

"I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you yours!" —Francis of Assisi

"Do you think that love of neighbor is not a duty for you, but an option? That it is not a law, but a piece of advice? I also truly hoped so...But I am terrified by the left hand of the divine Judge...they (the goats) are judged and put on His left not because they stole, committed sacrilegious robberies, or adulterous acts, or perpetrated some other forbidden act, but because they did not take care of Christ in those in need." St Gregory Nazianzus, On the Love for the Poor.

Almsgiving is one of the three pillars of Lent (besides prayer and fasting). Its good for us to consider what it means. St Gregory calls out a human thinking that is alive and well in our society, that almsgiving is an option, not an obligation. When we feel like it. When its convenient. When we have time. The list of "whens" goes on and the end result leads to "never". Almsgiving is actually in the Ten Commandments, "love your neighbor as yourself" but somehow we have not made the connection. Sadly, all of the commandments seem to have become the ten suggestions in our day. As Franciscans, part of our witness is how we approach almsgiving. Let's take thought during these days of Lent on how we live that out. —Franz

Wisdom from Solanus Casey

- To practice no religion is making a secondary matter of the primary purpose of our creation as rational beings: to know God, so that we may serve Him and be happy with Him in heaven.
Unpleasant situations will always come out right if we only have a little confidence in the good God and our Blessed Mother.
Gratitude is the first sign of a thinking, rational creature.

ODDS 'N' ENDS

Please continue prayers for the selection of a new bishop for the Diocese of Duluth.



The Fratelli Tutti books have arrived. Jane will bring them to our next fraternity gathering. As decided at last month's gathering, we will begin using Fratelli Tutti as the basis of our Ongoing Formation. —Bob

This month's Fraternity Gathering

March 21, 2021, 12:30 p.m. – Snacks and Gathering

Holy Family Catholic Church, social hall
2430 West 3rd St., Duluth
Park in the west parking lot

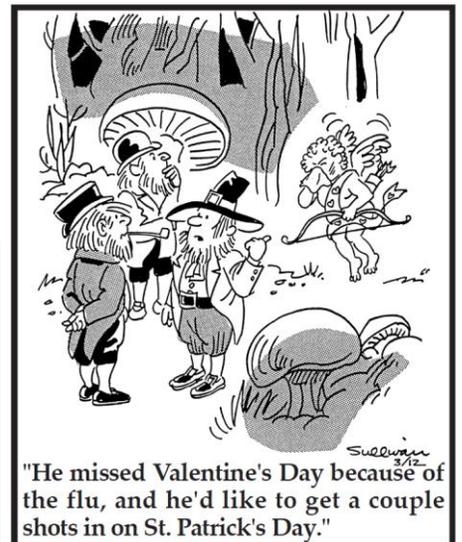
NOTE: This is the tentative plan. A decision on whether we gather in person or remotely will be made closer to the date. You will be notified by phone or email if the in-person gathering is cancelled.

Agenda:

- 1. Retreat Opening prayer – Darlene
2. Retreat on the Seven Crosses of Francis – Bob, Darlene, Kathy.
3. Business
a. Approve minutes, assign ministries
b. Treasurer reports, bills, receipts
c. Formation report
d. JPIC report
4. Vocation and closing prayers

Next month's meeting: April 18, 2021.

Ongoing formation – TBD



Gospel Reading: 5th Sunday of Lent, Jn 11:1-45

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill. So the sisters sent word to him saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He said this, and then told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him." So the disciples said to him, "Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved." But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him." So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go to die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him. So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

Faith Matters: Reflections from your Spiritual Assistant

There has been a lot of talk, and even acrimony, over the past decade about efforts to stem the tide of immigration along the Mexican border. Our former president, with support from many Americans, talked of building a huge wall on parts of that border to keep people out. It's a bit ironic, considering our history of the Cold War. Listening to the news reports I am continually reminded of President Reagan's stirring words about another wall—the Berlin Wall: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

Practically speaking walls never work anyway. History is full of failed attempts to use walls to either keep people out or keep people in. Some examples are the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall in England, the Maginot Line in France, the Iron Curtain, and, of course, the infamous Berlin Wall. If the need is great enough people power will defeat any wall.

The spirit behind walls separating people or nations is directly opposed to the principle in Catholic social teaching called solidarity. Solidarity reminds us that we are all one, no matter where we live, what political or economic system we follow, what ethnic group we belong to, or what name we give to the divine.

The most powerful image of this inherent connectedness is the photograph taken of the earth by the crew of Apollo 8 when they were returning home from a trip around the moon. This famous photo shows a shining Earth looking exceedingly small and alone in the vastness of space, with no national borders or barriers that separate us. It is hard to look at this picture without realizing how interconnected and interdependent all of us really are on this precious planet.

I learned first-hand the futility of one nation trying to isolate itself while living in Germany during the 1980's. One of that country's prize jewels, the Black Forest, was rapidly dying due to acid rain from factories across the border in France. Pollution from German factories was, in turn, destroying lakes and forests in countries to the north and east. After years of bitter wrangling, the nations of Europe realized that only by working together would they have a chance of saving their environment. Since then, tremendous progress has been made.

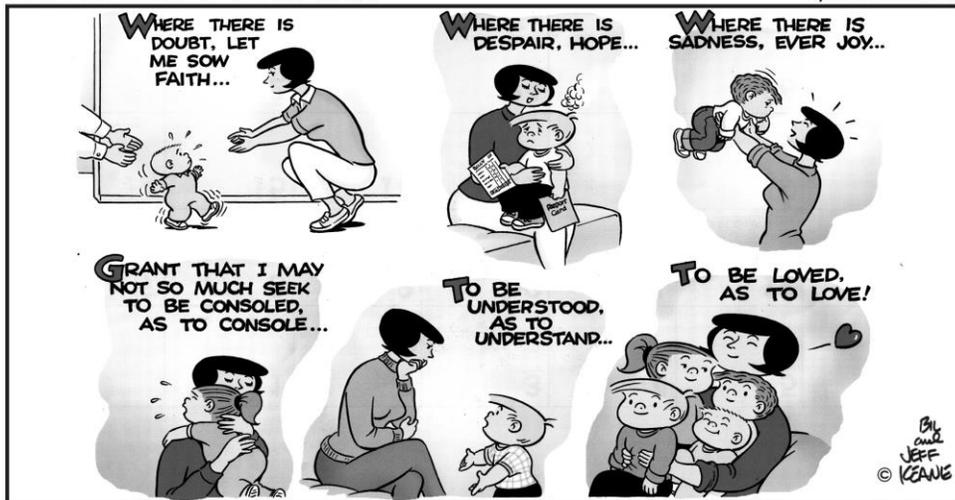
Here in America we have people working to divide us as a people, whether along racial lines, economic status, or other factors. Our politics has become polarized in ways not seen since the Civil War. Many commentators have noted the tribalism infecting our relationships, where those we disagree with are treated with contempt or labelled as evil.

Solidarity says that, despite what Cain claimed, we truly are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We share both their pain and some element of responsibility for their well-being. We are the lawyer asking, "Who is my neighbor?" and we are the rich man not noticing the poor Lazarus at our gate. As tempting as it is, we cannot just look away or insist that it's not our problem.

Francis understood in a deep way the reality that solidarity speaks to: we are brothers and sisters to each other and in relationship with all of creation. He realized that this extended even to our enemies and to those who don't believe as we do. Practicing the virtue of solidarity means learning that "love your neighbor" casts a very wide net. As Pope Francis said it, we are called to build bridges, not walls. —Bob

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

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PHILLIP'S FLOCK

By Doc Goodwin



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FORMATION

Here's some interesting and helpful information that came from Francine Gikow, OFS, a member of the National Formation Commission-OFS USA, courtesy of Diane F. Menditto, OFS, Chair of the National Formation Commission.

Spiritual Journal writing

The purpose of journal writing is...

- for discovery- not a justification for "my way."
- It is a source of growth-not for standing still.
- It helps to clarify our thoughts, wishes, responses and prayers.
- It is a tool for helping us realize and meet the questions of our lives.
- It can assist you in seeing possibilities and choices
- It helps us in finding patterns of our responses and choices- some of which may be automatic in the way we respond

General directions in journal writing

- Journal writing is NOT an autobiography. It is ideas, dialog with God, reactions to situations etc.
- A spiritual journal is for you alone! If you have the expectation that someone will see the contents of your journal, your writing will change to meet another's expectations. It is for your eyes only!
- Good journal writing is a dialog with God. That means it can be prayer at times but many times, we tell God our inmost secrets and then wait to listen.
- We must be brutally honest in our writings. There is no one to impress. God knows all and loves us furiously. We just have to sometimes peel off our layers of defense and trust in Him.
- Review and re-read your entries periodically to find commonalities and to look at yourself dispassionately when you are not in that moment, crisis, or emotionally involved.
- If journaling about scripture or another occurrence in your life, identify the "hot button" issue or what triggers a response from you and bring that to prayer and your journal. Try to find out, the "why" you react the way you do, what its meaning for you and how you respond.
- Share with your Spiritual Advisor/Director the issues that you find difficult in your journal.

What you need:

- an empty notebook or journal. Find something without pictures, quotes etc. to distract you. The plainer the better. Keep the notebook secure in a safe place so that no one but you has access to you.
- a pen
- a quiet place for quiet time when you are fresh and not tired.
- bible or spiritual classic

Process: Pray, Write, Read, Reflect

- In quiet/collect yourself to be open to hear God's responses to you.
- Begin with a prayer (I suggest Francis' Prayer before the Crucifix prayed slowly and quietly followed by our own request to the Holy Spirit to guide you.)
- Then just write. Write what troubles you, what excites you, what surprises you, your thoughts. Share with God.
- Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or handwriting. This is between you and God.
- Reflect back to older writings periodically. Bring to prayer.

—Jane