



# The Franciscan Times

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

*Pace e bene*

**Fall 2025**

## Holy Displacement: Chapter Message 2025

Charlie McCarron, Provincial Minister

At about 22 or 24, Francis was trying to find his life while he rode his horse through the hills around Assisi. One morning in the valley, he heard a cough and saw a figure moving toward him — shambling and hunched. As the light grew, Francis saw the signs of leprosy: a purple lesion above the lip, thin limbs, the smell of sickness. Fear hit him. He wanted to wheel his horse and flee. But something in him said, “Stay.”

Francis’ horse in his time and culture was more than a means of transportation; it was a symbol of wealth and class. It always required the poor to look up at the rider. So, Francis dismounted. First, he gave the man all the coins he had, yet the man kept shivering. Then Francis took off his cloak and wrapped it around him. Yet still, the man’s eyes told him he had a deeper need. “God, what now?” Francis asked himself. And then, Francis did the one thing he had always feared — he embraced the leper and kissed him.

Some early biographies say that in that moment the leper disappeared. Those versions of the story often remind me of the story of Emmaus when Jesus vanished as soon as the disciples recognized him in the breaking of the bread. Whether or not that’s exactly what happened, Francis knew that something profound in him had changed.

Near the end of his life Francis described this encounter as the key turning point of his conversion. In the Testament he wrote: “The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world.”

What was once unbearable for Francis became the doorway to grace. In a certain sense, stripping himself before the bishop and Assisi was just a ritualization of what he had already done in getting off his horse, and embracing his greatest fear.

Henri Nouwen wrote about *displacement* in the spiritual life — how being “unmoored” can become a path to God. Sometimes such unmooring is involuntary; i.e., a loss, a crisis, a frightening diagnosis, or a prison cell. Francis experienced such involuntary unmooring during his time as a prisoner of war in Perugia. Sometimes such unmooring is voluntarily chosen displacement; i.e., professing religious vows, going on a pilgrimage, stepping away from appointed roles and established securities. In Francis’ case displacement began happening when he embraced the leper. Either way, the point is displacement makes room — clearing out the

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## Chapter 2025 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Front row, left to right:

Lynn Herne (Recording Secretary)

Patronalia Hanley-Brown (Chapter member)

Susan Stewart

Nicole Hanley (Holding a tapestry artwork of the Profession Cross.)

Adrienne Dillon (Chapter member)

Linda Boyer (Provincial Secretary)

Valerie Hart (Fellowship Guardian)

Charlie McCarron (Minister Provincial)

Sarah Grondin (Anglican Church of Canada priest who celebrated for us)

Middle Row:

Gary Russell (Chapter member)

Max Sklar (Chapter member)

Alison Saichek (Provincial Bursar)

John Rebstock (Formation Guardian)

Keith Oglesby (Chapter member)

Bishop Kevin Robertson, Diocese of Toronto

Top Row:

Br. Desmond Alban SSF

Jorge Urrutia Castro (Tercera Orden)

Luiz Sirtoli (Brazilian Regional Minister)

Janet Strickler (Chaplain)

Susan Pitchford (Guardian for Lifelong Formation)

Jotie Noel (Assistant Minister Provincial)

Br. Brett Ballenger (Order of Lutheran Franciscans)

## Holy Displacement (cont.)

noise so we can meet God and our neighbor without our standard armor. I've experienced both voluntary and involuntary displacement in my time as Minister and can attest to the fact that it's never easy.

We are professed religious — in a sense we're "professional Christians". That's a holy work, but it's also dangerous. Like Francis in his encounter with the leper we can all have our horses we ride on. Some of us have little Shetland ponies adopted through a rescue league, while others have spent years grooming and caring for our mount till they are like Arabian thoroughbreds. Such thoroughbreds are variously constituted by procedures, commissions, titles, seniority, ministries, personas, positions, all in the service of the Gospel and/or the Church. They help us serve, but they can also position us above the other, giving us a safe distance, letting us speak from height instead of heart. From the saddle we can look down at the other approaching and we stay safe.

The weekend before Chapter began, I spent some time with my "exchange student son" Victor, who lives here in Toronto. He brought me to the lovely old town of Niagara on the Lake, where we encountered a tourist-trade carriage drawn by a Clydesdale horse. Victor had never seen a Clydesdale and was amazed at its size and muscular power. I remembered seeing them as a kid visiting my Scottish relatives doing their farm work. However, this Niagara on the Lake specimen was fitted with a beautiful harness, blinders and straps, all covered with silver ornaments that shone in the sun. Thinking about this reflection I was to give, I realized to myself that I was most often on a Clydesdale, not a pony, and that I had a lot of work yet to do to dismount.

The Franciscan life is a practice of dismounting, of descending, of embracing displacement. Again and again, we choose to get off our horse — whatever keeps us elevated or protected — and move toward the other on a level plane. We embrace the "other" that scares us so that our true Franciscan identity can shine. Only after that morning of dismounting and embracing the leper could Francis kneel before the cross of San Damiano and truly hear: "Francis, rebuild my Church." First, come down from the horse; then, embrace the world as it is, and only then can we rebuild the world as God desires. The sequence of the process matters.

This isn't just personal; it's also corporate. Part of my hope in bringing Chapter outside the United States for the first time in 108 years was to practice voluntary, institutional displacement. We often speak and decide from a U.S. vantage point simply because it's familiar, U.S. tertiaries are numerous, it feels efficient. Canada may feel close to home, yet it is distinct — with its own history, culture, and rhythms. We cannot assume everything works as we are accustomed. Coming here, then, can be seen as a sacramental act: an embodied encounter with our Province's multicultural, multilingual reality. It's a gentle first step in dismounting from our provincial horse; in letting go of our U.S.-centric posture and first-world privilege and striving to welcome the tertiaries of our other regions as true siblings and partners in our mission together.

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## Holy Displacement (cont.)

My mother had a simple way to say it when she thought I was a little too full of myself: “Get off your high horse!” Our Principles say it in another way on Day Three: “Jesus calls those who would serve him to follow his example and choose for themselves the same path of renunciation and sacrifice.” Francis shows us how: dismount, draw near, embrace, and discover that what once seemed bitter, frightening, or awkward, becomes sweetness — sweetness for the soul and for the body of the Church.

As the year goes on, and, as we try to weave together the many strands of our Provincial life, we may seek new means and practices of “dismounting”. As a Chapter community we’ll strive to do this in as inclusive and transparent a way as possible.

So today, let’s practice. What is your horse? Who is your leper? What one step of holy displacement can we take — personally and as a Province — so that we can truly hear Christ’s call and rebuild with love?

## A Celebration of the Season of Creation

### Gordon Kubanek, Creation, Justice and Peace Animator

We all know the story of St. Francis preaching to the birds as it, along with the Canticum of the Creatures, made Franciscan theology unique with its inclusion of ALL of creation in the salvation story. What we sometimes forget is how this came about.

Just before St. Francis preached to the birds, he asked himself: “Should I retire from the world and devote myself entirely to prayer, or should I continue traveling about as a preacher of the gospel?” The clear message to all of us is that preaching about and the healing of God’s creation is a core part of our being as Franciscans. To this end the Creation, Justice and Peace Committee [CJP] organized several events during the annual Season of Creation that took place during September. Our efforts were part of a much larger emphasis on Creation begun by the Orthodox Church in 1989 and now part of the Episcopal Church and Catholic calendars.



Our events this past year included listening in on the world day of prayer for Creation on September 1; of hosting an evening of sharing our poetry; of a pilgrimage where we visited a special place that needed healing and shared our photos and feelings of the experience; and participating in a virtual retreat. All participants had access to Ecumenical resources at [www.seasonofcreation.org](http://www.seasonofcreation.org), which included daily actions and creation prayers such as this:

*Creator Spirit:  
as the earth, so  
beautiful, so warm,  
receives and reflects  
the sunlight, so may  
we receive and reflect  
your love.*

The Season of Creation ended on October 4, in honor of St. Francis, and we hope next year to build upon our efforts from this year and include a TSSF-wide Transitus shared Zoom celebration as a finale to our 2026 Season of Creation. I’d like to emphasize that the main focus for us is to share and get to know each and grow



## Celebration of the Season of Creation (cont.)

together. Thus, we invite all TSSF tertiaries and companions to these events to SHARE in these experiential events as we contemplate, act, and are joyful!

For now, I leave you with an invitation to two upcoming courses to be held this winter that challenge us be healers of the destruction we have unwittingly unleashed upon God's creation. In so doing our goal is to strengthen our faith and help make our Love visible. The first course is made up of nine beautiful but thought-provoking sessions entitled "Love God, Love God's World" produced by the Episcopal Church. We ran the course last winter with rave reviews by all participants. The second course is a study of the very demanding book *Life after Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart* by Brian McLaren [Reviewed elsewhere in this issue.]

In closing, I leave you with this poem written by Edna St. Vincent Millay in 1917 in the midst of carnage of WWI:

*I will be the gladdest thing  
Under the sun!  
I will touch a hundred flowers  
And not pick one.  
I will look at cliffs and clouds  
With quiet eyes,  
Watch the wind bow down the grass,  
And the grass rise.  
And when lights begin to show  
Up from the town,  
I will mark which must be mine,  
And then start down!*

## An Evangelical Mission in Guyana, July 14-21, 2025 — A Travelogue barbara d. bennett

When I landed at Georgetown International Airport in Guyana on July 13, at 1 am there was Fr. Charles Roland, TSSF, waiting to welcome me. Later that day, we made our way to the regional airport where 19 Amerindians from Jawalla Village, Fr. Charles's home village, had flown in to join us in our further journey to Micobie, a small Amerindian village on the Potaro river about 250 miles southwest of Georgetown, where the Evangelical Mission was to take place.

The Evangelical Mission is an annual gathering of Amerindian tribes of Guyana for Christian edification started by Fr. Charles 25 years ago. People of all ages from various parts of Guyana make difficult journeys to come together in Micobie for a full week of praise, worship, and community building.



**[Jawalla Village residents preparing to travel on bus]**

he next day at 4:30 a.m., Fr. Charles and I headed to St. James Church in Georgetown, where the 19 Akawaio men, women, and

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## An Evangelical Mission in Guyana, July 14-21, 2025 — A Travelogue (cont.)

children from Jawalla Village had bedded down for the night. Everyone was already up and ready to go. (I later came to realize that 4 am is the common rising time for the Amerindians.) By 6 a.m., the bus, a Toyota four-wheel-drive, 15-seat van was loaded with all our stuff on the top and all of us inside. Nineteen people in a 15-seater van made it a bit crowded and took a toll on all of us during the eight-and-a-half-hour journey into the rain forest.

Most of the way was unpaved, muddy, and deeply rutted. The view along the way was mostly of a thick green forest with nary a sign or billboard. I was grateful for the



four-wheel-drive as well as for the driver who knew how to get where we were going and how to negotiate the roads.

At one point, however, even his skills proved unequal to the road, for we slipped into a trench. We all had to exit the van and fill in the trench with rocks found by the side of the road in order for the van to continue down the road and up a steep hill. Most of us walked up the hill in the rain so the van could successfully make it up the hill. Then, at the top, we all got back into the van, only to discover we had already arrived at our destination.

### **[Filling the trench into which we slipped]**

Micobie is a small village of around 800 indigenous people that sits on the Lower Potaro river in Region 8 (instead of state names, Guyana has numbered regions). Life in Micobie village is simple. Electricity comes from a few local generators or the few small solar devices that are edging into the local lifestyle, such as solar fans and lights. The internet is found at communal sites, making the already weak signal even weaker and not strong enough to deliver email messages. Few homes have indoor running water; most depend on the rain and the river for cooking, bathing, and laundry. Unfortunately, the river is polluted by unregulated miners seeking diamonds and gold without concern for the land and her people. The government and NGOs are trying to amend this devastation, but the process is slow. The people of Micobie, however, are strong, generous, and welcoming despite suffering a recent tragedy.

vidence for this tragedy came as we entered the village, for we had to pass a large memorial-cemetery honoring 19 children who died in a 2023 school dormitory fire at nearby Mahdia Secondary School. Some of the children lost were girls from Micobie. Yet, even in the face of such a tragic event, the mourning village has begun to rebuild the school. In fact, when I was later out on a walk, I passed a building site where two of the builders pointed out the location of a new school to replace the Mahdia school. One teenage Micobie girl put on her finest sequin dress to have a picture taken with me. Her father later told me that she was one of the survivors of the fire. I felt more than honored to have stood beside her.

Most of the Amerindians who attended the Evangelistic Mission brought their sleeping hammocks and hung them in open air shelters available around Micobie. Some others stayed in vacant rooms in the hospital. I was given a guest house that sits behind the village chief's home. Two women from Jawalla village, Lita and Paulina, were assigned to stay with me and watch over me. The housing was more

## An Evangelical Mission in Guyana, July 14-21, 2025 — A Travelogue (cont.)



than adequate, and I was grateful for the shelter, although the pipes connecting the cistern and house were broken. We had to collect rain water in buckets for bathing and flushing the toilet. Oh, I was so grateful to have Lita and Paulina at my side to help this privileged American make her way.

**[On left, novice Lita John helping to lead evening sing along]**

During the week, the daily schedule went like this: 6 a.m. Morning Prayer followed by Eucharist; 7:30, breakfast; 9 and 11, two presentations followed by discussions; and at noon, lunch. Lunch was followed by a break, since it was too hot to do anything during mid-day; but about 3 p.m., it usually had cooled

enough to have a third presentation and discussion; then at 5 p.m., Evening Prayer, followed by supper at 6 and at 7 p.m. we gathered back at the church for a sing-along and a finish at 9 p.m. with Compline.

**[Bishop Alfred David, Bishop of Guyana]**



Repentance was the theme for this year's evangelistic mission. We considered repentance from a variety of perspectives, with presentations offered by Fr. Charles, Fr. Patrick, and, during the first two days, the new (2021), and first, indigenous bishop, Rt. Rev. Alfred David. The theme was a natural for my talk on Franciscan spirituality since we began as the Order of Penitents. I spoke on reconciliation with one another and with creation. After my talk, we noviced four people from Jawalla: a couple, Dennis and Maria James, and my roommates, Lita John and Paulina Sam; and we welcomed into postulancy two young sisters, Verlyn and Delfia Hunter, also from Jawalla. All six came from a formation class in Jawalla village conducted

by Fr. Charles who is committed to growing the Order. At the end of the week, one more person, Hendricks Daniels from Rupertee Village in Region 9, was noviced, and Jacqueline Joseph from Isseneau Village in Region 7 was welcomed as a postulant. Formation for these two will be more of a challenge since they are not part of the Jawalla village class.



**[TSSF members from Jawalla Village, Fr. Charles Roland, prof.; Paulina Sam, nov.; Barbara Bennett (USA) prof.; in front: Lita John, nov.; Maria James, nov.; back row, Verlyn and Delfia Hunter, postulants; Dennis James, nov.]**

Wednesday morning, between Matins and Eucharist, we had a wedding. We, the Evangelistic Mission congregation, were the witnesses along with a few family members of the bride and groom. Apparently, this is a common way for weddings. They are not separate, elaborate events

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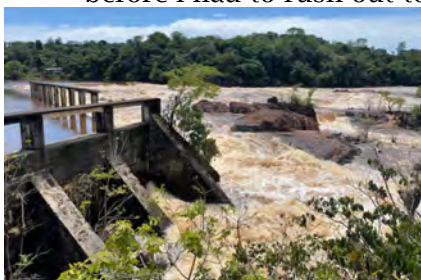


## An Evangelical Mission in Guyana, July 14-21, 2025 — A Travelogue (cont.)

but simple additions to the common worship, more in common with how we celebrate baptisms.

On Thursday afternoon, we honored the lives of Fr. John Dorman, TSSF and Fr. Winston Williams, TSSF. Fr. Dorman was an English Anglican missionary priest who served in the interior of Guyana for 38 years (1957-95). His influence brought Fr. Charles, Fr. Winston and Fr. Patrick into the priesthood. Fr. Dorman was professed in TSSF in 1980, and Fr. Charles and Fr. Winston followed in 1982. [Editor's Note. For more on Fr. John Dorman see pp. 23-4 in the Summer 2025 issue of the *Franciscan Times* and pp. 80-4 in *The First 100 Years in the Americas: 1917 - 2017: Third Order Society of St. Francis* (2017).] (Fr. Patrick, Fr. Charles's partner leading the Evangelistic Mission, opted not follow the Franciscan path.)

Friday afternoon was slated for a field trip to nearby Mahdia but a vehicle could not be found to take us. Fortunately, I headed down to the river just in time for a boat ride up the Potaro River to the tiny village of El Paso and the Tumaturmari Falls. I found this to be a magical welcoming place and was glad to have been diverted on this alternative outing. To get to the falls from the boat landing, we had to walk through the village of El Paso. On our way back to the landing, a tall man yelled out to me to come over to his house. After his insistence, I complied. He wanted to play checkers, saying he had to talk to me because he had never seen a grey-haired, blue-eyed person in El Paso before. "What was I doing there?" he asked. Well, we talked so much we never finished our game before I had to rush out to catch up with the rest of our group and take the boat back to



Micobie.

### [Tumaturmari Falls, lower Potaro River]

On Saturday morning, the Allelulia Church, an indigenous Christian worship group, invited us to join in their worship. We line-danced and chanted in Akawaio for three hours. I found the dancing and chanting from Scripture, even if in a foreign (to me) language, a powerful way to pray and was grateful for the opportunity to participate.

On Sunday, our final full day together, we had a full church for worship. It included a baptism and a time for people to witness their faith. From our Anglican worship, we went directly to the Pentecostal church to join in theirs. On Saturday evening we joined another local church for worship as well. At both churches we visited, we enjoyed singing, dancing, and testimonials. The sharing among the different churches was a



beautiful witness of welcome and community among folks with different religious perspectives.

All of this is how I found Guyana to be welcoming, generous, and simple. We are blessed and enriched to have the Guyanese within our Franciscan community.

**[The Evangelistic Mission community; Fr. Charles Rowland, front and center. In front of St. Timothy's Anglican Church, Micobie, Guyana.]**

# Welcome the Newly Professed

## Arin Waters

Hi friends! I'm Arin Waters, a member of All Saints Episcopal Church in Concord, North Carolina, a native of Charlotte, and a newly professed member of the Third Order.

Ever since I converted to Christianity from Japanese Buddhism and was baptized in the Episcopal Church in 2015, I have spent much of my life trying to answer the question, "What is my place in the Church, and where does God want me to go?"

In hindsight, with so many Franciscan markers in my life, the answer was right under my nose all along. I am glad that God led me to the way of St. Francis, and I'm excited to continue following Christ and grow in discipleship as a professed Franciscan.

When I am not doing church-stuff like Eucharistic visits or evangelizing about the Daily Offices, I spend a significant portion of my time in prayer for all who need it, especially my siblings in the LGBTQ community, and all other peoples who are marginalized in society. Prayer for others is really what I do most, every single day.

I'm extremely grateful to all who have supported me in this journey, and I eagerly look forward to seeing what the future holds.

## The Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder

The Reverend Dr. Philip C. Linder is an Episcopal priest who presently serves as the Canon to the Ordinary in the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina. "It was following being called by the bishop to serve in this position, that I felt called as well to go deeper into my life and faith in Jesus Christ, and it was then that I discovered the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis. I am so grateful to God to have discovered this journey with Francis and for the path of discernment, formation, and outstanding support from my sister and brother Franciscans. Along with my call to the priesthood, this is also a call for which I will be forever grateful."



A 1982 graduate of Villanova University and a 1985 graduate of the General Theological Seminary, Philip also has a doctorate in ministry from Columbia Theological Seminary and a doctorate in psychology from the Graduate Theological Foundation. In his years as a priest, Philip has led five parishes, including as Dean of Trinity Cathedral in Columbia, SC. Philip and his wife Ellen have three grown children and eight grandchildren. They live in Charleston, SC.



## The Reverend Jurinesz R. Shadrach

Jurinesz Shadrach is a priest of the Diocese of Colombo in the Church of Ceylon. He is currently pursuing a Master of Arts at the School of Theology, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee. His ministry and academic work focus on fostering reconciliation and dialogue across social, religious, and cultural boundaries guided by the Franciscan vision of peace, humility, and joy. His theological interests lie especially in sacramental theology and its impact on the rhythms of daily life and communal belonging. In his free time, Jurinesz enjoys writing poetry, working out, and seeking glimpses of the sacred in the ordinary.

## Rest in Peace

### Bland Newcomb Cleesattle (Companion)

Died November 1, 2024 (from the *Albany Herald.com*)

Bland was born in Albany, Georgia and married Don Cleesattle in 1968, and they had two sons.

Following graduation from Albany High School, Bland held a series of jobs before landing at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in 1986 as the Coordinator for the Golden Key Club. This was a group that grew far beyond the goals of the hospital's Marketing Department to attract 1000's of members who enjoyed monthly birthday parties, health screenings/education and eventually trips that took members all over the United States and some beyond our borders. While at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, Bland was instrumental in helping with the Centennial Museum. She retired from Phoebe in 2014 after 28 years but continued to find opportunities to volunteer at the hospital she loved.



Bland loved to travel and to research her destinations, to share with the group traveling with her interesting facts along the way; she was a tour guide with Astro Travel and felt it was her obligation to make the trip a learning opportunity for everyone. In her spare time, she taught Safe Driving classes for AARP.

Bland was a lifelong member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church where she rarely missed an event. She faithfully participated in Ladles of Love, served as a member of the Vestry, was President of the Daughters of the King, regularly attended Centering Prayer, loved Cursillo, and graduated from Sewanee's Education For Ministry. Members of The Episcopal Church of St. John and St. Mark also claimed Bland as one of their own as she filled many roles and faithfully attended this community as well.

### Jo Rivers Baxter Tyler — Professed 30 Years

A Homily by Rev. Harry Coverston, September 13, 2025, at St. Catherine of Alexandria Episcopal Church, Temple Terrace, Florida

It is a great honor for me to offer some words celebrating the life of Rivers Tyler this day. Thirty years ago in this sanctuary, Rivers asked me to preach the sermon for her profession to the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis.

I was honored to do so. Today, we come full circle in that Franciscan life, to her embrace of Sister Death, as we Franciscans call her, and the return of her mortal remains to the good Creation Francis loved.

One of the joys of writing this homily was reading the rule Rivers had written for her 30 years as a third order Franciscan. I had to smile as I read the provisions of that rule. "I will practice daily a self-examination of my strengths and weaknesses." That was Rivers. Aware of both the gifts given her by the Holy One to serve the good Creation as well as the limitations that all human beings encounter, thankful for the former, humble regarding the latter. Honesty with herself about who she was reflects the woman I knew.

In the part of her rule regarding prayer, she spoke of setting aside a time of prayer and meditation daily to pray for others and to end each day with a few minutes to count her blessings. This gratitude for the blessings of the Holy One



## Rest in Peace (cont)

### Jo Rivers Baxter Tyler (cont.)

and awareness of the needs of others is a deeply Franciscan way of following Jesus. And it marked the life of this remarkable woman we loved.

I also smiled as I read her provision regarding self-denial. She said, *"I can be non-judgmental of other people by accepting them as they are and by trusting God."* In those words, you hear some patently Franciscan understandings of seeking to locate the image of G-d on the face of every living being including those who, as Mother Teresa said, hide behind distressing disguises of poverty, illness, addictions, criminality and all the other human conditions that serve to obscure the divine image. Rivers knew that the image of G-d lying beneath those disguises never goes away, it simply waits its turn to be recognized, reclaimed, redeemed, renewed.

My heart was moved as she spoke of learning "to fill my emotional holes with the love of God, the love of my family and friends." It's hard for me to imagine this woman whom I always experienced as upbeat, optimistic, energetically engaging the world to make it a better place as having emotional holes. But I also know she is speaking a very human language here. We all have emotional holes. And, if we are being honest with ourselves, as Rivers was, we know that only the Holy One can ever fill them.

I learned something new in reading Rivers' rule of life. She referenced her use of the Serenity Prayer, the words of theologian Reinold Niebuhr used by recovery groups around the world, in the 12 Steps of Self-Esteem Seekers Anonymous. I long ago came to believe that one of the most important things Episcopal parishes could do is open their doors to the wide range of 12 Steps groups seeking to provide healing to hurting souls. But I had never heard of this particular aspect of the 12 Steps movement.

The 12 Steps of Self-Esteem Seekers Anonymous included these words: *"We came to believe that our self-esteem could heal and grow by our cooperating with a power greater than ourselves....and we made a decision to develop a spiritual life in which our wills and lives would be open to the healing graces of our Higher Power."* My observation of Rivers is that she was a decided success at this. In truth, I would never have known that Rivers suffered from self-esteem problems. Indeed, what I observed was that she readily brought self-esteem out in those with whom she engaged, from her Biology and Latin students to her track stars to her brothers and sisters in the Third Order.

Rivers chose her own lectionary for this service and I always find that to be very telling. Her choice of the verses from Lamentations included the following: *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;... [For] although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; He does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone."*

Rivers knew grief only too well. Her beloved son, W.T., preceded her in death several years ago. Our common wisdom tells us that there are no pains more severe than a parent seeing their child die before them. Yet, as Rivers knew, the love of G-d flowing from an abundance of steadfast love, was present with her in her time of loss and the long, empty days that followed.

Rivers also knew affliction only too well. She gradually lost her sight and her autonomy as her life proceeded. For a woman as independent and as intent upon serving the world as Rivers, that must have been difficult to say the least. But I remember her thereafter as



## Rest in Peace (cont)

### Jo Rivers Baxter Tyler (cont.)

upbeat, intent on being present at the fellowship events when she could come. At a basic level, she was a living example of St. Paul's words that she chose for today, *"For we know that, if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* Rivers continued, despite the obstacles, living into her calling as a Franciscan, until, like Brother Francis, she accepted the embrace of Sister Death and passage to that *"house not made with hands but eternal in the heavens."*

The Gospel reading Rivers chose is a deeply loved passage about the Good Shepherd. In it Jesus is quoted as saying, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."* I am struck by all the sheep Rivers tended in her life. From her students to her athletes to her Franciscan brothers and sisters to her family members, Rivers gave time, energy and compassion to them all, laying down her life in bits and pieces. And we are all the better for that.



In closing, I want to draw attention to the beautiful fabric work that Rivers created, leaving behind a physical legacy of her time with us. Today, I wear the quilt work stole that she made for me. It is one of my most prized possessions and I wear it regularly at our Franciscan events. She also created a number of banners that expressed her Franciscan vocation which we see today in front of us. I never see these banners or wear this stole that I do not think of Rivers Tyler. They are the epitome of what we catholic Christians call sacraments – the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. When they are physically present with us, so is the spirit of Rivers Tyler.

One of the songs that we Franciscans often sing at our gatherings came from a wonderful organization called the Girl Scouts of America. It is entitled "Weave, Weave, Weave." And in light of the fabric work that Rivers leaves us, I think it is a perfect way to end this homily. Here are some of the lyrics:



*Weave, weave, weave us together,  
Weave us together in unity and love.  
Weave, weave, weave us together,  
Weave us together, together in love.*

*We are many textures, we are many colours,  
Each one different from the other.  
But we are entwined in one another in one great tapestry -*

*We are different instruments playing our own melodies,  
Each one tuning to a different key,  
But we are all playing in harmony in one great symphony.  
Weave us together, together in love.*

I think this song speaks to the life of Rivers Tyler. Sister, we will sorely miss your soft Southern drawl, your biting humor and your wonderful smile. But I think I speak for all of us when I say we are all grateful for the strand of our own tapestries that Rivers Tyler wove into our lives.

## Rest in Peace (cont)

### Br. Robert Hugh

From “Reminiscences by Br. Robert Hugh” in *The First 100 Years in the Americas: 1917 - 2017: Third Order Society of St. Francis* (2017) (pp. 136-8)

I was sixteen years old when I discovered that only 10 miles from my high school was the headquarters of a Franciscan Friary organized in the Church of England. I had always supposed that strange characters like monks, nuns, and friars were bound to be Roman Catholic. A weekend visit proved me wrong, and I came under the guidance of Fr. Algy SSF, and his young secretary novice, Br. Michael. When I left school for military draft service in the army just after World War II, Algy suggested I become a Companion, and helped me draw up my first Rule of Life and make my first confession. He was my spiritual director until his death in 1955. After reading theology at Cambridge, and going on to seminary at Oxford, I became a Tertiary for the next decade as a parish priest in the Diocese of Durham. First Fr. Francis and then Fr. Reginald were the friars who guided my Third Order journey. I also remember being sent off by bus to be looked at by Dorothy Swayne, a formidable but wonderful tertiary who in the 1930's had worked with Algy in adapting the Principles of the Christa Seva Sangha to become the Principles of the First and the Third Orders SSF.



### Br. Robert Hugh, 1968

In 1964 I left parish ministry to test my vocation in the First Order SSF, at Alnmouth, Hilfield, and Glasshampton. Only just first professed, I was asked to be one of three friars to visit the OSF Friars in the U.S. as part of an exchange at the time of the amalgamation of OSF and SSF. I was told it was for “a year, or so.” At the end of November 2002, I shall have completed thirty-five years of “... or so”!

Br. Paul envisioned the Third Order as free-standing in its own right, with its own administrative, pastoral, and formation leadership, rather than being heavily dependent upon the paternal benevolence and guidance of the friars. Br. Paul had been working to communicate this vision of the Third Order while he was Minister, and I saw it as my trust to further that vision. In accepting an invitation, to be the Third Order Friar-Chaplain, I declared my hope that by the end of my term as Chaplain I should have worked myself out of a job since the role would thenceforward be filled by a tertiary. That did not quite happen since Br. Mark Francis followed me for the next three years, but already much progress was being made.

During this time, I traveled a great deal to spend time with fellowships and individuals, realizing that it is not really possible to win people to a different understanding of the Third Order by the written word alone. I believe that I managed to visit personally with nearly all the professed during my years as Friar-Chaplain. Many were very responsive to this, but others clearly felt threatened by the SSF/OSF amalgamation. In many cases they had a staunch Anglo-Catholic background, a deep commitment to their profession, and to the friars, especially to Fr. Joseph, which they feared they might lose if the Third Order stood free and equal with the First. Because Paul's initiative coincided with the SSF/OSF amalgamation, quite a number of tertiaries concluded that it was all a scheme that “those dreadful Brits” (who, some of them were convinced, were “Black

## Rest in Peace (cont)

**(Br. Robert Hugh (cont.))**

Protestants!") had hatched. [Editor's Note. "Black Protestants" meant hardline Protestants who were vehemently anti-Catholic.]

I find it hard to believe how different my role as Friar-Chaplain to the Third Order was from that of say a Friar-Visitor today. If new would-be tertiaries wanted to join, they wrote to me, and I approved their draft rule. If they were ready for profession, my approval as Friar-Chaplain was a key part of that. If a newsletter needed to go out, I was the one who composed it, and then typed it onto a stencil, put it on the Gestetner duplicator, and lamented as all the 'o's dropped out after the first fifty copies, leaving blobs of ink on the page. Fortunately, numbers were much smaller (my guess is about 150).

Formation was the first area really taken over by the Third Order itself, and I have the happiest memories of visits to Lambertville, N.J., where Peter Funk was composing the first set of Formation letters, as he and Marie Hayes guided those in formation (at first divided according to gender). John Scott became the first administrator of the Third Order (Guardian in those days, rather than Minister).

In 1979, when Norman Crosbie succeeded Luke as Minister Provincial, he asked me (I was Assistant Minister) to represent him and the Province in the relationships between the friars and the tertiaries. Thus began the "Friar-Visitor" role. In 1981, I became Provincial Minister, and, as the CSF Sisters have done, combined both roles. For most of the years since 1987, when my term as Minister ended, I have continued to be Friar-Visitor. Participation in Regional and Provincial Convocations and in the Third Order Chapter have been highlights for many years.

**A Franciscan Viewpoint (from *The Religious Life: A Franciscan Viewpoint*) (Franciscan Times, Summer 1992) by Br. Robert Hugh**

Francis witnessed to the difference between giving and sharing. So often we sway on that narrow tightrope between Christian love and what the world calls "charity" in its sense of "do-good-ing."

Naturally warm and generous, Francis would not be content with a token response (to lepers he encountered) but would empty his purse and throw its entire contents to those who begged.

Yet somehow, he knew this was not enough, and one day as he rode by, he knew he must do more and do it now ... he dismounted, walked back, opened his arms, embraced the disfigured leper, and kissed him on his rotting face.

In many ways, the money he had already given was much more useful than the embrace. But if I had been the leper, accustomed to watching the faces of those who passed by ... like Francis hitherto, whose faces expressed compassion and pity as they threw alms from a safe distance.

But now here was a gesture that was different, that said ... you are you, a person, a unique person ... and you can experience love and offer it in return.

## Rest in Peace (cont)

### Br. Robert Hugh (cont.)

#### From Former Minister Provincial Anita Miner

I recall Br. Robert so well. He had a very wry smile, almost daring us to say something he could respond to happily, and then he would laugh.

One of my remembrances was the Celtic Spirituality trip in 1998 Br. Robert and Br. Justus organized. The plans were exquisite with liturgies, music and meticulous details. We started out in northern England, Oban, and on to Iona (it rained the whole weekend), and more historic spots, and we ended up in southern Scotland. It was a very educational, spiritual and a no-nonsense trip. We saw monuments, ruins, churches, burial stones, cormorants, and sheep everywhere. One of the highlights of the trip was a weekend at Durham Castle and Cathedral where we delighted in knowing where Br. Robert had lived at the beginning of his priestly and Franciscan journeys. Many of us recall dragging our suitcases up four flights of stone stairs to our rooms in the Castle and the grandiose dining room, fit for a king, one might say! He did allow us to go to a local pub one night but that was a concession. There were no stops at Scotch distilleries in Scotland — no, not one. Regardless, a good time was had by all, and we formed many Franciscan friendships and deepened our faith.

In former days, when Chapter would meet on Long Island at the Friary, Dee Dobson, the third Guardian of Third Order, and Br. Robert would arrive early for the meetings. Dee was famous for making key lime pie with limes she brought from Florida, and he would sit in the kitchen area joking around or telling stories. He and Dee were six months apart in age, and each would harass the other as to who was older.

When the movie *Babe* came out in the U.S., a movie based on the novel *The Sheep-Pig* by the British author Dick King-Smith, Br. Robert told us the author was his cousin. Br. Robert's given last name was King-Smith. All those details made the movie and *Babe* even more special for us.

Br. Robert Hugh was one of a kind, and I thank God it was my good fortune to know and interact with him!

#### From Former Friar and Provincial Chaplain David Burgdorf

Today (9/22/25) we are remembering Br. Robert Hugh in the provincial TSSF intercessions. Usually, I pray with these names in thanksgiving for the owners' missions and ministries, even though I may not personally know the individuals. Br. Robert Hugh, however, I did know when I was a friar, 1978-86, living with him at San Damiano Friary in San Francisco, 1980-82. He and I had both come to SSF from TSSF, so our Franciscan formation had been less communal in those days than that of the friars. For example, as TSSFs, we were more concerned about how to "get in" the Daily Office and prayers before rushing off to work rushing off to work, while in SSF, the concerns were about breathing together during the Psalms and not rushing through the asterisks." Since Br. Robert was the Guardian at the time we were together, the younger brothers used to watch him for cues about how to get along in community. It was not, however, that he was a stay-at-home friar, because he was on the road (the railroad, that is) doing parish missions throughout the U.S.A. and helping many Christian people understand the Franciscan emphasis within their standard Christian values.

I feel quite fortunate for one particular passage in my time with Br. Robert. It was my own "leadership training module," which became very useful after I became



# Rest in Peace

## Br. Robert Hugh (cont.)

an “SSF Alumnus” and returned to TSSF and my work as a priest and addiction counselor. In 1981, Br. Robert, then Minister Provincial, gathered together for a General Chapter all the friars in the American Province at the Bishop’s Ranch in Healdsburg, CA, to talk together about questions like “Who are we?”; “What are we doing?”; and “Where are we going?” With the help of Fr. Louie Vitale, OFM, two addiction specialists from MN, and Br. Geoffrey, the SSF Minister General, we wrestled with questions of commitment and freedom, addiction and recovery, and human sexuality. It was, as I recall, an opportunity for communal self-examination and open-ended sharing. With the lifting of some old “no-talk rules,” there was a growth of compassion for each other. Br. Robert headed off a future return to “more of the same” by asking each of us to imagine a personal boundary beyond which we would not go, even though we were in religious vows that defined our commitment to this community. It was his call to us to move from going along with the boys to renewing personal discipline and growth. Like a good leader, Br. Robert was able to take responsibility for the effort and let go of the outcome. Some responded, and some didn’t. For me, his leadership made all the difference, and I am grateful.

## Homily for Robert Hugh by Br. Clark Berge SSF (Sept. 16, 2025)

Here we are, gathered on our back deck to remember and give thanks and to pray for the soul of Robert Hugh. There is so much that can be said about him. Some of you knew him much longer and more intimately than I did, and we will have time for reminiscing. Time doesn’t allow for everything that could be said — though mere time constraints wouldn’t have inhibited him. First, I want just to flag up his support and care for the Third Order as well as our sisters, his commitment to the Conference of Major Superiors, and the numerous pilgrimages he led! And to mention in passing his deep devotion to music. I’ll refrain from speculating about his fascination with trains, except to say it was a certifiable obsession! He was such a mensch as our Jewish friends would say, a Yiddish and German term for a person of integrity, honor, and compassion, embodying innate decency, responsibility, and a deep sense of kindness and humility. I want to try and capture just a bit of the importance of this celebration of Robert Hugh in both its Scriptural and pastoral — actually fraternal — context.

Robert Hugh was a real brother. He joined SSF as a postulant in 1964 and professed in 1967 and basically gave his life to all that was involved with that choice. Or as we say, he’d found his vocation. Vocations aren’t careers, nor are they exactly like marriages though there are elements of career — jobs, accomplishments, fame and notoriety, and there are elements of family — for better or worse, love, forgiveness. Yet we do these things because of our love for Christ and in service of the ideal of making Christ known and loved. Our lives are our sermon so to speak. You could say Robert was congruent to the end: always ready with a detailed anecdote and living to the great age of 97. He gave us quite a long sermon to take in and savor.

The thing about life as sermon is that it isn’t over until it’s over. You can start where you will: at birth and early childhood, his beloved parents and brother Beresford, or as a young man at Sherborne School in Dorset, England, near to Hilfield, or at Corpus Christi, Cambridge, Cuddesdon, Oxford, his ordination in 1955 by Michael Ramsey or as a vigorous young curate. Or surprise, surprise when he became a friar. How his family and friends must have mused over his choice to test the vocation of a friar. He wrote weekly letters home, and in each letter, he described the goings-on of the friaries and the brothers. We’ve got these letters in the archives. Full of obvious affection for family and for the brothers. Who writes home with literary sketches of the

## Rest in Peace (cont)

### Br. Robert Hugh (cont.)

brothers? He served this province as novice guardian from 1968 to 1970, Third Order Chaplain 1970 to 1974, Guardian of this friary 1974 to 1981, Acting Minister in 1981 and elected Provincial Minister 1981 to 1983. Clearly the brothers were important to him, and the interest he took in each of us over the years was, I think, part of what kept him with us. He cared deeply.

I imagine love for the brothers helped him persevere as he pursued the Lord's calling. When I was professed the brothers had the cake decorated with a message: "persevere" it read. Not congratulations or anything like that. Perseverance is a choice, and it has proved to be the thing that helps me stay committed. As long as I recommit daily to being a brother, I discover new things about myself, and new opportunities arise. And the Lord gives me brothers and sisters in community to hone my love for him. Jeremiah got it right in the reading from Lamentations: "The Lord's unfailing love and mercy shall continue fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise. The Lord is good to everyone who trusts in him." Keeping it green is a phrase I have often heard. Rising every morning to greet the Lord is a chance to renew that trust in God's love and mercy. Robert always said God initiates prayer, taking the first step towards us; accepting God's love for us makes all the difference in how the rest of the day (the rest of life!) goes, too!

One of my warmest memories of Robert was when I joined him on mission to the Diocese of Oregon in 1991 when I was a novice. We arrived in some little church in some little town. Was it Sandy? Or Gresham? I forget. But it was a small crowd in a small town. Robert stood smiling on the chancel steps, with his arms open as he welcomed the people, singing "This is holy ground/We're standing on holy ground/For the Lord is present/And where He is is holy." It was obvious why he was in such demand as a missionary and evangelist. The Lord's love and mercy was his message. And he embodied it!

A great fan of WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get), he charmed, cajoled, taught the church the Franciscan understanding of humility — to know the truth about ourselves and the truth about God. The key to accessing the joy of the Gospel life was surrendering to the love of God, who welcomes us in a wide, warm embrace. Robert did his very best to embrace us all. Brothers, family, people on retreat, people in the streets and soup kitchens. Franciscan life is an adventure in loving. Where we find ourselves at any moment is holy ground. It's a holy life!

One of the really important aspects of Robert's ministry among us Friars was his willingness to take on the difficult conversations. It seems to me that he was always the one to approach a brother in trouble. He was the one who wrote a diplomatic, charitable yet unflinching letter or a minute summarizing a really raw discussion. No ad hominem attacks. Though when he was seriously displeased, as former Br. Thomas Carey once observed, he could be heard to remark the situation was "tiresome." When he said that, watch out!

Robert Hugh was the exact age of my father, both men born in 1928. My father died in 2015, age 87. There were times, I have come to recognize, when I projected on Robert unresolved issues with my father. For years I was oblivious to this, but it was the only thing to account for the intensity of my reactions to him sometimes. One time after we

## Rest in Peace (cont)

### Br. Robert Hugh (cont.)

had had a set to in Chapter about something, and my reaction was more emotional than the situation warranted, I stood outside the friary feeling terrible. Robert came out and stood for a moment watching me shrivel with mortification. Then he said, "Clark, dear. I'm not your father. I am your brother." He had correctly seen the situation for what it was and didn't take offense. He met my woundedness with love and compassion, centering our relationship on the larger picture of our shared vocation as friars in Christ. He was an agent of healing in my journey to wholeness and authenticity. It's what brothers can do for each other as they come to know each other over time when they persevere in love and humility.

"I am resurrection and I am life," Jesus says. Jesus raised Lazarus. God raised



Jesus from the dead. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are raised from the graves of our fears. Jesus empowers the baptized to live life to the full and to serve and heal in his name. Resurrection means there is nothing to fear when we meet Sister Death. Nor do we need to constantly squirm around trying to outfox her. Jesus shows death to be kin to us. Francis saw this too. Death gives life its beauty and poignancy. I gave Robert his last Communion. It was a real Franciscan moment. I was feeling very emotional. I spilled the chalice on him. He smiled at me and said "Amen." It was the last thing I heard from him. His great Amen. His "So be it," in the sometimes-messy conditions of life, the moment of acceptance, gratitude and trust. Literally washed in the blood of

the Lamb.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Br. Robert Hugh, 2025

### Rev. Dn. Ruth W. Manson — Professed 52 years

The Reverend Deacon Ruth W. Manson, 98, of Greensburg, passed away Friday, June 13, 2025, in Redstone Highlands, Greensburg, PA. She was born in Pittsburgh, PA and was a daughter of the late George D. and Margaret B. Wick. Ruth was a graduate of Wellesley College, where she also received her master's degree. She later attended Trinity School for Ministry graduating in 1984. She was ordained to the diaconate in 1988 and served for 20 years at Christ Church Greensburg retiring in 2009.

She initiated the Stephen Ministry at Christ Church Greensburg, served in the Deacons Hospital Ministry and was a hospice volunteer.



## Rest in Peace (cont)

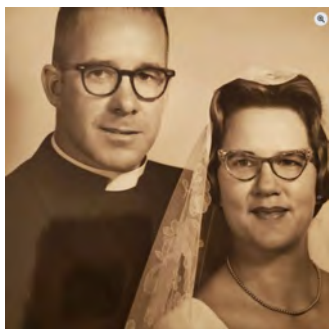
### Amory King — Professed 46 Years

*Mount Airy News* from Jun. 26, 2025 (Primarily authored by daughter, Lucy)

The journey through life ended peacefully for Amory deSaussure Merritt King June 22, 2025. Her children, Lucy and Chris, were by her side as she took her last breath.

Amory lived a fulfilling life long before dementia took hold. She was born May 1, 1936, at home in Mount Airy, NC. Being born at home was an important fact that Mom shared often. She had three brothers, Bill, Cullen and John which meant life at home was full of adventure and sibling antics exploring each community they moved to. Mom shared many stories about their adventures, most often about their time in Atlantic Beach, FL where she swam in the ocean.

After graduation from Bartrum, a women's school in Florida, Amory attended Salem College in Winston-Salem, NC. Next came her graduate work at St Margaret's House in San Francisco where she earned her Masters of Christian Education. During her tenure at graduate school, Mom worked in the Episcopal Diocese of Idaho, which is where she met The Rev Kale F King. While they volunteered at Paradise Point Episcopal Church Camp in McCall, Idaho during the summer of 1961 sparks began to fly. Later that year on October 8th they were married at Trinity Episcopal Church, Mount Airy N.C. and lived together for 59 years until Kale died in 2021.



Amory and Kale welcomed two children into the family, Lucy born in Rupert, Idaho and Christopher born in Emmett, Idaho. The home was one filled with faith, love and laughter. Kale and Amory also provided a sense of adventure by moving the family several times. During each move, Amory took charge of organizing, packing, wrangling children, and then reversing the process. She was the glue that held us together as we moved. We moved from Rupert, ID to Emmett, ID to Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa to Lowgap, NC to Glasgow, MT and finally to Sandpoint, ID. In 1985, after both children were out of the house, Amory and Kale moved to Wheatland, WY. In 1988, Amory's father gave them land below his house to build a retirement home close to her parents. After Kale died in 2021, Amory would reminisce and say, "We had a good life, didn't we?"

Faith was the thread that ran through Amory's life. She was known to pray as she completed tasks in the home. She supported Kale in his ministry and made a home filled with love for Lucy and Chris. Those who remember her, talk about her spiritual guidance and how she spoke about God's hand in her life. Her life as a tertiary in the Third Order (something she and Kale shared) informed her life and choices she made. As Franciscans they tried to lead simple lives. As children, we didn't know how much that influenced how we lived. During our year in Liberia, our parents prayed the Anglican Rosary with us, and we read Evening Prayer as a family. The year in Liberia taught our family a lot about the world. It added to the experiences we had in South Africa the summer of 1970.

Amory was an avid reader who devoured books of all sorts. She had a creative soul and found herself drawn to fiber arts. She sewed our clothing, knitted our sweaters, and wove beautiful pieces on her four-harness loom. At one point, she had a business named Amory's Webs. She sold her pieces at craft and art fairs. She had a distinct rhythm when she was weaving, and it seemed like a holy dance. Later in her weaving career, Amory wove fair linens and Eucharistic garments for different parishes and priests. It was one way for her to combine her faith with her art.

Even when her dementia robbed her of her ability to read. Amory would carry a book or her crossword puzzles around. During her last days, I found her prayer book marked at Morning Prayer. She also kept her Franciscan Directory with her precious belongings. Amory was a woman of faith who loved people



and challenged them at times. She adored her family, especially her grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

**Amory and Her Daughter Lucy in 2025**



## **Book Review and Invitations to Review**

### **Review of *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*, Brian D. McLaren (2024)**

Rev. Canon Jeff Golliher, Ph.D. (Assisting Minister Provincial for Sacred Ecology) and Janet Fedders (former Minister Provincial)

We have written this review eagerly and for many good reasons. At the top of the list is simply that McLaren addresses complex, urgent, and sometimes scary questions in a very wise and personal way. To read his book is to get the impression that the writer is speaking to us face-to-face. The questions he poses relate to the ongoing crisis of Mother Earth of which we are a part, as well as the intimidating political, economic, and cultural forces which are the cause of our dire predicament. While McLaren's thoughts are highly intelligent, he doesn't adopt a strictly academic point of view. Rather, he puts his wisdom into writing from the perspective of a gifted "spiritual friend" (what we once routinely called "spiritual direction"). Put another way, his focus is primarily on discernment. We have found this book to be an uncommon example of the kind of encouragement we all need in these perilous times — and we highly recommend it.

Brian McLaren is a former English professor and Christian pastor of twenty-four years. Currently he's a faculty member of The Living School at the Center for Action and Contemplation. For us as Franciscans, it's important to know that in 2023 McLaren, along with Patrick Carolan, wrote an article published online by "Red Letter Christians" called *It's Time for a Franciscan Renaissance*. McLaren also published an article with the same title on the website of the Center for Contemplation and Action, September 8, 2023. (<https://cac.org/daily-meditations/its-time-for-a-franciscan-renaissance-2023-09-08/>). While the book reviewed here is not written for Franciscans, you'll notice several quotes from St. Francis or references to him in the text. You'll also notice implicit signs of our *charism* — "the transformation of life" — present in McLaren's thoughts and words. In short, Franciscan readers will find the book encouraging; and his commitment to strengthening our discernment, very challenging. In that sense, he is offering us some deep spiritual guidance in practical and diverse ways.

McLaren's important, but implicit, contributions also relate to the work of David Wallace-Wells in *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after Warming* (New York, 2019). The reason is that McLaren's writing addresses perhaps the greatest challenge we face in these perilous times. Wallace-Wells said that because our climate/ecological crisis is so massive in scale and potential severity, it is basically "unthinkable" for most of humanity. McLaren's book helps us to make it "thinkable." He implicitly echoes this in the title of his book — "Life after Doom." This is what McLaren says about that: "Doom is a kind of *pre-traumatic stress disorder* that arises when our old normal is deteriorating and no new normal has come into view. For our purposes, it isn't a single catastrophic event at some point in the future. Instead, it is *the emotional and intellectual experience shared*

## Book Review and Invitations to Review (cont.)

### Review of *Life After Doom* (cont.)

*by all who realize the dangerous future into which we are presently plunging ourselves, our descendants, and our fellow creatures” (p. 6).*

In the body of the book, McLaren frequently addresses the issue of ecological and civilizational “collapse,” well aware that these are possibilities, not in a world of fantasy, but in the real world that we all inhabit. To act and think effectively, we must face the “unthinkable” honestly, without distortions, so we can discern clearly what we must do and then act. This is how McLaren puts it: “We shift our imaginative energies from averting collapse to building life rafts and arks of sanity, resilience and morality. We can then make it through a turbulent passage in the company of people who share humane values and creative vision” (p. 177). His whole book makes this all the more “thinkable” and doable.

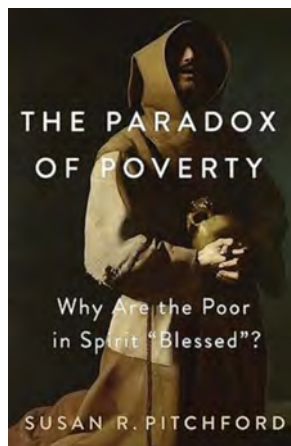
McLaren also identifies four possible scenarios that might occur, depending, in large part, on how we respond now and in the future: Collapse/Avoidance, Collapse/Rebirth, Collapse/Survival, and Collapse/Extinction. He presents these possibilities in ways that engage and encourage readers to discern our way through any resistance or denial that we may feel. We might already be asking ourselves some good questions about this and if we are, then we might want to read closely the chapters in his book that we identify below. Consider these examples:

(1) Have we been wondering about or seeking honest answers to where the climate and ecological crisis is taking us? If so, then read Chapter Two, “Welcome to Reality.” Be sure you’re sitting down in a comfortable place!

(2) Have we been wondering what role faith plays in even the possibility of collapse? If so, then read Chapter Six, “Hope is Complicated,” Chapter Seven, “Learn to See,” Chapter Eight, “Seek Indigenous Wisdom,” and Chapter Nine, “Don’t Read the Bible (in the Same Old Way).”

(3) Have we been wondering whether we are past the time of simply fixing things; and if so, where are we now? Then, read Chapter 14, “Imagine Safe Landings and New Beginnings,” Chapter 15, “It Only Takes Two or Three,” Chapter 20, “Find Your Light and Shine It,” and Chapter 21, “We Make the Way by Walking.”

Again, this is a very useful and inspirational book for Franciscans. Like McLaren has said, “It’s Time for a Franciscan Renaissance.” St Francis and St. Clare would probably say the same, and through the Holy Spirit, they’re probably whispering words like that into our souls in this very moment. McLaren’s book should be helpful as we learn how to put our Rule and Principles into practice and live our charism in these difficult, challenging, and perilous times.



### An Invitation to Review Susan’s Pitchford’s New Book For the Next Issue of the Franciscan Times

Susan Pitchford’s newest book, *The Paradox of Poverty: Why Are the Poor in Spirit “Blessed”?* (Liturgical Press, October 2025) has just been published in paperback and in Kindle.

Here’s what Murray Bodo, OFM (author of *Francis: The Journey and the Dream*) wrote about this book in the opening accolades:

"A wise old Franciscan friar once said that we moderns have forgotten the secret to a life in God, namely, that 'God is powerless

## Book Review and Invitations to Review (cont.)

### Invitation to Review Susan's Pitchford (cont.)

and we keep looking for God where there is power.' But, as Susan Pitchford beautifully explains in these pages, this powerlessness of God is paradoxically the real power, the power of the poverty of God who did not cling to divinity but emptied himself by becoming human and dying on a cross. Those who enter into God through the portal of that seemingly powerless poverty are those whom Jesus calls 'the poor in spirit.' Why Jesus does so and why he also calls them 'blessed' are at the heart of Pitchford's fascinating book. It is the story of how and when the powerlessness of poverty becomes the power of God in us. I found *The Paradox of Poverty* a profound and moving read."

And if his words don't convince you to read this book and write a review, then listen to Susan's own words in this "Author Talks podcast from Liturgical Press:



<https://youtu.be/N0zzW6rHfsk?si=Ln6NcibtBgSxeFXQs>

If you would like to write a review, aim for around 500 words, and send it as a .doc or .docx file attachment to the editor at

[jbrockma@udel.edu](mailto:jbrockma@udel.edu).

### Review: Someone From Assisi — a one-act play by Thornton Wilder (1962)

By Charles Demers

*Note: This is an essay based on the text, not a production of Wilder's play.*

In many narrative depictions of the lives of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi, particularly those by contemporary authors, the potential echoes or shadows of romantic — or more accurately Erotic (as in driven by Eros) — love between the two figures of history have proven fictional temptations too strong to resist. At least a frisson of erotic is often injected into these retellings, as for instance in Franco Zeferelli's *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* (1972), in which the historical age gap between the two saints is erased, and the teen idol performers playing at them exchange looks of longing not only for beatitude.

## Book Review and Invitations to Review (cont.)

### Someone From Assisi (cont.)

This is emphatically not the path chosen by the playwright Thornton Wilder in his short one-act play, *Someone From Assisi*, which instead depicts Saint Clare (rendered here as “Mother Clara”) as a woman who might in fact be uniquely privileged for having met Saint, or rather “Father Francis” (Wilder’s play perhaps inaccurately, perhaps deliberately depicts Francis as a priest) only *after* he had sublimated his concupiscent lust for the finite world into an all-surrendering love of God.

The action of the play turns around a visit by Francis to the convent of Saint Damian’s, to break bread with the sisters of the Second Order. The visit is the occasion of much excitement, but a young girl at the convent, Pica, is distressed by the appearance of a loud, mentally ill woman known and much-abused locally, who has turned up on the convent’s doorstep and threatens the dignity of the occasion.

The fact that the character of the 12-year-old-girl, Pica, bears the name of Saint Francis’s real-life mother, Pica Bernardone, alerts us to a very subtle but uncanny experience of time and the retracing of putatively well-known storylines in this piece, as well as to the importance of Francis’s relationship with the feminine, women, and girls.

The mentally distressed woman, named Mona, both disturbed and disturbing, emerges per the play’s stage instructions from out of the audience. By this strategy the passivity of the viewer is compromised, and the audience is made responsible for Mona — we are made either to identify ourselves with her, or with the tormentors she is escaping.

“They throw stones at me. They kick me. Everywhere people hate people. My daughters — with brooms — they drive me away. I can’t go home; I can only go home when the sun goes down. And I shall say [to King Solomon,] oh, King, change the hearts of the world.” These words, spoken by Mona to Clara, are full of gendered significance: stones are thrown at her, but unlike the woman caught in adultery, Christ does not dissuade them; her daughters attack with brooms, symbols associated with domestic subservience but also witchcraft; and she is not safe to go home until the *sun* goes down — unlike Sister Moon, Brother Sun is the masculine symbol, and Mona is not home until it has set. As confirmation of this reading, a few moments later, Clara speaks these words to Francis: “I will, Father....Now sit in the sun. The meal will be ready very soon.”

It is a meal that Francis wants to eat outside (in the sun?), to which a hurt Clara responds, “But you have never sat down with us at our table... why is that? (*lowering her voice*) My sisters are beginning to believe that you think that women are of a *lower order* in God’s love. ... They have heard that you share your meal with... wolves and birds, but never with *them*.”

Francis is taken aback by the exchange, and the conversation soon turns to his past, including his past sin; his time before conversion as a troubadour with French pretensions (hence “Francis,” which was not his baptismal name); and chivalric ambitions. Here is the only moment in the play when Wilder feints at romance between Francis and Clara — but it’s a deliberate misdirection:



## Book Review and Invitations to Review (cont.)

Someone  
From Assisi  
(cont.)

FRANCIS. I went through a troubled time... (*Suddenly, he looks at her happily.*) And then I found my lady."

CLARA. (*laughing*) Yes, we know, Father.

FRANCIS. Poverty! And I married her!

CLARA. Yes.

It is not Clara who is the object of Francis's chivalric lusts; it is Mona. It emerges gradually that Mona knew Father Francis when he was merely "John," and it is strongly implied that her current mental state, and low standing amongst her family and community, are owing at least in part to the asymmetrical patriarchal consequences of their times together, and of John's passions and unfulfilled promises.

According to the posthumous foreword written for Wilder's play by his literary executor, *Someone From Assisi* was written as part of a never completed cycle of plays touching on Ages ("Infancy," "Childhood," etc.) and Sins ("Pride," "Gluttony," etc.). *Someone From Assisi* acted as the treatment on Lust.

Choosing Saint Francis of Assisi as the focus for a study on lust is at once both tremendously counterintuitive and perfectly sensible. Of the saints known for pre-conversion ribaldry and erotic conquest, maybe only Augustine of Hippo is known for greater contrast. Augustine, whose philosophy exerted a particularly strong influence on the Franciscan charism in Western Catholic thought, was also the theological master who most fulsomely described time itself as a creature. In the closing minutes of *Someone From Assisi*, as we see the distress which attends to the discovery of the consequences of his past sin, we might ask if this is the rare creature with whom Saint Francis is not at ease. We might also ask how time might have treated Mona differently — what if she had met John after he had become Francis. What if she had met him after he had married his Lady?

The Franciscan liberation theologian Leonardo Boff, in his book *Francis of Assisi*, writes, "Francis has a clear consciousness that this liberty to love is not bought without a price. We live in a decadent situation. Passionateness, the seductive power of Eros, illusions of imagination (the person loved is always the person imagined) all exist." And so "a special vigilance and asceticism in the attitudes of Saint Francis come into play. The effort of discipline tries to maintain human stature in a reality that, if on the one hand it ceases to push Eros to the utmost expression of Agape, on the other, it may turn into depravations in the form of domination and obsession."

We don't want to turn to the repression and sex-hatred that too many traditionalists and fundamentalists have offered up in the face of the complexities of human sexual desire — which, in loving and life-affirming contexts, is a gift of God. However, it's also clear that lust is no more a self-regulating market than Wall Street is, and in a fallen world (one that tends to turn people, particularly women and girls, particularly women

## Book Review and Invitations to Review (cont.)

### Someone From Assisi (cont.)

and girls of color) this corner of human life will always be fraught with pain.

In another of his books, *Come, Holy Spirit*, Boff quotes the pneumatology of a fellow towering, left-wing theologian who identified self-consciously with the Augustinian-Franciscan tradition: Paul Tillich. Tillich was a giant of 20th-century religious thinking whose reputation suffered in the years after his death when the somewhat lurid details of his open marriage and proclivity to pornography emerged in an unhappy memoir by his widow, Hannah Tillich.

The quotation from Tillich's *Systematic Theology* chosen by Boff captures perfectly just how complicated a place something like human sexuality emerges from: "All the processes of life contain an essential and an existential element mixed together, goodness and alienation, so that neither one nor the other prevails exclusively...that is the root of our ambiguity."

In the closing lines of *Someone From Assisi*, a nearly blind Francis takes the hand of a young girl with the same name as his mother; he leaves the disappointed Poor Clares alone to their dinner so that he can accompany Mona back home.

**MONA.** (*stopping and peering at FRANCIS*) Haven't you got a stick?  
**FRANCIS.** No, Mona Lucrezia. I have nothing. (*They go out.*)

### An Invitation to Review the First English Translation of Hermann Hesse's *St. Francis* (1904) For the Next Issue of the Franciscan Times

R. John Brockmann



Your's truly edited the text and wrote the Introduction and new postulant, Duncan Fisher, made the translation from German to English. We are planning to release the book in paperback and in Kindle early in 2026, but we invite you to read and review the book for free ahead of time. In exchange for your review, I will send you a copy complete with illustrations in pdf (approximately 63 pages).

If you would like to write a review, aim for around 500 words, and send it as a .doc or .docx file attachment to the editor at

[jbrockma@udel.edu](mailto:jbrockma@udel.edu).

Hesse in 1905 prior to his notoriety as a best-selling author, and winner of The 1946 Nobel Prize in Literature.