

St. Clare Fraternity

NEWSLETTER

April 2020

Our Council: Arlene Stewart, Minister Tom Brown, Vice
Minister Katie Roberts, Formation Director Maryanne Sheofsky,
Secretary Anne Pennsy, Treasurer Victoria Snyder,
Councilor Brother Mike Tripka, TOR, Spiritual Assistant

Minister's Message

Sister Faustina was a young, uneducated nun in a convent of the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy in Poland during the 1930s. She came from a poor family that struggled during the years of World War I. She had only three years of simple education, so hers were the humblest tasks in the convent, usually in the kitchen or garden. However, she received extraordinary revelations — or messages — from our Lord Jesus. Jesus asked Sr. Faustina to record these experiences, which she compiled into notebooks. These notebooks are known today as the *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska*, and the words contained within are God's loving message of Divine Mercy.

Today, we continue to rely on St. Faustina as a constant reminder of the message to **trust** in Jesus' endless mercy, and to live life mercifully toward others.

The Divine Mercy message is one we can call to mind simply by remembering ABC:

A - Ask for His Mercy. God wants us to approach Him in prayer constantly, repenting of our sins and asking Him to pour His mercy out upon us and upon the whole world.

B - Be merciful. God wants us to receive His mercy and let it flow through us to others. He wants us to extend love and forgiveness to others just as He does to us.

C - Completely trust in Jesus. God wants us to know that the graces of His mercy are dependent upon our trust. The more we trust in Jesus, the more we will receive.

Jesus told St. Faustina: "***How painfully distrust of My goodness wounds Me! Sins of distrust wound me most painfully.***"

Jesus himself gave St. Faustina a Novena to pray, starting on Good Friday and ending on the Feast of Mercy: the Sunday after Easter. I will be emailing it daily to everyone starting on Good Friday. Now more than ever we need to trust and plead for God's mercy.

“O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus, as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You.”

Happy Easter to you and your family as we prepare to celebrate our Father’s greatest sacrifice through his Son, Jesus Christ. Have a blessed Easter.

From our Formation Director

On March 9th during our regular monthly meeting, we got into small groups and discussed Reflections 39 (The Practice of Justice) and 40 (Blessed Are the Peacemakers) from “Live Like Francis.” One person from each small group reported what they discussed back to the fraternity. We also talked about Rule #4 as presented in “Praying The Franciscan Rule” which reflects on observing the Gospel by following the example of St. Francis. Rule 4 states “Secular Franciscans should devote themselves to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.”

OFS National & Regional News

Summer Seminar “Called to Act With Justice” July 9-12,2020

Speakers: Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR and David Seitz, OFS

This seminar is endorsed by the National Executive Council of the Secular Franciscan Order--USA

St. Clare Fraternity News

We met on March 9th at Sts. Cosmas and Damian Meeting Room. Minutes were approved. The Treasurer’s report was also approved. The meeting was presided over by the Vice Minister, Tom Brown. Various reports were given on the satellite group at Christ the King Manor. The sweatshirt/t-shirts were available for pick up at this meeting. Several members were absent and so some reports were not available.

We thought we would be meeting again but God has other plans for us. Let us remember all our Fraternity’s prayer intentions.

Happy April Birthday to:

6th Joe Harclrode

Franciscan Holy Days

- April 3 St. Benedict the Black
- April 16 St. Bernadette Soubirous
- April 17 St. Benedict Joseph Labre
- April 21 St. Conrad of Parzham
- April 23 Blessed Giles of Assisi
- April 24 St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen
- April 28 Blessed Luchesius

Prayer for the Intercession of St Roch, Franciscan Tertiary (who lived during the Black Plague)

O Blessed St Roch, patron of the sick, have pity on those who suffer. Your power was so great when you were in the world that, by the Sign of the Cross, many were healed of their afflictions. I implore your intercession. Offer then, to God, our sighs and tears, and obtain for us that health of mind and body that we seek. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE EASTER SAINT

The sanctity of Francis of Assisi is a many splendored thing. He is an EVANGELICAL saint, for he sought to imitate Christ by living in a most radical way the perfection of the Holy Gospel. He is likewise an ECCLESIAL saint, a man who anchored his mission and his teaching in that of the mystical Bride of Christ, the holy Catholic Church. Nature lovers claim Francis of Assisi, the friend and brother of creation, as an ECOLOGICAL saint. Those involved in dialogue with other religions hail the Sultan-visiting, peace-promoting Francis as the model of an ECUMENICAL saint. But can the Poor Man of Assisi, who bore on his body the wounds of Jesus Crucified, be rightly called an EASTER SAINT?

THE ROAD TO EASTER

For St. Francis, the spiritual Easter was not a one-time event, but a journey, a process. Like St. Paul, Francis could declare *All I want to know is Christ and the power flowing from His Resurrection!* This knowledge and power enabled Francis to take the Cross-road which leads to glory: sharing in (Christ's) sufferings by being formed into

the pattern of His death, Francis hoped that (he) too might attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil3:10-11)

THE ENCOUNTER

Francis' road to Easter began with a profound encounter with Jesus Crucified. Praying before the crucifix in the church of San Damiano outside Assisi during the first years of his conversion, Francis heard Christ address to him the heart-shaking words, *Francis, rebuild My house!* The future saint *felt a mysterious change in himself, but he could not describe it.* This was the beginning of his spiritual Easter.

St. Francis journeyed to Easter transformation by contemplating and imitating Jesus in the mysteries of His poverty and humility. Seraphic love even compelled the Poor Man to ask Christ to grant him to feel in his body the pains of the Passion and to feel in his heart the love which urged Christ to die for sinners.

THE ICON OF THE CRUCIFIED

In September 1224, two years before the Seraphic Patriarch's death, God answered his prayer with the imprinting of the Sacred Stigmata, making Francis *an Icon of the Crucified Jesus.*

Yet, Francis' immersion in the mysteries of the Passion did not make him sad or somber. Rather, the sorrows of the Lord opened Francis to a deeper, truer joy. The wounds of Christ's Passion which the Poor Man bore were in truth signs of spiritual resurrection, God visibly confirming Francis' passage through death to life.

A NEW CREATION

The Easter life is new life, --life in Christ. Again, and again, the 13th century authors hail St. Francis as the new man. In him, *new signs of sanctity appear, new prodigies* are made manifest. His religious family is a *new flock* in the Church, a *new order*, living a *new life*. Francis proclaimed even in his body that *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature: the former things have passed away. Behold! They are made new!* (2 Cor. 5:17)

ALL IS MADE NEW

Francis' Easter newness was the fruit of his union with the Crucified and Risen One. This union is the secret of the Little Poor Man's joy, his peace-making skills, his enthusiasm for the things of God, his unique relationship with creation. Illness, disappointment, pain, betrayal and misunderstanding still marked Francis' earthly pilgrimage. But he saw these sufferings in a new light. He understood that through them, God was making all things work toward an eternal good, an eternal Easter. And so, *in Francis and through him an unexpected joy and a holy newness came into the world.*

NOT I, BUT CHRIST!

St. Francis' mission of newness did not end with death. Those present at his funeral services saw his body, adorned with the wounds of Christ, shining with a marvelous brightness. In life, Francis bore in his body the likeness of the sufferings of Christ. In death, his body presaged the glory of the future resurrection: *The wounds he has, show forth/ Gifts of a newer kind.* The power of this new life was also manifested in the wonders which occurred through his intercession: *he shone with the new light of miracles after his death.*

AND ALLELUIA IS HIS SONG

Against this backdrop, the Easter references in St. Francis' writings shine with a new splendor.

When composing his devotional Office of the Cross, the Seraphic Father included a special Office for the Easter season. Yet even in the solemn Offices for Holy Week, the thought of Resurrection is present: *Arise, my glory! Arise, lyre and harp! I will arise at dawn! I have slept and risen and my most Holy Father has received me in glory.*

Christ made Francis, the Eater Saint, a singer of the new song of Redemption. In the "Exhortation to the Praise of God," the Poor Man sang as his own the hymn of those who stand before the Throne of God in heaven: *Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, glory, and honor!*

His song of Easter triumph is likewise that of the Church: *This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

CONCLUSION

St. Francis of Assisi shows what can happen when the grace of Easter becomes effective in a Christian's life. He teaches us that every earthly suffering holds the seed of resurrection.

For Francis, Easter was vibrant reality that gave light and hope and even energy for his daily journey with Christ to the Father. He teaches us *that the real saints (the Easter saints) are the quite human, quite natural people in whom, though the Easter purification and transformation, what is human appears afresh in its total originality and beauty.* (Pope Benedict XVI)

St. Francis of Assisi, Man of the Gospel, Icon of the Crucified, Easter Saint, pray for us!

Source: <https://www.poorclares-belleville.info/Fruits/Easter2.htm>

CHRIST IS RISEN, ALLELUIA!

HAPPY EASTER!