bringing a physical dimension into our prayers as we contemplate our Lord. Similarly, icons invite us to further experience God with our senses. They have been called a visual window into heaven.

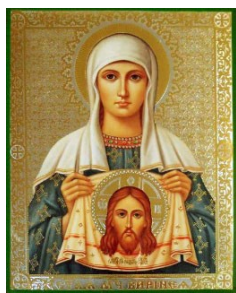
The First Iconographer

Icons are as old as Veronica's Napkin. The Orthodox tradition says that as Veronica wiped Jesus' face on his way to Calvary, the image of Jesus was left upon the cloth. Jesus became the first iconographer! It is believed that from this image, all of the historic icons of the Church were copied.

Although not actually in the Bible, Veronica is part of our tradition in the Stations of the Cross. Her name means, "True Image."

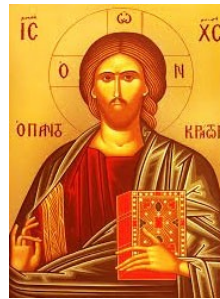
Rebuild My Church

Using icons in prayer requires the use of our eyes and our imagination. As you look intently at the image of Jesus, his eyes are open to see you, his ears are clearly open to hear you, and his mouth is open to speak with you. It was from the icon style Cross at San Damiano that our Lord spoke to Francis asking him to, "Rebuild My Church."



Using Our Senses

As you gaze upon a holy image, the world reseed as you are drawn closer and closer to God. Jesus is King of all Creation, reigning from the right hand of the Father, yet he is with you, before you, and around you. We trust that you will enjoy this latest edition of *The Franciscan Connection* and if this is your introduction to icons, we pray that you be open to including them as part of your devotional time with God. Using our senses as we pray helps us to delve into the depth of the



mystery of God. Creation is moving towards God. May the new year be blessed for us all.

Richard Simpson, Provincial Chaplain, TSSF Province of the Americas

"Just one kind word can warm three winter months. *Japanese Proverb*



From The Minister Provincial

Peaches (I Treasure The Sign)

Did you notice that the editors of *The Franciscan Connection* put a couple of ripe peaches next to my byline? In Summer you may have thought it seasonal; in Fall you probably thought they'd forgotten to change it out. Actually, the peaches are intentional. In one of my first communications with the Order, I mentioned that when the Holy Spirit comes around, I often smell peaches. For instance, my profession to the Order was overflowing with "peachiness." Being a contemplative, I treasure these (and other signs) of the Holy Spirit. Of course. Because Presence is everything.

Time Away

Peachiness has led to other things too. A couple of you noted my peachy thing and wrote about your

own experiences. I treasure these correspondents and what they share. As a community, we should be able to share all of our really deep stuff, don't you think? I also treasure these experiences because they are signs of Francis. I wonder if an aroma would waft around Francis; he was constantly in The Presence, so he may not have had a "sign." But my own sign, my *peachiness*, reminds me of Francis' "time away," his isolation and his designated time with God. And I know that as Franciscans, all that we do has to derive from our "time away," or it is nothing. And of course, we know that "time away" is actually "time with."

What About You?

As you know, I am not a priest. I can't shake a sermon out of my sleeve whenever I want. I am not schooled in theology. But I know the Holy Spirit and her sweet sign to me. I'd love to hear about yours! Will you share?

*Janet Fedders, Minister Provincial, TSSF
Province of the Americas*



Fellowship Focus

Teamwork

In the Fall of 2017, conveners began meeting together on Zoom to share insights, compare notes, and support one another in our common ministry in our respective Fellowships. We were responding to the move of the Spirit throughout the Order to strengthen Fellowships so that they might become centers for lifelong formation. Change never comes easy even when it promises to provide positive results. A new chapter in our order has begun: Teamwork. We have used our time together to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Order, to discern what that means to us in the Fellowships and to reflect on what brings us joy and where the opportunities for growth are in Fellowship life. We have worked to understand what it would mean and what would be required of us if we reclaim the vision of St. Francis and St. Clare, St. Louis and St. Elizabeth, and "simply live the Gospel."

Camaraderie

There has been a wonderful move afoot throughout the Province to reach out to Tertiaries who had been left alone. We have encouraged Conveners to reach out by phone or face to face to all Tertiaries who live within their region. Through the Saints Wisdom

Project, nearly every Tertiary was called and many have reconnected with their Fellowships. Jonathan Lloyd told us of two Tertiaries who are returning to his Fellowship after a long hiatus. As our numbers increase and we take responsibility for those who are ours, our camaraderie grows. Other Conveners have quietly visited their homebound Tertiaries.

Community

In Fellowship life we are now learning to embrace the whole Franciscan vision. In our Zoom gatherings we are considering how best to balance our common life, a balance that embraces the three facets of the Franciscan life. They are contemplation, community and missional action. While we might feel most at ease in one of these facets, a Franciscan vision embraces all three in a joyous unity and wholeness of being. Working these on the Fellowship level may require rethinking of how we are to be together. Before our last Zoom chat, Conveners received a copy of the report from the IPTOC Task Force on Lifelong Formation I chair outlining "Fellowship Life," in which I wrote, "*Fellowships need to balance the journey inward (disciplines of Rule of Life, community prayer, Scripture, vocational discernment, nurturing, and study) with the journey outward (disciplines of service, activism, justice, kindness, and mission). The journey inward prepares us to do the journey outward and then sustains and encourages us to continue that work when the going gets tough. The journey outward continues to heal and transform us as we discover the places where we may have been complicit with the world, the flesh and the devil through our own silence and brokenness.*"

Fellowship Personalities

While each Fellowship develops its own charism and interests, it is important that we see the bigger picture. The Franciscan model, which is universal to us, is the balance of contemplation and community and missional action. Living out this holistic approach helps us keep our equilibrium and our spiritual health and makes us more effective in our missional action. How individual fellowships implement this vision will differ according to the gifts and passions of Tertiaries gathered. It is important to seek to fulfill the whole Franciscan vision entrusted to our care. Thus, we will pay attention to accountability, spiritual discernment, contemplation, study (at this moment we are commending primary sources; St. Francis, St. Clare, Scripture) so that we may follow God's deeper call and purpose.

Living Icons

As fellowships move from a therapeutic construct to a more discernment-based model, we will be better equipped to shine the light of the Gospel to the world around us. This edition of *The Franciscan Connection* shares insights about the use of icons in personal and public worship. May our fellowships and all our gatherings be "windows into heaven, living icons, as it were." May we better reflect both the journey inward *and* the journey outward, balancing in all the facets of our common life of contemplation, community and missional action.

*Peter Stube, Fellowship Coordinator, TSSF
Province of the Americas*

"Even a stopped clock is right twice a day!"

Anonymous

The Saints Wisdom Project



The Saints Wisdom Project

What began as an idea (to somehow better connect our seniors and those most on the fringe of our Order with the rest of the family) has turned out to be an ongoing ministry. Not only did the idea turn into a goal, it became our mission. A number of fellowships were already doing a great job in this area, but in our Order there was no formal plan, no precedent for how to do this successfully. Through the ongoing writing about the aging process (by all members of all ages for various reasons) people now have a forum to share their insights, ideas, and experiences as well as their concerns. There has been a shift in the comfortability of tertiaries to openly share the struggles that come with aging. Thanks be to God. No one should feel like he or she is alone, especially during this potentially daunting time of life. The publication of a book containing all of the Saints Wisdom Project articles is still being planned and we will continue to share articles here in this section of *The Franciscan Connection* even after the book is created. This endeavor will help insure that we remain steadfast in our commitment to keep the heartbeat of our community strong.

Article submissions are being accepted on an ongoing basis. Please contact the Saints Wisdom Project team at saintswisdom@yahoo.com or TheSaintsWisdomProject.com P.O. Box 706, Mt. Sinai, NY 11766.

The Saints Wisdom Project Team



Stay Active

~ A "Saints Wisdom Project" Article ~

I received your invitation to write an article for the Saints Wisdom Project. Hope this helps. At this time in my life I can't drive long distance because of back problems, but I am fortunate that John Brockmann, TSSF lives in Scituate too and can give me rides to Fellowship meetings and other Franciscan events. At church I do a healing ministry, I take the altar flowers to nursing homes and shut-ins. I am one of the members of a prayer shawl group that knits shawls for people who need our prayers and support. I also help put on a Community Dinner each month at our church for anyone who can be helped by the meal. We mainly get seniors because most of them live alone. It is a social time blessed with a home cooked meal. We serve between forty-five and eighty people. And, in November each year, I continue to help with our church fair.

I Stay Involved

I enjoy participating in the "Meals on Wheels" program at least three times a week. My job is to help get the bags ready for the drivers. I even sometimes drive a route myself and I assist two days per week with the meals provided at the site. We usually get around fourteen people. As you can see, I stay involved! I am on the Board of Directors of South Shore Elderly Services, help out at the Scituate Senior Center, as well as help with the food pantry. Additionally, I am active with the local Rotary which meets on Wednesday evenings. I am the secretary, so I spend much time on the computer recording the minutes. Our group also hosts fundraising events.

Good Citizens Award

I am also in the Daughters of The American Revolution (DAR) organization and am currently a representative for the National DAR at the Veterans Hospital in Brockton, Massachusetts. My work involves collecting new clothing and Christmas gifts for the veterans at the hospital. Finally, I am chairperson for "The Good Citizen Award" which grants scholarships to three students from different local high schools. I even volunteer at the book store in the Scituate Library!

Purpose And Fulfillment

From my experiences I offer the following suggestions for ministry (in particular to the senior

saints in our Order). 1. Stay active and volunteer often. This helps to keep you going and is good for your health. 2. Get involved in a strong church and support its ministries. For instance, in my area there is an outreach organization serving the homeless called *Father Bill's And Main Spring*, where I have helped. 3. Be a driver for various groups such as "Meals on Wheels." They always seem to be looking for volunteers. If you do not drive you might work in the kitchen preparing the food bags for the drivers to deliver. This is an important ministry because many of the clients live alone and rely on this service. 4. Check the local Senior Centers to see if they need any type of help. 5. Inquire at your local library for opportunities. 6. Food pantries are also a good way to serve. 7. Be on the lookout for requests for knitted prayer shawls and hats (if you knit) by local churches and organizations. Items are especially needed for children and babies. The most important thing to remember is to focus on being active and involved. This brings purpose and fulfillment.

Joan Powers, TSSF (Professed Fifty-Five Years)
Brother Juniper Fellowship



Give All You Can Give
 ~ A "Saints Wisdom Project" Article ~

Wandering through Assisi I realized how shallow my faith had become. The glorious experiences of my youth at a magnificent interracial church in Harlem, New York City were decades ago. I discovered a new possibility: There was a tertiary from the Third Order in my church. I was led to writing a rule, having a spiritual counselor, and being in fellowship and community. I attended the larger meetings and was enriched, coming to know others who inspired me and enriched my faith.

Fussing With The Cell Phone

At age eighty-two, fellowship has become more arduous. I did get to the Provincial Convocation in Kentucky, but doubt I will be able to attend the next. The annual meetings are slipping away. I need to be met at airports and driven to gatherings. The quarterly meetings of my fellowship do not match my need to use public transportation, and to not drive. This is a new age with electronics that can elude some of us elders. I fuss with my cell phone, forgetting how to turn it down. I try with the computer and struggle to access attachments and registration forms. Stairs without a bannister require a friendly arm.

Show Up And Listen And Speak My Piece

The good news? I have great support from the ecumenical woman's group that I attend. Through them I have community support to act out my beliefs in justice, through local, state and federal actions. I have the education and time "to show up, listen, speak my piece, and go home and pray." I believe that people do not deserve despair or indifference from elders. The generations that will inherit this world (children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren) deserve all I can give them of my time, skills, and wealth.

Cindy Kokis, TSSF (Professed Thirty-Two Years)
Cascadia Fellowship



Even When The Body Is Failing
 ~ A "Saints Wisdom Project" Article ~

Dear Franciscan Family, Currently I am living in assisted living across the street from my home. As I am aging, I'm finding just how my body is failing and am grateful for the care that I receive from the staff here. As to what kind of ministry that I am doing, I read the Bible here to the other residents weekly. And some ask for prayers. I think this is a good ministry for me as it's right up my alley. I am known as the "Prayer Warrior" around here. I still attend worship services twice weekly. One is here where I live and one is at my home church. I also continue with my AA meetings twice a month with the help of friends driving me to and from the meetings. For years, I used to volunteer monthly with the Drug and Alcohol Center here in the area. I am not as active with this ministry any longer, but I am happy to say that others have stepped up to keep this work going. As time goes by, I realize more and more that the ministry of "presence" is one of the most important things we can bring to others.

Bob Hasserries, TSSF (Professed Thirty-Five Years)
Los Pequeños Fellowship



The Emmaus Travelers Program

The feedback we have received regarding connections that TSSFers have made with each other in the Order continues to amaze us. People have said on many occasions, "Wow, you really did your homework in connecting us!" The responses are filled with appreciation and gratitude, though they

always include a disclaimer: "Thank you, but we simply cannot take credit for what the Holy Spirit has done. We surely pray over all of the names of tertiaries looking to connect, but God orchestrates the outcome!"

False Starts

We typically include a testimony or two in the Emmaus Travelers section of this periodical and will continue to do so, but if you have not had a positive experience with your ET experience, please contact the team and we will assist you. Occasionally, "false starts" happen before a true connection is actually established. Once both parties make a genuine effort and a link is made, fruit frequently follows.

Absolutely Nothing In Common

Remember, the whole thrust of the program is for tertiaries to experience friendships with others in the Order *outside* of their normal routine interactions. We have even had input from participants that both parties in an ET Connection had *absolutely nothing* in common, and YET, they decided to continue their efforts towards one another.

True Community

And from that commitment amazing things have happened. True bonds of brotherly and sisterly love were formed. That is GOD at work. It is not just loving those who love us, see things our way, or like the things we like, etc., but relating, accepting, and opening oneself up to "the other" in true community and Christian charity. That is GOD! We cannot imagine a greater testimony of affirmation to the value of the Emmaus Travelers Program.

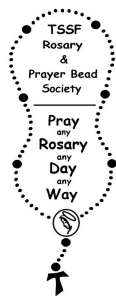
The Emmaus Travelers Program Team

If you have not yet become an Emmaus Traveler and would like to do so, please contact the team at saintswisdom@yahoo.com or [The Emmaus Travelers Program](http://TheEmmausTravelersProgram.org) P.O. Box 706, Mt. Sinai, NY 11766.

The Emmaus Travelers Program Team



"When the student is ready, the master will appear." *Zen Proverb*



The TSSF

Rosary And Prayer Bead Society

Cold winter greetings! Despite rainy, snowy, and otherwise dreary weather, we can still experience joy. Not matter what is happening in the atmosphere at any given time, we can boldly proclaim, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we

will rejoice and be glad in it." *Psalm 118:24* This reality should not be affected by anything we encounter in a given day, least of all the weather. As we embrace each new day with faith and confidence, along with the expectation that God is in control, then *every* day is magnificent.

Behind The Scenes Dialogue

The members of the Rosary and Prayer Bead Society now number one hundred and fifty-five! It is not only the number that is amazing, but it is also the diversity of ways in which pray-ers are using their rosaries. We are incredibly blessed by the stories that have crossed our desks and all the behind-the-scenes dialogues that have occurred during the past fourteen months regarding rosaries, prayer, and the excitement in the air about the new level of connection in our Order. If you would like to share *your* rosary story, you may use any of the addresses below.

Contact us: Judith at serg1us@aol.com or Joy at joymazzola@me.com or saintswisdom@yahoo.com or [The TSSF Rosary And Prayer Bead Society](http://TheTSSF.org) P.O. Box 706, Mt. Sinai, NY 11766.

The TSSF Rosary And Prayer Bead Society Team



Barnabas Ministry Stories

Tangible Assistance!

All that we do for the Lord should be considered "ministry." Some ministries are common to most churches, while others are individually run. For instance, "Snail mail ministry (writing letters to people), driving Ministry (helping people who can no longer drive), or a ministry of "Presence" (listening with intent to the people placed on your daily path, for instance), all involve an element of dedicated encouragement. The Barnabas section of *The Franciscan Connection* highlights ministries like the ones above and even included a story of mass being

celebrated in a barn! In this issue, learn about a tertiary who uses one of her talents to help and encourage others in a tangible financial way!
The Emmaus Travelers Program Team

"A friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and sings it back to you when you forget how it goes." *Anonymous*

Ministry Highlight

Being A Beggar For Good (For God)!

From the time of the earliest Franciscans, begging has been a part of our tradition. The early brothers strolled the streets of Assisi begging for food and praised God for whatever came their way. Francis begged for bricks and mortar to "rebuild God's Church," and after eight hundred years, San Damiano still stands due to the results of his begging. Today many of us are uncomfortable with the concept of begging. We know our ministries need money and resources to function, but most of us shy away from begging (ie. fund raising). Even asking for pledges for annual budgets can give us anxiety. Pity our priest brothers and sisters on Stewardship Sunday! Pity even our Chapter leaders!

A Foundation To Do Good

However, there is another way to look at begging (and *fundraising*). Francis tells us that all barriers set up by privilege based on wealth should be overcome by love (our Third Aim). Both Francis and Clare gave away their inheritance to serve the poor. Today we may call this creating a foundation to do good. There always have been rich people who want to do good with their resources. St. Louis (King Louis IX, a tertiary saint) created soup kitchens, set up the first free library in Europe, and changed trial by might to trial by law. Elizabeth set up hospitals and cared for the sick. In our own time, we have families such as the Kelloggs, Rockefellers, Eli Lillys, Buffetts, and Gates who also seek to do good with their fortunes.

500 Billion Was Available

In 2016, there were over 86,000 foundations set up in the USA plus state and federal grants, all designed to "Do good." Approximately \$390 billion was given to worthy causes. This is great, but even more astonishing is that more than *\$500 billion* was available! Of all the recipients, 32% were religious and faith-based organizations, 15% went towards education, 12% to human services, and 11% was allotted for replenishing foundations.

Interested Funders

Funds can be found for almost anything! Grants have been given for training to restore antique boats and cars, support for endangered languages, and even hand-bell choirs. Some recent grants serving Franciscan values include: Monarch butterfly conservation, housing of pets at women's domestic violence shelters, retirement of coal-fueled power plants, support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and anti-poverty projects in NYC, just to name a few. Whatever project, there nearly always is an interested funder (or more) who can be discovered with simple research.

Concisely And Compellingly

Although there is much money available from foundations, corporations, and individuals, a compelling case must be presented as to why the funder should partner with you because the competition is tough. We can learn how to maximize success from the experts in persuasion (professional marketers). If we employ their tools of selling, we can use them to "do good." There are three main components to consider: One, authenticity (know yourself and your mission); Two, research (identify and know the funders so you can write to their heart); and Three, (persuasion - tell your story clearly, concisely, and compellingly).

A Fruit Loop In A Bowl Of Cheerios

To stand out from the competition, be a Fruit Loop in a bowl of Cheerios. Know your need; have an attainable plan of operation linking goals, objectives, and activities for expected results. Highlight and repeat the most important relevant ideas and have a detailed timeline. If you can say all the above in the time it takes to go up an elevator, you will have a clear, concise, and compelling story for your mission. Using this time limit requires you to identify the essentials and you can build from this foundation. Remember to write to your readers, not yourself. Too many applications are written from the viewpoint of the writer. For example, phrases such as, "This computer will make my life easier," or "We can make payroll," should be avoided. This approach is the least effective approach because it gives your *need* top billing, not the *mission*.

Include A Special Topic

Research your readers. Why did they set up the foundation? What are their special interests? Do they have restrictions? Are they accepting new applications? Will their range of funding meet

your needs? If you can read a biography of the decision makers and learn their history, you may be able to include a special topic near to their hearts. I found one funder in Texas who went to college in my area of upstate New York.

Win Their Hearts

Above all, remember you are telling a story. Jesus taught us the power of storytelling. You want people to connect first with their hearts. If you reach the heart, the head looks for reasons to follow. You want them to connect with the Prodigal Son, the healers, the friends carrying their sick friend onto a roof for healing, and the re-builders of God's church. If you can win their hearts by presenting rational plans to achieve the mission and explaining the story clearly, concisely and compellingly, you will have a higher chance of being funded. You, my brother and sister, will be a "Fruit Loop in a bowl of Cheerios!"

Followers Of The Poverello

If anyone would like some advice or help with research or writing a grant, feel free to contact me. I have access to the Foundation Directory online database with my freelance grant writing service (Grantwriting By Lynn). Visit my website GrantwritingByLynn.com. I also review announcements of RFPs (Request for Proposals). Some grants have a very short window of opportunity to accept an application. One recent example was a grant opportunity for school gardens and training in environmental sustainability. There was only a two week window in which to submit a request! As followers of the Poverello, begging for resources to do good is part of our tradition. Many of us are involved with ministries that could benefit from extra resources at times. Perhaps we can help each other and do good in Francis' name.

Lynn Herne, TSSF

The Mustard Seed Fellowship

Send your Barnabas Ministry submissions to saintswisdom@yahoo.com or write to [Barnabas Ministry](mailto:BarnabasMinistry) P.O. Box 706, Mt. Sinai, NY 11766.

TFC

"Only the works of saints and artists give us any reason to believe the human race is worth belonging to."

Katherine Ann Porter



By The Hand Of David (A Retirement Ministry)

February 4th, 1981

My first encounter with the Society of St. Francis was with the Order of St. Francis (OSF) at Little Portion Friary, Mount Sinai, Long Island, New York, during the summer of 1968. Five years later in seminary, I met a Friar from England, Brother Robert Hugh, who was engaged in ministry with seminarians and university students. Brother Robert holds an important part in my life as well as in the lives of my children and late wife. His witness led to my profession in the Third Order on February 4th, 1981. I also fondly remember the Brothers who reorganized the Order when OSF merged with another religious Order in England to form SSF, The Society of St. Francis.



St. Francis Of Assisi



The Good Shepherd

Move Nothing!

Fast forward to 2012 and my retirement after nearly forty years of ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church! I knew that new opportunities for ministry lay before me, but what would they look like? I spent almost a year sitting in the pews as I acclimated myself to this new chapter in my life. I eventually accepted a call as an Interim Rector some eighty miles from my home. The parish was filled with wonderful people and many opportunities, though as the interim I felt I could only "dust, but better make sure I moved nothing!"



*St. Augustine And St. Monica
(Written True)*



Me (Hard At Work)

An Ikonopis

After nine months this ministry work came to its conclusion and as I reflected on the experience. I realized it was too similar to being a full time Rector, which was what I had retired from. I needed to find something else to excite and challenge me. I was searching for something that would bring joy: ministry that would engage me in an incarnational way which seems so Franciscan to me. Hence, in retirement I became an *Ikonopis*, one who writes icons.

God Is Full Of Surprises

Parallel with my last twenty years as a Rector in the Diocese of Dallas, Texas was my growing interest and eventually my passion for iconography. I spent four years studying under Mr. Phil Zimmerman, a popular Russian Orthodox iconographer located in Pennsylvania. Much to my joy and amazement, I could actually “write” an icon as well as teach others to do so. And since I had no formal training as an artist I never thought I could engage in this ministry, but I have! God is full of surprises.



Diocese Of North Carolina

attending a variety of annual diocesan conventions. I have even done several

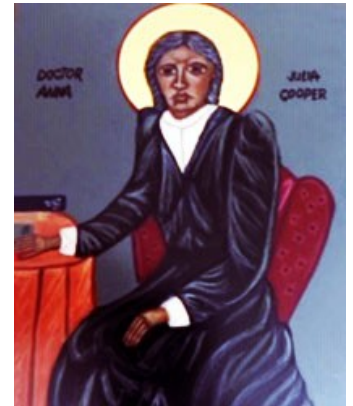
Without Profit Being My Goal

I have written well over a hundred different icons as well as taught Congregational Icon Writing Workshop in five

commissions for churches. And since this is not what I do for a living, I am free to weave my ministry as a tertiary into my icon writing without profit being my goal. Rather, I can concentrate on witnessing Jesus’ Incarnation, raising the understanding of Episcopalians about the use of icons and making enough money to keep myself in “boards, paint, and gold leaf!” So, yes, I am happy to sell an icon or teach a workshop to congregations, but I also enjoy donating my work to various church related fundraisers or celebrations in support of their ministries.

Black Saints Matter

I am presently developing a series of icons depicting Saints of African heritage because I firmly believe that every child should be able to look at the stained glass windows, Sunday School art or icons in her or his church and see someone who looks like they do. I have always been amused by how Christian artists historically portray our Lord, a man who was most certainly a middle eastern Jew and not a blond, blue eyed Swede! I think Swedes are wonderful, but Jesus did not look like one and

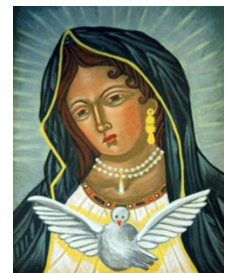


Dr. Anna Julia Cooper

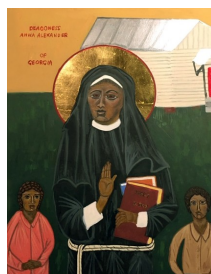
I think we owe it to our brothers and sisters of color to show the wonderful rainbow of colors that make up the Catholic Faith. “Black Saints Matter!”
David Holland, TSSF North Carolina



Moses The Black



Alma Maria The Conception Of Jesus



Deaconess Anna



Pauli Murray



Praying With The Face Of God (Changes Lives)

As an artist and Christian, in the early 1990s I became interested in icons and began to study them. At the time, my spiritual director, Canon Robert Limpert fostered my learning and then writing of them. I loved the social justice forms of the icons of Robert Lentz and resonated with his strains of social justice that were at the forefront of his work. My art at the time was as a silk painter creating many pieces involving social justice, as well. I always wrote a narrative to go along with them, even before I started painting, as if the words or the prayers formed the visuals.

Graymoor

I was encouraged to write to Robert Lentz and was then able to take one of his long workshops near Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. Later, I became acquainted with the Monastery of New Skeet, an Orthodox monastery near where I lived in Upstate New York. I began to study with a Companion (of the Monastery) who lived there, who is a prolific and beautiful icon writer named Sr. Pat. I was a novice in the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis at this time, and I went on retreat at Greymoore (in Garrison, New York) with some tertiaries from the New York fellowships. There was a social gathering for us on the evening of our arrival. I am not that comfortable at such social gatherings when I do not really know anyone. I saw a man standing on the wall across from me and I walked over and started a conversation with him. His name was Brent and he was from Pennsylvania. After we exchanged greetings, I discovered that he was encouraged to come to this retreat to feel the love of God and the joy of this love because here he would meet "the Franciscans."



Meanness And Shaming

In desperation, Brent did just that. I found out from our discussion that he was a gay man living with AIDS, and that his parents were members of a huge televangelism network who had generated an anti-gay writing campaign against him. He was receiving

hundreds of letters telling him that if he did not convert back to being "straight," he would go to hell. He felt lots of anger, meanness, and shaming in these letters from so-called "Christians," but he could not sense any of God's love.

We Both Cried

Brent and I stuck together during most of the retreat. We listened to the talks and prayed. He and I both met lots of people and experienced powerful moments together and separately. After the retreat we determined to stay connected as we both cried and he told me that for the first time, he finally felt God's love. In parting, I encouraged him to keep looking for the love of God in other places, as well as in his heart. He did just that, as I would find out later. We did manage to write to each other faithfully.

He Had AIDS

Meanwhile, back from the retreat, I felt led to pray for Brent in a committed and continuous way. I struggled with the reality that he was being judged because of his sexuality, the fact that he had AIDS and that he was being alienated by most of the religious people around him. This really troubled me because regardless of what people believe. It is not their job to judge others, period. We, as Christians, are called to *love*.

Do Not Weep For Me, Mother

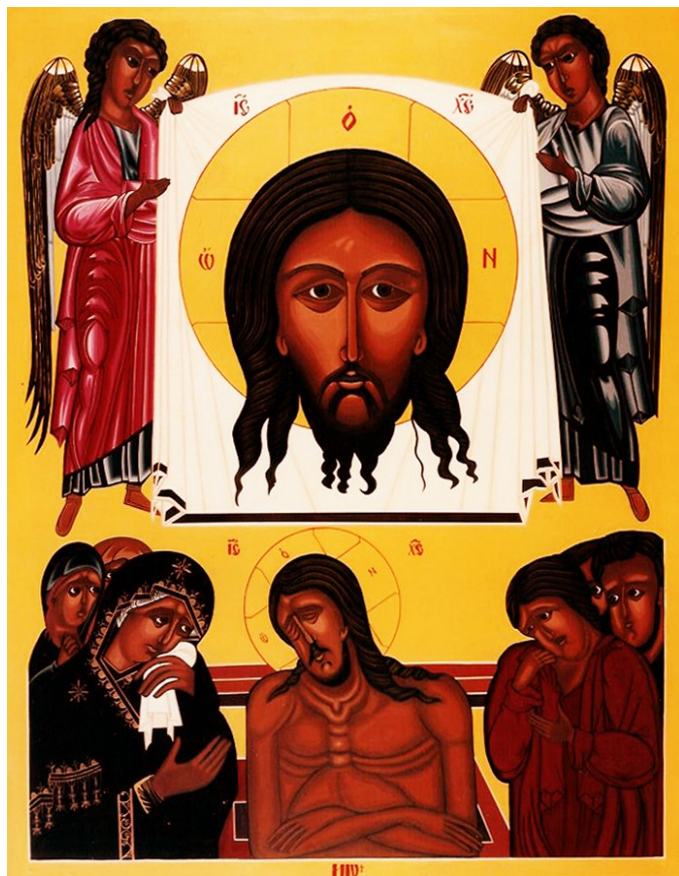
One day, I came across a traditional icon referred to as a "Holy Thursday" icon. It is typically only revered on this day and as a result is not very well-known. The icon is called "Do Not Weep for Me, Mother" and shows Christ in a sarcophagus with Mary crying, holding a tissue to her eyes, The Holy Church is surrounding them. Above them is a resurrection icon of the Holy Face on a napkin.

I Took My Chances!

Once I saw this icon I knew immediately that I had to write it for Brent. As I began to craft the narrative, I knew that I would change a few things from the traditional version as is my style (Robert Lentz does the same as well). Christ's halo is inscribed with several Greek words that mean "the one who is," which I included in mine, but changed to read "the one who is (has) AIDS." I knew I would do this even before I started to create the drawing before writing the icon. I also knew some might think this was wrong or an abomination, but I was compelled to do so anyway.

What Writing The Icon Did To Me

At the time, I was working virtually with Robert Lentz and hands-on with Sr. Pat at the Monastery. Her traditions of strict Orthodoxy were a great support for this "little Franciscan rebel girl." They founded my feet on prayer and silence and enabled me to paint and look into the Face of Christ each night, hour after hour, after I came home from work. I can tell you that looking in the Face of Christ for long periods of time is a very humbling and searing process, making one vulnerable. I encountered defects in my character as I painted and struggled with the writing. I wondered if I had enough patience to finish this icon. Would I keep erasing the cartoon? Struggling to get this or that line straight, I worried about making the eyes just right. Robert Lentz told me that I "bit off more than I could chew" with this icon that was forty-five inches wide by fifty-four inches long. He said I should stop struggling and throw it in the river. I did not! I kept wrestling as I tried to whittle down my defects of character, as part of my process in writing this icon. This experience involved tears as I gazed into the face of Christ who loved me back and told me I was enough!



Do Not Weep For Me, Mother

My Leap Of Faith

During this same period of time, Robert Lentz offered me an apprenticeship in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This was far from upstate New York, my job, and my friends, but I took a leap of faith and began the necessary preparations. Getting ready for this huge change involved completing the icon so I could deliver it to Brent as I drove across the country on my way to Albuquerque. Brent and his partner knew nothing of this icon or the narrative.

At The Foot Of His Coffin

I was able to complete writing the icon just in time for the move. I made plans to stop and visit with Brent at his home in Pennsylvania. Once there, I surprised him with the icon and the accompanying narrative. We all cried together as we sat, looked, and prayed. After a bit, Brent said, "I want this icon to be at the foot of my coffin during my funeral along with the narrative." His partner and I looked at each other and agreed. It was obvious to me that Brent's health had declined terribly since I last saw him and his partner confirmed how sick he had gotten and why he was so pale and thin.

They Asked For Forgiveness

Not long after, Brent passed away. His partner indeed had the icon at the foot of his coffin and placed the narrative on a stand so it could be read before the icon. Reading the story and staring at the icon and the face of Christ had a profound impact on many who attended the funeral. In fact, it brought reconciliation, understanding, healing, and love to Brent's partner that day from Brent's family who asked for forgiveness and received it. I am crying as I write this now, even though this happened so many years ago, because God is just so great and his Love for us is everlasting!

She Started Crying

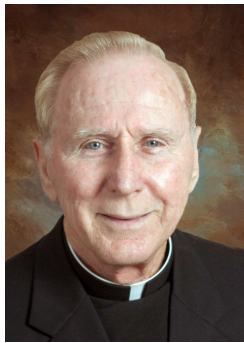
Later on, Brent's partner asked me if it would be alright to give the icon called "Do Not Weep For Me, Mother" to the Caron Institute in Pennsylvania. At the time it was a place where they had AIDS support groups. Brent and his partner had gone there often to talk with Fr. Bill Hultberg. Many years afterward I called Fr. Bill to see if the icon was still there and how it had been received. He told me the following story. "We hung the icon in a space over the door and next to the Star of David. A week later a woman was receiving communion and she started crying. It startled everyone. Her name was Jo Ellen and she attended church regularly.

God's Will Was Done

On this particular Sunday, there were four hundred people at Mass. Her crying and sobbing scared the living daylight out of me. I was further amazed as she shared that the reason she was affected so strongly was that she saw the lost souls of those who had died of HIV entering *into* the icon." Fr. Bill then said, "You will never know the power that icon that had on all of us here." I was crying and taking notes as he spoke to me over the phone. All I could say was, "Thanks be to God!" Afterward, I said to myself, even if I never write another icon or paint another picture, it is Okay. God's will was done with this one particular work.

Why Not Give It A Try

Well, several months ago, I tried to call Fr. Hultberg who was already in his nineties, but I was unable to get through to him so I sent an email to the institute. I received a call back and they informed me that they did not know anything about where the icon was! This experience took place more than twenty-four years ago. Praying and spending time with the face of Christ and Christ himself is transformative. *Fr. Bill Hultberg*



My hope and prayer for you is that many of you will spend time praying with icons in silence. If the practice is new to you why not give it a try? *Cece Evola, TSSF*
The Milagro Fellowship



An Icon Encounter With St. Clare

Byzantine icons have always fascinated me, so when an icon writing workshop was offered in my retirement community, I signed up and went along. I have always loved painting and the class given by Rev. Mary Beth Wells opened a door into a new discipline. The combined method of working and praying felt like "coming home" to me.

Conversation In Prayer

"We don't paint alone," my teacher pointed out. Oriental art begins with prayer. Ancient Greek artists and poets routinely conversed with their muses, but in our Western art, something often

seems to be missing that icon writing restores: conscious conversation in prayer with our Creator and even with the saints we are portraying. The whole experience is a prayer.



St. Francis Of Assisi Blessing Animals

Looking Straight Back At Me

At the beginning of my class I learned that I would be writing two icons, one in acrylic (a more modern way of writing icons) and another in "egg tempera." Egg tempera is the traditional method and involves mixing one's own paints. I wound up finally choosing two subjects, both of which were prayerfully chosen after meditating for a long time before a selection of many possible saints. (I almost wrote that I wound up being chosen by two subjects, because that is how it felt as I prayed, looked, and studied the holy portraits.) The experience was very powerful and it seemed that the saints were looking straight back at me! In the end, a not too ancient monastery icon of St. Francis blessing the creatures stood out to me, as well as a fifth century Coptic icon of Christ the Teacher, thought to be the first portrait of our Lord.

So He Would Look Ugly

Though I have been a tertiary for many years, the process of portraying St Francis was like finally

having a chance to really get to know him. When it came time to work on the face of St. Francis, something unexpected occurred. First, it seemed too early when the teacher guided me through the required steps. As I started I was led in my prayer to ask St. Clare for help, as she was one of those who knew and loved him best. I seem to recall a story from my student days in art history classes, in which St. Francis himself asked his first portrait painter to redo the very handsome picture he had just painted. He would rather look ugly instead, in order to avoid attracting the attention of pilgrims so that they would focus wholly on our Lord Jesus.



5th Century Coptic Icon Of Christ The Teacher

The Humility Of St. Francis

After the face was done by my hand (in St. Clare's hand so-to-speak) I stepped back and looked at it. First, it surprised me because it was charming in a strangely childlike way and wasn't really staring back at the viewer at all. I slowly realized that it appears like Francis is listening to God. I felt really grateful to St. Clare for doing an end run around her dear St. Francis' humility. And I think that humility is exactly what the icon portrays. I do not know if anyone else would ever appreciate this particular face of Francis as I do (because of my unexpected experience).

A Wonderful Blessing

When the class finished and all the work was completed, my icons hung in a little exhibit here in my independent living community. During a special visit from my young granddaughter, she went right up to the Francis Icon and said thoughtfully (to no one in particular), "I think that's just what he would have looked like." However, I heard her words and nodded to myself, yes, maybe he did look like that. Later, doing the Coptic icon was its own meaningful spiritual journey. I'll tell about it another time. But dear reader, do try an icon writing workshop or retreat if you have an opportunity to do so. It requires no special talent or prior training, and it's an amazing adventure in prayer and discovery!

Mary Louise Maroney, TSSF

St. Elizabeth's Fellowship



My Love Affair With Icons

Stricken And Smitten

Growing up in small town Nebraska where there were no Orthodox churches, and to my knowledge no Orthodox Christians, I did not experience icons until my early twenties when I went to seminary to prepare for Ordination to the Sacred Priesthood. My adviser and mentor at Seabury Western Theological Seminary introduced me to Orthodox Christianity in a theology class which included experiences with "windows into heaven" when he brought several of his icons to show the class. I was stricken and smitten and my love affair with icons began at that very moment. I began reading and studying everything I could about iconography and dreamed of the day when I could find and afford a hand-written icon to grace my home and aid me in my prayers and meditations.

Precious Holy Images

Many years later, while I was living and ministering in the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island, New York, some dear friends from my seminary days came to visit my home, having just completed a one-week course in writing icons at an Orthodox Retreat Center near Johnstown, Pennsylvania. When they showed me their work, I was smitten once again and began planning a continuing education experience for the very next year where I too would learn to write icons and be enriched with volumes of information about iconography and these precious holy images.

I Went Home With My Treasures

The two-week icon writing course was a sacred time for me as my instructor (a well-known iconographer, Phillip Zimmerman) not only taught us the theology of icons, but step by step instruction in making icon boards, using acrylic gauche pigments, brush techniques and the prayers used during icon writing. It was during this retreat that I completed my very first hand written icons of our Savior Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother Mary. The icons were blessed at a closing Liturgy and I went home with my treasures. Since that time, one of those icons has graced the holy corner of every place I have lived and any time I moved into a new place, the first thing I did was to place the icon in the holy corner.



Madonna And Child

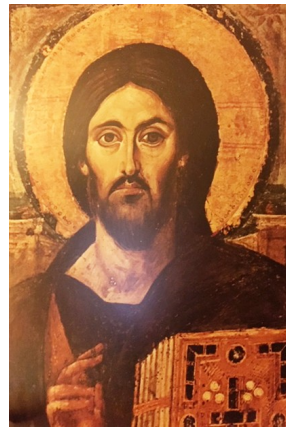
Egg Tempera Vs. Acrylic Paints

There are several icons in my place of prayer. Some were written by my first instructor, others were gifts from friends. A few are bought classics, like a copy of the first known icon of our Lord called "The Pantocrator" which hangs in the monastery of St. Catherine in Mt. Sinai, Egypt where I have been blessed to visit and pray before. Opinions vary among iconographers as to the technique and materials used to write icons. Some modern teachers use acrylic which is a faster drying paint.



Monastery Of St. Catherine (Mt. Sinai, Egypt)

Then there are those who believe that icons must be created in a traditional way, using egg tempera paints. After a number of courses on the subject, I began to study with a well-known Episcopal priest and iconographer, Fr. John Walton, who skillfully taught me to write icons using egg tempera and pure pigments. Under his gentle and skillful hands, I wrote several icons which were given as gifts to friends and family. These do have a different essence and beauty than those written with acrylic paints, but opinions vary regarding what is "acceptable."



*Christ the Pantocrator
At The Monastery Of
St. Catherine
(Mt. Sinai, Egypt)*

Icons Bless Me

I have studied with a number of teachers and enjoy a library of classic volumes on the technique, theology, and collections of icons from around the world. I have also introduced icons to various parishes where I served as a priest and helped many Episcopalians come to value and appreciate holy icons in their worship spaces. A number of books I treasure include: [Praying With Icons](#) by Henri Nouwen, Archbishop Rowan Williams' classic little volume entitled [The Dwelling of the Light: Praying with Icons of Christ](#), and two wonderful books by a dear friend and teacher, Fr. Peter Pearson, called [A Brush With God](#) and [Another Brush With God](#), both published by Morehouse Publishing. The presence of icons in my home blesses me and aids me in my prayer life. These "windows into heaven" are a treasure, available to me at any time for prayer and meditation, and knowing they are here brings me great comfort.

*Rodney R. Michel, Friend of TSSF
(Retired Bishop, Philadelphia)*



Jesus Our Savior (One Of My First Icons)



Visio Divina

First And Foremost A Spiritual Practice

My first attempt at writing an icon was for a Mother's Day gift when I was an eighteen-year-old studio art major. I look at it now and groan at how I really didn't have a clue about what the process was all about. I have since thought of revising it, but decided to keep it as is because it is a good reminder to me of how far I've come and how far I've yet to go. Since *The Franciscan Connection* focuses on the ministries of tertiaries, it has made me reflect on whether or not icon writing (or any other artistic practice) is a "ministry." I believe it is, and I also think that if I don't share my icons, or write them for someone else (which I really haven't yet) then *how* is it a ministry? For me it is a ministry of prayer, since icon writing is first and foremost a spiritual practice.

Shared Presence

The icon exists in a context, a context of prayer and worship. When you take an icon out of that context in a certain sense it becomes less than an icon. If we merely treat an icon as any work of art, we have missed the point of an icon. It is not just a work of art, but part of an act of prayer and worship from



My Very First Icon (For Mother's Day)

"The question is not what you look at, but what you see." Henry David Thoreau



A Later Icon Of The Madonna I Wrote

A Divine Way Of Seeing

Visio Divina is a divine way of seeing, in the way that Lectio Divina is a way of reading or hearing. Both practices look to the ancient Christian sense of the heart. In our modern culture the heart is thought of as the seat of emotion and feelings, in opposition to the mind, which is the center of the intellect and rationale. In the ancient Christian understanding the heart is primarily an organ of perception, the center of a person where what we have come to divide as mind and heart are joined. The ancient Eastern writers of the Philokalia (an anthology on prayer and the spiritual life), speak about the necessity of bringing the mind into the heart. It is in the heart that we can perceive and encounter God. Therefore, St. Benedict begins his Rule: “Listen carefully, my son, to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” We find in Ephesians 1:18, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” In Matthew’s Beatitudes we read, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Lectio Divina

In the practice of Lectio Divina we seek above all a listening heart wherein God’s Word (God’s self-communication) is made manifest in Christ, in the Scriptures, in the human heart and in the heart of all Creation. Lectio Divina is a method of approaching scripture or other texts to listen to the depths, seeking to encounter Christ, the Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit, hidden in the words of the text. Ultimately, it can be said that the goal of Lectio is an ever-expanding capacity to listen with the heart to the Word of God in all of life’s situations, not just reading, leading to a more constant awareness of God’s presence. It is a listening as communication not so much for a particular message, but for the nearness of the Living God. It is therefore a listening that leads to a new way of hearing. In this sense, the faithful practice of Lectio can undergird our entire life of prayer, work, and communion with others.

Visio Divina

All this can also be said of a practice of Visio Divina, which the discipline of icon writing can enhance, training us in an ever expanding capacity to see God’s footprints in all of life’s situations, and leading to a more constant awareness of God’s presence. We can learn to see and perceive the depths of what St. Bonaventure calls “The Book of Creation,” seeking to encounter the Christ, the Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit, hidden within God’s revelation in Creation and the events and encounters of our daily lives. In this way, the practice of Visio Divina, which can be focused and trained through icon writing and other forms of visual attentiveness is an eminently Franciscan practice.



St. Michael



*Sketch Of
Conrad Of Piacenza*

Become The Image

In addition to Bonaventure's exhortation to look into the depths of Creation to perceive God with the eyes of our heart, there is, of course, St. Clare's teaching on prayer, "Gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him."

This gaze Clare learned in the many years that she prayed before the icon we call the San Damiano Cross which for her was the mirror of eternity.

"Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance! And transform your whole being into the image (icon) of the Godhead Itself through contemplation!" In a sense, the San Damiano Cross is more Clare's than St. Francis' since it was Clare who spent her life in contemplation before it. Ultimately, for both Bonaventure and Clare the call is to become icons ourselves. Clare writes, "Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ, rather it means becoming the image (i.e. icon), of the Beloved, an image (i.e. icon), disclosed through transformation." In the end, for us as Franciscans the whole of Creation is an icon of God, who is constantly manifesting and emptying God's self for our sakes. The practice of icon writing is one way to train the eyes of our heart to live in that awareness.

Charles McCarron, TSSF

The Long Island Fellowship

"In the middle of winter, I learned at last that I carried within myself an invincible summer."

Albert Camus



I'm Just Saying . . .

Reflections On Thin Places

Have you stood alone on sand-swept dunes by the sea, a setting sun turning breakers into molten gold with towering cumulus brushing twilight with deep vermillion and suddenly felt a mysterious unity with all Creation? Or have you leaned against an ancient stone arch in crumbling ruins on a windswept crag and shuddered at a mystic Presence? Maybe you have experienced a complete rapture of all your senses as the soaring sound of a great orchestra and chorus lifted your soul to realms beyond comprehension. Others may have felt and seen God in the innocent and trusting eyes of a two-year-old granddaughter. Some people have been completely and wholly absorbed in the scarlet petals of a

blooming rose. Or perhaps, alone in a friary cell in the fading light of late afternoon, you encountered the Living Christ with his hands outstretched entreating your love. Celts, from before the Christian era, called these experiences "Thin Places" where the material world merges with the spiritual world.

The "Other World"

Mystics record these encounters with the "other" world in their deepest contemplations.



And they are often accompanied by mysterious light and feelings of peace and intense love. In the last few years, an increased awakening to things Celtic has occurred: jewelry, crosses and tours to abandoned abbeys and monasteries in Ireland, Scotland, England, Spain, and France have become quite popular. People feel a connection with this "other world" of monastics who have taken Christ's admonition literally to cast off worldly desires and material pursuits to follow him in simplicity and humility.

Mystical Experiences

A deep, spiritual yearning seems to be drawing people to the mystical experiences of ancient Christianity, seeking those "thin places" that define our relationship with the Creator and all Creation. Souls are seeing, maybe for the first time, how all things and all life are related and connected and infused with Absolute Love.

The Material And The Spiritual

Richard Rohr, OFM, writes in his meditation for December 3, 2018, "Whenever the material and the spiritual coincide, there is the Christ. Jesus fully accepted the human-divine identity and walked it into history. Henceforth, the Christ "comes again" whenever we are able to see the spiritual and the material coexisting, in any moment, in any event, and in any person. All matter reveals Spirit, and Spirit needs matter to "show itself!" I believe "the Second Coming of Christ" happens whenever and wherever we allow this to be utterly true for us. This is how God continually breaks into history, even before the first Homosapiens stood in awe and wonder, gazing at the stars."

Overwhelming And Ecstatic Joy

About ten years ago I experienced an extraordinary encounter with a "thin place," in a most unexpected place, time and circumstance. It occurred at my desk in my office in the Pennsylvania Capitol while sorting through emails on my computer. Budget analysts, secretaries, and other employees were nearby in conversation. Suddenly, I felt an overwhelming and ecstatic joy. Intense warmth radiated throughout my body. I jumped up from my desk and wanted to jump up and down, to dance, to sing, to praise God. Colleagues looked askance at me and wondered if something was wrong. Soon a wonderful calm and serene peace, an overwhelming love followed the ecstasy. It slowly subsided over the next few weeks. I did not understand it, but considered it an incomparable and unwarranted gift, a consolation for which I will be forever grateful. For me, this was a "thin place" experience. Have you ever experienced a "thin place"? If so, please consider sharing it. I'm Just Saying . . .

Gary Davis, TSSF

Troubadours Of The Susquehanna Fellowship

"Quiet minds cannot be perplexed or frightened, but go on in fortune or misfortune at their own private pace, like a clock during a thunderstorm." *Robert Louis Stevenson*



"My hunch is that anyone who has ever been able to sustain good work has had at least one person (and often many) who have believed in him or her. We just don't get to be competent human beings without a lot of different investments from others."

Fred Rogers

UPCOMING

The Southwest Convocation 2019

Illuminating Creation

2019 (October 4-6) Friday Through Sunday

The St. John's Hand-Illuminated Bible

This Convocation, "Illuminating Creation" will provide opportunities to learn about the spirituality of the artwork of the Heritage Edition of the St. John's Bible (all seven volumes) and will be an experiential and interactive time of reflection using text and artwork. There are three major sections to the program: Creation, Journey, and Renewal.

Hands-On Experience

Each segment features short meditations based on selected illuminations from this amazing Bible. A "scriptorium" will be available for participants to create their own illuminations or journal entries in response to the experience of Visio Divina (divine way of seeing) meditations.

Contemplation

The retreat center provides many spaces for silence, private prayer, and meditation. There is a labyrinth and walking trails along the beautiful Bosque, a breathtaking open space that runs along the River, as well as the magnificent Rio Grande River itself.

St. John's Cathedral

Our convocation leader is the Very Rev. Mark Goodman, experienced in presenting the Heritage Bible to audiences. He gained his understanding and training at the St. John's Abbey and is the Dean Emeritus of St. John's Cathedral in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He served as Dean from 2007-2017, and was instrumental in securing a gift of the Heritage Edition of St. John's Bible for the Cathedral in 2014. Our event will be held at the Bosque Conference Center in Albuquerque, NM.

Albuquerque International Balloon Festival



This annual event will occur during this weekend as well. Over eight hundred hot air balloons will be on hand along with their owners! For a copy of our flyer with more details about the *Illuminating Creation* Convocation, contact Cece, thetwowhos@gmail.com.

The St. John's Bible

www.saintjohnsbible.org

Albuquerque Balloon Festival

www.balloonfiesta.com

UPCOMING

Franciscan Gathering 2019

Transitus And Feast Day Celebration

2019 (October 3-5) Thursday Through Saturday

Twofold Intention

The Transitus of St. Francis or passing over from this life into new life is celebrated each October 3rd by Franciscans everywhere. By combining this holy day with his feast day, we set the stage for a unique experience of both solemnity and joy. A sacred space will be created for deeper fellowship than is typical for large gatherings.

Open Space

The bulk of our time together will provide multiple venues for tertiaries to interact with one another in an informal, organic way. There will be small and large group activities, but participants will craft their own experiences with the space, time, materials and opportunities available!

Centers

While not painting the *whole* picture or listing *all* of what is planned, we will say that there will be time for music, writing and poetry, art, walking and talking, eating, and uninterrupted conversation! A labyrinth is available as are meditation spaces.



Where?

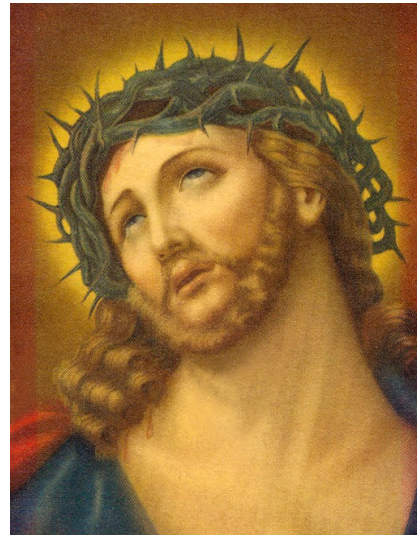
We will meet at The Spiritual Center at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 301 St. Thomas Road, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The church is in Lancaster County and is just outside the city (four miles from the Lancaster train station). Contact the Transitus And Feast Day Celebration Team to learn how to register and book your sleeping accommodations. Write to saintswisdom@yahoo.com.

UPCOMING

Holy Land Pilgrimage 2021

A Journey To The Holy Land

2021 (May 24-June 3) Eleven Days



No Ordinary Cookie-Cutter Tour!

Canon Iyad Qumri is a local Arab Palestinian Christian guide, licensed by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. He has a wealth of biblical, historical, and contemporary cultural

knowledge and enthusiasm to share. Iyad has over twenty years of experience in developing personalized tours that provide a sense of history and connection with the world Jesus inhabited. Some of the places we will visit are Jerusalem, Jericho, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Gethsemane, the Dead Sea, Emmaus, and the Church of the Resurrection!

I Knew I Had To Return!

My name is Lynne Sharp, TSSF, and I am a priest in upstate New York. When I visited the Holy Land the first time, I knew I had to return with a group! Our guide, Iyad Qumri will take us to places of spiritual importance beyond typical tourist destinations. You are invited to join other pilgrims from the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. Together, we will visit the places of his birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection. As an added bonus we will be visiting the Sisters of Nazareth Guest House for a three-night stay, which is close to local markets, churches, and cafes.

Already Booked

If your interest is piqued, and you would like to participate in this pilgrimage, please contact me for a detailed brochure outlining our itinerary. The cost is \$2050 for the eleven days, per person (double occupancy) plus airfare. Some single rooms are available for an extra charge. If you would like to join us, write to Rectorstjames14840@gmail.com,



The World As An Icon

God Is At Eye Level is the title of one of my favorite photography books, which has had quite an influence on me as a photographer and artist. The world around us can be thought of as an "icon," a window through which we see the Divine. One does not need to be an artist to discover ways in which we might acknowledge this reality. Many of us have experienced this spontaneously. Sunsets, for example, and newborn babies, seem to evidence this, and with a little attention and effort viewing the world this way can become a prayerful practice.

To Glimpse God

Awareness of God's Omnipresence gets easier with practice and intention. Try it right now. Close your eyes for a moment, move your head around a bit, then open them, and look at whatever happens to be in front of you, whether it's a teapot or a tree or a person walking by. Look deeply and steadily at it; look and see if you can peer through that particular window and "glimpse God."

Some Ordinary Sight?

After you have tried this, I would love to hear about your experience. Were you able to see some random thing in the world as an icon? If the exercise didn't work for you with something random, can you think of a time when an ordinary sight experience did act as an icon for you? It might be nice to have a dialogue about this topic. Please feel free to reach out to me at thegratefulnessfairy@gmail.com.

Janet Strickler, TSSF

Lilies Of The Field Fellowship



End Notes

Speaking Of Icons . . .

Has this edition of the *The Franciscan Connection* inspired you to think about icons? Would you like to own one? Check out the huge selection of them at MonasteryIcons.com. The number of people that write icons (that we are aware of) continues to grow! If you write icons, please contact us and let us know, as we are planning to showcase more work by our Third Order family. Send your submissions to us at saintswisdom@yahoo.com. **TFC**

Parable

i was looking
at the birds of the air

when hunters
shot them down

and i saw the lilies
die of too much cold

no one seemed
to be watching over

but birds still sing
lilies bloom

not foreseeing
not fretting

they die
a happy life

we live
a worried death

Murray Bodo, OFM

The poem "Parable" is from Murray Bodo's book Wounded Angels, published by Blissfool Books, MPG Books Group, Bodmin and Kings Lynn, 2009, Great Britain. Used with permission from the author.



Final Words

Happy New Year

No matter what practice, position, tradition or tool we choose, regardless of the approach, application, concentration or school we use: prayer works. Whether we incorporate traditional or spontaneous prayers into our daily devotions or utilize ways of praying which involve multiple senses: prayer works. *Anything* which aids us with our focus in prayer is a blessing! People use physical prayers (cross prayers), incense, and rosaries. In fact, during the past fourteen months, the Rosary And Prayer Bead Society has seen an increase of about 1,700% in membership (from nine members to one hundred and fifty-three). And in this issue we have added icons to our available prayer possibilities!

Remember, "Stay connected!" **TFC**

ST. MARK'S CHURCH

754 Montauk Highway
Islip, NY 11751

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID ISLIP, NY
Permit #11

The Franciscan Connection

A Publication of The Third Order,
Society of St. Francis,
Province of the Americas

Winter 2019

Come On In!

- Thoughts From Our PC ♦ MP ♦ And FC

Ongoing Ministry

- The Saints Wisdom Project (SWP) *Update & Articles*
 - Stay Active ♦ Joan Powers, TSSF
 - Give All You Can Give ♦ Cindy Kokis, TSSF
 - Even When The Body Is Failing ♦ Bob Hasseries, TSSF
- The Emmaus Travelers Program (ETP) *Update & Testimonies*
- The Rosary And Prayer Bead Society (RPBS) *Update*

Barnabas Ministry Story

- Being A Beggar For Good (For God)! ♦ Lynn Herne, TSSF

Articles

- By The Hand Of David ♦ David Holland, TSSF
- Praying With The Face Of God ♦ Cece Evola, TSSF
- Icon Encounter With St. Clare ♦ Mary Louise Maroney, TSSF
- My Love Affair With Icons ♦ Rodney R. Michel
- Visio Divina ♦ Charles McCarron, TSSF
- Reflections On "Thin Places" ♦ Gary Davis, TSSF

Other Goodies

- Quote ♦ Fred Rogers
- The World As An Icon ♦ Janet Strickler, TSSF
- Parable ♦ Murray Bodo, OFM
- Upcoming ● End Notes ● Final Words



The
Franciscan
Connection

Phyllis