

OFS



EVENTS

DECEMBER

2016

PUBLISHED BY OUR LADY OF THE ANGELS REGIONAL FRATERNITY
OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER IN THE U.S.A.

CONNECTING THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN
COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE REGION.



Here are some event listings that our brother and sister Franciscans and fraternities are holding throughout the region.

Come and gather with other Franciscans to observe, participate and celebrate together.

If your fraternity or church has planned a gathering or special event, please send me your information for e-publication by the 25th of the preceding month.

**Deadline for our January 2017
issue is December 26th.**

Send all event listings to:
Anna Geraci, OFS, Publications Editor

acpg@aol.com

MARK SUBJECT LINE: OFS E-VENTS



**IF THERE ARE NO FRATERNITY EVENT LISTINGS
RECEIVED FOR A PARTICULAR MONTH,
OFS E-VENTS WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED
FOR THAT MONTH.**

O HOLY NIGHT
the stars are
BRIGHTLY
SHINING;
It is the night of the
dear Savior's birth!
Long lay the world
in sin and error pining
Till He appeared and
the soul felt its worth.
A THRILL OF HOPE
the weary world rejoices,
For yonder breaks
a new and glorious morn.
FALL ON YOUR KNEES
O hear the angel voices!
O NIGHT DIVINE
O night when Christ was born!
O NIGHT DIVINE
O night, O night Divine

FRATERNITY EVENTS

HERE ARE SOME EVENTS OUR
BROTHER AND SISTER FRATERNITIES
ARE SPONSORING.



HOLY NAME OF JESUS
CHURCH
ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS
CHAPEL
WEST 96TH STREET AT
AMSTERDAM AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY

CONTACT:

MADGE COOKE, OFS

pcooke792@icloud.com



ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS FRATERNITY is

sponsoring a **TAIZÉ ADVENT SERVICE**

to be held on **Tuesday, November 29**, in the
St. Mary of the Angels Chapel, from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Chapel is located on West 96th Street between
Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue; it is handicapped
accessible. The Ramp is located on the side of the
church between church and school. A button on the
left side must be pushed to open the door.

Taizé is an elegantly simple prayer service consisting
of songs, chants, psalms, Scripture reading, silent
meditation and intercessions with sung responses.
It is based on the prayer of the ecumenical community
of the Brothers of Taizé. All are welcome!



ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
CHURCH
135 WEST 31ST STREET
NEW YORK CITY

CONTACT:

PATRICIA CLAYTON, OFS

reap.clayton@gmail.com



ST. BENEDICT THE MOOR FRATERNITY is sponsoring an

ADVENT HOLY HOUR FOR MERCY SERVICE

on **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2**, from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
in the lower church of St. Francis of Assisi Church.

Mercy is the foundation of the Church's life. As a faith
community, we are called to be caught up in the witness of
the tenderness that springs from the gospels. In this recent
Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis called for a
"revolution of tenderness" to encourage more just, tolerant,
patient, loving and merciful relationships between individuals
and nations. As we begin a new church year and enter the
season of Advent, we remain committed to living lives of
witness to the charism of Gospel mercy.

Based on Italian folk tales of the Nativity and Epiphany, Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is a retelling of the story of the Magi from the point of view of a young disabled boy named Amahl, who lives in poverty with his widowed mother near Bethlehem.

Holy Cross/St. John the Baptist Parish presents

Gian Carlo Menotti's

Amahl and the Night Visitors

A concert to benefit the
Food Pantry of
Holy Cross/St. John the Baptist Parish

Sunday, December 4, 2016 @ 3:00 PM

St. John the Baptist Church

213 West 30th St., New York, NY 10001

Suggested Donation:

Adults \$20.00 – Children/Students \$10

For more information, call (212) 564-9070

Bring a canned good to receive a \$2.00 discount

He sees a bright star in the sky one night and tells his mother to go look, but she brushes him off, buried in concern over their bleak future and lack of means with which to support themselves.

That night, three kings come across their meager hut and seek shelter, for they have traveled long and far following the star of which Amahl had spoken. They bring with them treasure and gifts to give to “the Child” who has just been born and who will reign over all.

Blinded by the lure of the gold and what it could do for her family, the Mother attempts to steal just a bit of the treasure, but is caught red-handed.

What no one expects is a gift far greater than gold blessed by the Child, Amahl finds himself suddenly cured of his disability.

A vivid and accessible tale originally created for television.

FRANCISCAN SAINTS AND BLESSEDS CALENDAR

DECEMBER

- 2 BL. MARIA ANGELA ASTORCH, II ORDER
 8 IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
 PATRON & QUEEN OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER
 10 BL. PETER TECELANI, III ORDER
 13 FINDING THE BODY OF OUR HOLY FATHER ST. FRANCIS
 15 BL. MARY FRANCES SCHERVIER, III ORDER



The post-Thanksgiving shopping frenzy has begun, and for some, the focus on sales and spending can detract from the true "reason for the season."

Thomas Moore, author of *The Soul of Christmas*, writes that if shopping for gifts feels empty or annoying, perhaps the problem is not with the practice of gift-giving, but the spirit in which the giver approaches it. To read his reflections on the significance of gifts to the Christmas spirit and advice on how to give with soul, [click here](#).

IF LINK ISN'T WORKING, CUT AND PASTE:

http://email.franciscanmedia.org/e1t/c/*N7hMNmnW6N-XW5WwSJB8_sW40/*W3s8GcK2TVhj1W6jxhQT5xXhr40/5/f18dQhb0SbTP8Y9YsWW6mXby41V2S58W477VgW5G2Jj7V-5_dH8ZQft2W5q9cPw8yym7NW5yMB2y1nP03_VQKk4P8p6tHMW1qPxjr63ndj7W64J4Kv3PnT_CW63n0Z48CRVZsW8BtSK98qByVBW8Bpf2T8mp2b



Go Forth and Give Freely

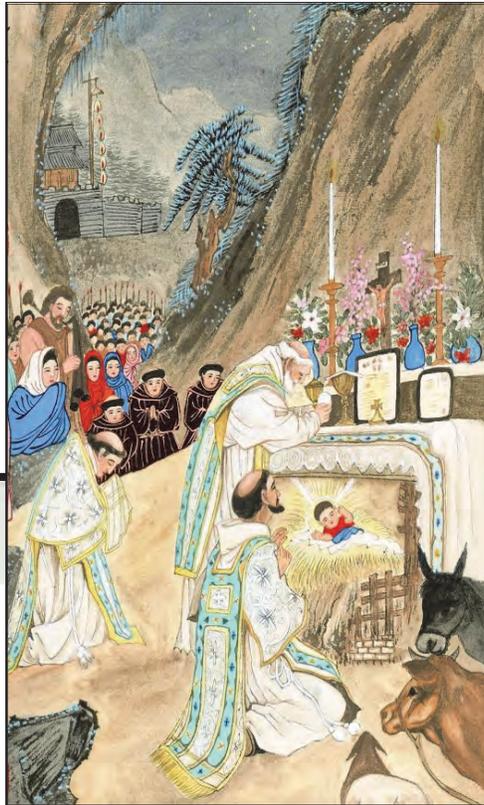
LIVE Q&A with author Thomas Moore on December 2nd

Want to learn more about the soul of Christmas? We'll be chatting with Thomas Moore live in our studio on Friday, December 2, at 3:00 p.m. ET.

You can ask him your questions about Christmas traditions and how to keep the Nativity spirit alive throughout the year. It's easy to participate—all you have to do is [click here](#) to join us on Facebook for the live broadcast!

IF LINK ISN'T WORKING, CUT AND PASTE:

https://www.facebook.com/FranciscanMedia/?utm_campaign=Soul+of+Christmas&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=38144145&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_EyuBVN-C8xY_xhs4HWITBR-S5frBxA7m-dGFY-vHoPmZBzGoE0j3bFZ850xNUDMVlpSNuzc85UoF0PrjSlmaTayO3Q&_hsmi=38176312



24 CHRISTMAS AT GRECCIO

What better way to prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child than to take a brief journey to Greccio, the spot in central Italy where Saint Francis of Assisi created the first Christmas crib in the year 1223.

Francis, recalling a visit he had made years before to Bethlehem, resolved to create the manger

he had seen there. The ideal spot was a cave in nearby Greccio. He would find a baby (we're not sure if it was a live infant or the carved image of a baby), hay upon which to lay him, an ox and an ass to stand beside the manger.

Word went out to the people of the town. At the appointed time, they arrived carrying torches and candles. One of the friars began celebrating Mass. Francis himself gave the sermon.

His biographer, Thomas of Celano, recalls that Francis, "stood before the manger... overcome with love and filled with a wonderful happiness... For Francis, the simple celebration was meant to recall the hardships Jesus suffered even as an infant, a savior who chose to become poor for our sake, a truly human Jesus.

Tonight, as we pray around the Christmas cribs in our homes, we welcome into our hearts that same Savior."

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/christmas-at-greccio/>



CHARITY SHOP WITH US

Socks Instead of Christmas Stockings



**CLICK HERE
to give the gift
OF CLOTHING**

There are so many children, women and men who are without the basic clothing that so many of us take for granted when we dress each morning. Can you imagine having no undergarments or socks? Imagine if all of your clothing was dirty, torn and lacking for warmth in the winter cold? Your generous gift can help the Franciscan Friars offer warm, clean clothing to the children, women and men who come to us in need each day.




Shop Clothing

THEIR NEEDS



**CLICK HERE
to give the gift
OF CLOTHING**

**THE CLOSET
winter essentials**

Each day people come to the doors of the Friars asking for any available used undergarments or clothes. Sadly, when we have none to offer, we have to turn them away. Can you imagine living without socks during the winter?

HELP US PROVIDE:

- 1. pants/socks
- 2. shoes
- 3. winter coats
- 4. gloves
- 5. knit caps
- 6. undergarments
- 7. hats
- 8. scarves
- 9. Mitts
- 10. pajamas
- 11. sweaters

It seems to me that I often take what I consider the basic necessities of life for granted. There are so many people who don't have toilet paper, underwear, socks or even food on this Thanksgiving holiday when we recall our gratitude for all that we have. Maybe together we can tackle this problem. How about this year, instead of shopping for ourselves, we CHARITY SHOP for others? All you have to do is shop online with our friars by visiting our Franciscan Store and page through our Charity Catalog and shop for the poor! You can fill your cart with the basic items needed by the people we serve at our Inn, breadline, food centers and residences.

CHARITY SHOP AT: <https://www.flipsnack.com/frdavid/the-franciscan-store-charity-shop-for-the-poor.html?p=2>

Homelessness and hunger are on the rise and each day men, women, children - whole families - come to the friars looking for warm meals or asking for any available undergarments or clothing. We have a major shortage for basic necessities and now that Winter is approaching the friars are getting concerned about meeting the needs of those who come to us. So ultimately we must rely on the generosity of people like you who want to reach out and give a helping hand to so many who don't have the "basic necessities of life" that we have. We need your help now. Please go to the Franciscan Store and Charity Shop for those who have so little and need so much. From our table to yours, thank you for helping us be even more thankful this Holiday season.

Many Blessings,



Fr. David, OFM, FriarWorks, Executive Director

NEW MET EXHIBIT SHOWCASES FRANCISCAN TREASURES FROM THE HOLY LAND

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has organized a landmark exhibition, “Jerusalem 1000–1400: Every People Under Heaven,” which demonstrates the key role that the Holy City, sacred to the three Abrahamic faiths, played in shaping the art of a period during which Jerusalem was home to more cultures, religions and languages than ever before. In times of peace as well as war, Jerusalem remained a constant source of inspiration that resulted in art of great beauty and fascinating complexity.

JERUSALEM 1000–1400: EVERY PEOPLE UNDER HEAVEN

is the first exhibition to unravel the various cultural traditions and aesthetic strands that enriched and enlivened the medieval city. The exhibition features some 200 works of art from 60 lenders worldwide, including four dozen key loans from Jerusalem’s diverse religious communities, some of which have never before given these pieces on loan.

Among the highlights of the exhibition are five sculpted capitals from the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth belonging to the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. These pristinely preserved works, unearthed at the beginning of the 20th century, powerfully demonstrate the skill and imagination of the sculptors and the dramatic relationship between faith and art during the brief but exceptionally fertile Crusader period.

This is the first time the ensemble has left Nazareth.

Fr. Xavier Seubert, O.F.M. has contributed a chapter to the catalog of the Exhibition which runs through **January 8, 2017.**

For more information on the exhibition go to:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2016/jerusalem>



St. Francis in the Desert



[Giovanni Bellini](#)
(ca. 1424/35–1516)
St. Francis in the Desert, ca. 1476–78
Oil on panel

Panel: 49 1/16 x 55 7/8 in. (124.6 x 142 cm)
Image: 48 7/8 x 55 5/16 in. (124.1 x 140.5 cm)
Henry Clay Frick
Bequest

Accession number:
1915.1.03

Currently on View
Living Hall (139)

Commentary:

The Frick Collection in New York City houses a Bellini painting that can never leave the museum. Internationally recognized as a premier museum and research center, the Frick is known for its distinguished Old Master paintings and outstanding examples of European sculpture and decorative arts.

St. Francis of Assisi, is one of the best-known saints in the world and the above painting of him, called *St. Francis in the Desert*, may be one of the most beloved portraits of him ever done. Painted by Giovanni Bellini around 1480, it was obtained by Henry Clay Frick in 1915 and immediately became one of his favorite pieces, even though religious art was not his cup of tea. Now part of the Frick Collection's permanent collection, it still sits in the same room as it did when it arrived.

In the video tour, Colin B. Bailey, Associate Director and Peter Jay Sharp, Chief Curator of The Frick Collection, bring this painting of Francis to life in this brief, informative tour.

THE FRICK COLLECTION, 1 East 70th Street, New York, NY 10021

Phone: 212-288-0700

<http://www.frick.org/visit>

Virtual Tour: http://www.frick.org/visit/virtual_tour

Video Tour: <http://aleteia.org/2016/10/11/watch-famous-painting-of-st-francis-comes-to-life/>





THE TEXT OF THE ENCYCLICAL AVAILABLE IN MANY LANGUAGES

SEE HERE FOR COMPLETE LANGUAGE LISTING

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals.index.html#encyclicals>



ENGLISH

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html



ESPAÑOL

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html



ITALIANO

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html



PORTUGUÊS

POLSKI

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/pl/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html





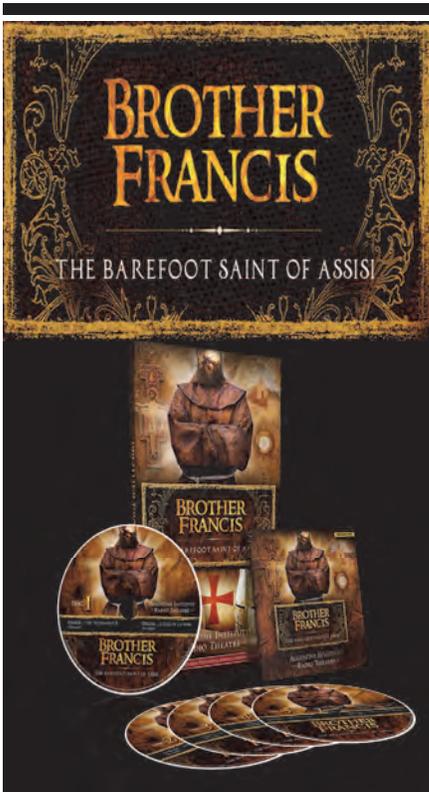
OFM STUDY GUIDE ON “LAUDATO SI” AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

The Order of Friars Minor have developed a resource booklet for use as a study guide alongside "*Laudato Si.*" These resources arose from an urgent concern that the Cry of the Earth and the Cries of the Poor are being disregarded.

As Franciscans, we must be partners in dialogue, making our specific contribution to the healing of our world and the people who live in it. The guide begins with explanations of the four dimensions through which *Laudato Si* will be examined, the Biblical, Ecclesial, Franciscan and Scientific.

The booklet aims to provide guidance so that all who read it might be able to respond to the ecological challenges of our time. It includes an introduction by Minister General Michael Perry, OFM.

We thank the OFM's for the distribution of this guide. You can view the study guides in both English or Spanish on FAN's website: <https://franciscanaction.org/article/ofm-study-guide-laudato-si>



INTRODUCING A NEW 10-PART AUDIO DRAMA

The power and passion of one of the world's most popular saints is captured in this exciting 10-part audio drama from Augustine Institute Radio Theatre. Bold and inspiring, AIR Theatre takes storytelling to a whole new level. Dozens of accomplished, award-winning actors bring characters to life and cinematic sound and music will quicken the imagination. Brother Francis: The Barefoot Saint of Assisi is an unforgettable experience that will inspire your heart and stir your soul.

EPISODE LISTING

1. The Troubadour (22 minutes)
2. A Fool in Chains (26 minutes)
3. The Road Back (23 minutes)
4. Unclean (25 minutes)
5. Unshackled (19 minutes)
6. A Beggar Son (30 minutes)
7. The Rule (25 minutes)
8. Clare (22 minutes)
9. The Sultan (27 minutes)
10. The Little Poor Man (34 minutes)

This audio 5-CD set includes a 24-page discussion guide that will help you discuss major concepts and themes from this unforgettable audio drama.

To watch the trailer and/or to order
<https://www.augustineinstitute.org/air-theatre/>



Special Introductory Price: \$49.95 (Standard retail price: \$59.95)

Featuring 5 audio CDs and a 24-page discussion guide.



Brother Francis is being broadcast on

EWTN Radio <http://www.ewtn.com/radio/index.asp> on Sundays at 9:00 p.m. ET and

Immaculate Heart Radio: <https://ihradio.com> on Sundays at 11 a.m. ET.



Pope Francis's New Apostolic Letter

by Daniel P. Horan, OFM, from his blog, Dating God | <https://datinggod.org>



On the occasion of the close of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, Pope Francis issued a new Apostolic Letter titled, *Misericordia et Misera* (“**Mercy and Peace**”), in which the Holy Father addresses the need for the spirit of the Year of Mercy to continue into the future even while the Jubilee Year itself comes to a close.

Using the narrative of Jesus’s encounter with the woman accused of adultery (John 8:1-11) as an opening and guiding image, Pope Francis says that, “Here what is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God’s love must take primacy over all else.” (*Mercy and Peace*, no. 1) It is through the encounter with Jesus that both the accused woman and the bystanders experience the mercy of God as primary to any interpretation of the law.

The pope highlights a number of ways that Sacred Scripture offers us images and insights about the nature of God’s Mercy and the peace that only God can give. This document is extraordinarily rich, and one that deserves its own attentive readings—and so I encourage all to do that.

I wish now only to highlight a few notable quotations and invite you to read the whole document in your own time.

ON THE THEME OF CONSOLATION AS A FRUIT OF MERCY:

All of us need consolation because no one is spared suffering, pain and misunderstanding. How much pain can be caused by a spiteful remark born of envy, jealousy or anger! What great suffering is caused by the experience of betrayal, violence and abandonment! How much sorrow in the face of the death of a loved one! And yet God is never far from us at these moments of sadness and trouble. A reassuring word, an embrace that makes us feel understood, a caress that makes us feel love, a prayer that makes us stronger... all these things express God’s closeness through the consolation offered by our brothers and sisters. (*Mercy and Peace*, no. 13)

ON THE THEME OF SILENCE AS AN ELEMENT OF CONSOLATION:

Sometimes too, silence can be helpful, especially when we cannot find words in response to the questions of those who suffer. A lack of words, however, can be made up for by the compassion of a person who stays at our side, who loves us and who holds out a hand. It is not true that silence is an act of surrender; on the contrary, it is a moment of strength and love. Silence also belongs to our language of consolation, because it becomes a concrete way of sharing in the suffering of a brother or sister. (*Mercy and Peace*, no. 13)

ON THE NEED FOR CREATIVE MERCY IN THE CHURCH AND BROADER WORLD:

Now is the time to unleash the creativity of mercy, to bring about new undertakings, the fruit of grace. The Church today needs to tell of those “many other signs” that Jesus worked, which “are not written” (Jn 20:30), so that they too, may be an eloquent expression of the fruitfulness of the love of Christ and the community that draws its life from him. Two thousand years have passed, yet works of mercy continue to make God’s goodness visible.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



In our own day, whole peoples suffer hunger and thirst, and we are haunted by pictures of children with nothing to eat. Throngs of people continue to migrate from one country to another in search of food, work, shelter and peace. Disease in its various forms is a constant cause of suffering that cries out for assistance, comfort and support. Prisons are often places where confinement is accompanied by serious hardships due to inhumane living conditions. Illiteracy remains widespread, preventing children from developing their potential and exposing them to new forms of slavery. The culture of extreme individualism, especially in the West, has led to a loss of a sense of solidarity with & responsibility for others. Today many people have no experience of God himself and this represents the greatest poverty and the major obstacle to recognition of the inviolable dignity of human life.
(Mercy and Peace, no. 18)

ON MERCY AND THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON:

Being unemployed or not receiving a sufficient salary; not being able to have a home or a land in which to live; experiencing discrimination on account of one's faith, race or social status: these are just a few of the many examples of situations that attack the dignity of the person. In the face of such attacks, Christian mercy responds above all with vigilance and solidarity. How many situations exist today where we can restore dignity to individuals and make possible a truly humane life!

Let us think only about the many children who suffer from forms of violence that rob them of the joy of life. I keep thinking of their sorrowful and bewildered faces. They are pleading for our help to be set free from the slavery of the contemporary world. These children are the young adults of tomorrow. How are we preparing them to live with dignity and responsibility?

With what hope can they face their present or their future? The social character of mercy demands that we not simply stand by and do nothing. It requires us to banish indifference and hypocrisy, lest our plans and projects remain a dead letter.

May the Holy Spirit help us to contribute actively and selflessly to making justice and a dignified life not simply clichés, but a concrete commitment of those who seek to bear witness to the presence of the Kingdom of God.
(Mercy and Peace, no. 19)

FINALLY, THERE IS AN IMPORTANT PARAGRAPH IN WHICH POPE FRANCIS INDEFINITELY EXTENDS HIS WIDESPREAD GRANTING OF SACRAMENTAL FACULTIES FOR ALL PRIESTS TO ABSOLVE SINS PERTAINING TO ABORTION (WHICH, FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT IN MENDICANT ORDERS—E.G., FRANCISCAN, DOMINICANS—OTHER PRIESTS HAD TO SEEK DELEGATION FROM THE LOCAL BISHOP TO GRANT ABSOLUTION FOR ABORTION PREVIOUSLY).

Given this need, lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God's forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion.

The provision I had made in this regard, limited to the duration of the Extraordinary Holy Year, is hereby extended, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin since it puts an end to an innocent life. In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father.

*May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of special reconciliation.
(Mercy and Peace, no. 12)*

And there are so many more passages worth pondering and sharing.

Read the complete Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera* ("Mercy and Peace") at:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap-20161120-misericordia-et-misera.html



REFLECTION:

ST. ELIZABETH AND THE ANCHOR OF FRANCISCAN LIFE

by Fr. Felix McGrath, OFM



Some years back, when a group of young men began their Franciscan journey at St. Joseph's Seraphic Seminary in Callicoon, NY, in 1954, their class patron was St. Elizabeth of Hungary. In all these years, I have never forgotten that. On this feast day of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, one of those young men – now an old Franciscan – is offering this little prayer, this little “thank you” to her for being part of my Franciscan journey and for being part of the journey of many Franciscan men and women. I'm also grateful for her brothers and sisters in God's great family – saints are for everyone.

St. Elizabeth's life was like the old saying – “she went a long way in a short time.” She was only 24 when she died. Elizabeth was from a different time and a different world than ours, a world of kings and castles. Marriage in Elizabeth's time was not the Hollywood rice and bouquets, and far more political than an ordinary “I do.” But, Elizabeth's marriage has a storybook beginning – the beautiful, young princess marries the handsome prince Louis. They had three beautiful children and were living in a castle – a real Camelot – but God had other plans for the young princess. Louis went off to the Crusades and died on the way and Elizabeth was left a young widow with three kids. Scheming relatives wanted her castle and her money. They literally threw her and the children out into a cold snowy night, but God's poor people took her in.

From the beginning, Elizabeth had a heart for the poor, the sick, the old, the inferior – not exactly popular people then, or even now. She would go down to the not-so-safe neighborhoods to bring food and medicine. Louis, her husband, did not share his wife's enthusiasm, hence the story of roses tumbling out of her cloak instead of loaves of bread is memorable. Elizabeth fought her greedy in-laws and got back her castle and possessions, but now God called Elizabeth to make another journey – a Franciscan journey. She would live the rest of her life as a member of the Third Order of St. Francis. This was to be her anchor, as it is in the life of so many men and women of the Third Order of St. Francis, also known as the Secular Franciscans. Elizabeth built a hospital for the sick using her own funds. Until the day she died, she personally cared for the sick and the dying.

A long time ago, St. Francis founded three orders for religious men and women, including one for people living in the world – men and women, clergy, married and single. That's a lot of diversity. It's hard to put Franciscans in a box or in a habit. The one thing that we all have in common is that we are all individuals and live the Franciscan life in a unique, personal, surprisingly familial way.

There's something in the heart and in the mind that brings us together as a family. We are dysfunctional at times – yes, like any family – but we are still a family. We hang on to that, no matter what. What is this, a vocational talk for the Secular Franciscans? No – these are the thoughts of a Franciscan priest who has spent 60 years hanging onto the anchor of his Franciscan life. This feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Patroness of the Third Order, is just a reminder of the mysterious, beautiful way that God steps into all our lives and teaches us where He wants us to go. Sometimes life can get very rough and confusing, but God gives us all like He gave St. Elizabeth the gifts and the anchor of our Franciscan life. God in His wisdom, love and mercy called us all to St. Francis of Assisi, to walk as his little brothers and sisters – this will be our anchor, our guide in life as it was for Elizabeth and all of our Franciscan brothers and sisters who have gone before us.

But we won't keep it to ourselves – we will open our hearts and lives and be instruments of God's peace for all our brothers and sisters in the world and in our Franciscan family. On the Franciscan feast of St Elizabeth of Hungary, it is good to be reminded to be grateful to God, who called us all to be a part of this Franciscan family, no matter who we are or where we are, and no matter what is going on in our lives.

That's why God called us to be Franciscans – so that God could bring us safe through life and safe home to heaven.

– Fr. Felix, a native of the Bronx, NY, has been stationed for 42 years at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in New York City. He has ministered for more than 25 years as a spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscans currently to St. Thomas More and LaVerna Fraternities in New York City.

