



The Canticle

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Voice of
The Community
of St. Francis,
Province of
The Americas

Franciscan Spirituality in our World Today

In this issue of our newsletter you will learn about our first Immersion offering as part of our Companions in Franciscan Spirituality Program held last October. Companions are women who come to live, work, worship, and study with us as they immerse themselves in learning and living Franciscan spirituality, community and service.

Our Franciscan tradition has important insights to share with our modern world. Within Franciscan community, women who hunger to learn about and experience God can be nurtured. The Sisters of the Community of St. Francis have found a valuable gem in Franciscan spirituality and from our lived experience of it, we hope to pass on to people things that can benefit them and the world.

A fundamental quality of Franciscan spirituality is its incarnational focus. This springs from Francis' relationship with God through his passionate love for Jesus Christ, the incarnate God. From this came his respect for creation, joy in this world, and his concern for the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized among us. It leads to a spirituality which sees God in others and in ourselves, the sacramentality of the human person, the call to preach the Gospel and contribute toward the realization of The Kingdom. For Francis the Gospel was a person: Jesus; and was primarily about relationship.

In the light of this, both Francis and Clare set a high value on community and our relationships with one another, both within the religious community and with

the wider community around us. This means a concern for the common good and a practical interdependence with each other and with the whole earth community. It is a spirituality which is as much about dealing with each other as it is about dealing with God.

Simplicity and voluntary poverty characterize Franciscan spirituality. This involves a focus on not grasping hold of things and people, living a simple lifestyle in harmony with the earth and trusting in God's providence, generosity and hospitality.

All of these values and ways of living can be of benefit to our world where individualism and self-aggrandizement are more prevalent than concern for the common good and a recognition of our interdependence, not only with one another, but with the other creatures and with the earth itself.

In short, Franciscan values could be salvific for our faltering world characterized by discourtesy, a sense of privilege, greed, and pragmatic using of one another. In light of this reality, it is good to

hear the words of Thomas Berry, Roman Catholic priest and culture historian, who warns in *Dream of the Earth*, "If the earth does grow inhospitable toward human presence, it is primarily because we have lost our sense of courtesy toward the earth and its inhabitants, our sense of gratitude, our willingness to recognize the sacred character of our habitat, our capacity for the awesome, for the numinous quality of every earthly reality."

Sr. Pamela Clare, CSF



St. Francis begging. Sculpture at St. Mary's Basilica, Phoenix, AZ. Photo by Garry Wilmore. www.flickr.com/photos/gwilmore/745716091 CC BY-NC-SA

Companions in



Franciscan Spirituality Program

This past St. Francis-tide (Sept 30 – October 9) we offered a ten day residential immersion experience entitled *Companions in Franciscan Spirituality*. Three women from various places in central and southern California as well as a woman from Ohio joined us for this program.

The central event in our program was the celebration of St. Francis Day, starting with the Transitus, the service in observance of Francis' death the evening of October 3. The following day we were the hosts for the SSF Brothers who joined us for a festival dinner.

The rest of the program gave participants the opportunity to immerse themselves in our life — our prayer and cycle of daily offices and Eucharist; our community life; and our ministry. We offered classes covering The Life of St. Francis, Franciscan Prayer, Poverty and Simplicity, Community, and Creation. In addition to study, the Companions were given a tour of the Ten-

derloin and the Mission Districts, two prime areas of our ministry in San Francisco. It is important to understand our context in order to appreciate our contemporary expression of the Franciscan charism.

One day the companions volunteered at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality, preparing soup for the 200 or so hungry people who eat lunch there daily. With the chopping work at Martins and the chopping work in preparation for the St. Francis Day feast, the companions discovered the truth of the slogan "Get closer to God: Slice carrots," which was part of an ad campaign for the Episcopal Church about 5 years ago.

On the first Sunday they accompanied Sr. Maggie to Open Cathedral, the outdoor Eucharist offered at Civic Center by the San Francisco Night Ministry. On the last Sunday they attended Holy Innocents with Srs. Jean and Pamela Clare where they experienced a lively congregation with many young children.

In between the activities in this rather busy schedule, there was time for one-on-one conversation between participants and with sisters as well as opportunities to take walks, enjoy the garden, read, journal, and reflect individually and as a group.



Companion Debbie helped set up the chapel for our celebration of St. Francis Day. All the Companions helped with household chores as part of their experience of community life. At right: Jessica (back) and Anna Marie (front) wash dishes after dinner.



Companion Kathy gathering up her things in preparation for returning home after the ten day program

A Report on a 30 Day Experience with the Community of St. Francis

As a transpersonal psychology scholar, a chaplain in a multi-faith hospital ministry, and an ardent inquirer into the diverse ways the divine moves through humanity, I dove into the Community of St. Francis with a curious heart, ready to be opened and changed. Having left my Christian roots long ago to explore God off-road, in the formlessness of consciousness, my prayer/meditation life was full, and also, predominately impersonal. Entering into the convent, I immediately felt at home in the holding of my simple room, the Franciscan vows of *poverty*, *obedience* and *chastity*, and the religious life the sisters exemplified.

My 30 days in the community brought me (back) into direct communion with God, as *consciousness*, but also as a personal presence continually revealing itself as I surrendered to it. Daily office prayer, solo prayer, cooking, cleaning, lending helping hands to the community, I blended into life, emptying myself of an individual dependency. I discovered the treasure trove of non-dual, mystical and all-inclusive perspectives inside religion, especially within the open-embrace of the Anglican tradition. Most of all, my heart has been stretched wider open to humanity; in Richard Rohr's words, "My life is not about me; I am about life." Living at the Community of Saint Francis was one of the most significant experiences on my spiritual path. I highly encourage all who are called to a life of spirit and service to step into the world of St. Francis with beginner's mind and see what happens.

Michele Elizabeth

Michele Elizabeth lived at St. Francis House and shared the life of the sisters at St. Francis House during the summer of 2016.



Life at The Family Link and St. Francis House. Above: Sr. Maggie with assorted dogs (not all Franciscan) . Right: Sr. Jean with her apple pie for our Thanksgiving celebration with the SSF Brothers. Far Right: Sr. Pamela Clare presenting at the 2016 Ecclesia Conference in Burlingame, CA.



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The Canticle
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Spirituality

COMPANIONS IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY 2017

April 7-17 Holy Week/Easter Immersion

Share Holy Week and Easter with the CSF Sisters at St. Francis House. This program includes a one-day training in foot massage which will lead to participation in the Care Through Touch Institute's Maundy Thursday Foot Massage with homeless people at various social service agencies in San Francisco's Tenderloin District (skid-row). (Limit: 2 women)

August 11-21 Summer Immersion

The focus of this program will be on Francis as Nature Mystic and our relationship with God's creation. As well as living and praying with the community, participants will work in the urban garden at St. Francis House and make trips to various natural sites in and around San Francisco while studying ecological theology and spirituality from a Franciscan perspective. (Limit: 2 women)

Contact us for more information.



Srs. Maggie, Jean, Ruth, Pamela Clare, and Helen Julian (our Minister General from England).

Contact Information

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*And for the most up-to-date and more informal contact, check out our Facebook page
Community of St. Francis, American Province*

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