



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

March 2014

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POPE'S MESSAGE FOR LENT 2014:

AN INVITATION TO EVANGELICAL POVERTY IN OUR TIME

Vatican City, 4 February 2014 (VIS) – "He became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" is the title of the Holy Father's Message for Lent 2014. The title is drawn from the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians in which the apostle encourages them to show their generosity by helping their brothers in Jerusalem, who were experiencing difficulties. In the document, dated 26 December, feast of St. Stephen protomartyr, the Pope explores the meaning of St. Paul's invitation to evangelical poverty in our times. The full text of the message is published below:



"Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As Lent draws near, I would like to offer some helpful thoughts on our path of conversion as individuals and as a community. These insights are inspired by the words of Saint Paul: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich'. The Apostle was writing to the Christians of Corinth to encourage them to be generous in helping the faithful in Jerusalem who were in need. What do these words of Saint Paul mean for us Christians today? What does this invitation to poverty, a life of evangelical poverty, mean to us today?

Christ's Grace

First of all, it shows us how God works. He does not reveal himself cloaked in worldly power and wealth but rather in weakness and poverty: 'though He was rich, yet for your sake he became poor ...'. Christ, the eternal Son of God, one with the Father in power and glory, chose to be poor; he came amongst us and drew near to each of us; he set aside his glory and emptied himself so that he could be like us in all things. God's becoming man is a great mystery! But the reason for all this is his love, a love which is grace, generosity, a desire to draw near, a love which does not hesitate to offer itself in sacrifice for the beloved. Charity, love, is sharing with the one we love in all things. Love makes us similar, it creates equality, it breaks down walls and eliminates distances. God did this with us. Indeed, Jesus 'worked with human hands, thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, he truly became one of us, like us in all things except sin'.

Continued on Page 7

OVERVIEW FOR THE MONTH

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The month of March is dedicated to St. Joseph. The first four days of March fall during the liturgical season known as Ordinary Time which is represented by the liturgical color green. Green, the symbol of hope, is the color of the sprouting seed and arouses in the faithful the hope of reaping the eternal harvest of heaven, especially the hope of a glorious resurrection. The remainder of the month falls during the liturgical season of Lent which is represented by the liturgical color purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart.

At the beginning of this month we will embark on our journey to the cross by receiving ashes and donning the purple of penance. We will reflect on our mortality ("Remember man thou art dust") and the shortness of life ("and to dust thou shall return"). We will heed the call, "Now is the acceptable time, now is "the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2)." Just like Our Lord's earthly life every moment of our lives is leading up to the last moment—when for eternity we will either go to God or suffer the fires of hell.

Let us not tire of doing our good works and penance, but continue with the enthusiasm of the catechumens on their way to Easter and Baptism. May our Lenten observance be a joyful journey — and not a forced march. The Solemnity of the Annunciation bravely appears during Lent; a pure white flower in the purple Lenten landscape. It seems to be, at first glance, a Christmas feast, but upon reflection we grasp that the feast is intimately linked to the Paschal mystery. For what Christ inaugurated at His incarnation in accepting to offer himself for the human race, he will complete in his sacrifice on the cross. ☐

FEASTS FOR MARCH

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of March are:

- 3 Katharine Drexel (USA), Opt. Mem.
- 4 St. Casimir; Fat Tuesday, Opt. Mem.
- 7 Perpetua and Felicity, Memorial
- 8 John of God, Opt. Mem.
- 9 First Sunday of Lent, Sunday
- 16 Second Sunday of Lent, Sunday
- 17 Patrick, Opt. Mem.
- 18 Cyril of Jerusalem, Opt. Mem.
- 19 Joseph, husband of Mary, Solemnity
- 23 Third Sunday of Lent, Sunday
- 25 Annunciation of the Lord, Sunday
- 30 Fourth Sunday of Lent, Sunday

The feasts of St. Frances of Rome (March 9) and St. Toribio de Mogrovejo (March 23) are superseded by the Sunday liturgy. ☐

OUR CENACLE CORNER

Seeking a deeper relationship with God through meditation of passages from Holy Scriptures

Knowing our Holy Bible Part II

The Different Revisions
of The Holy Bible From The Christian
Perspective

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

WHAT ARE THE ORIGINS OF ASH WEDNESDAY AND THE USE OF ASHES?

By Fr. William Saunders

The liturgical use of ashes originates in Old Testament times. Ashes symbolized mourning, mortality and penance. For instance, in the Book of Esther, Mordecai put on sackcloth and ashes when he heard of the decree of King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes, 485-464 B.C.) of Persia to kill all of the Jewish people in the Persian Empire (Est 4:1). Job (whose story was written between the 7th and 5th centuries B.C.) repented in sackcloth and ashes (Job 42:6). Prophesying the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem, Daniel (c. 550 B.C.) wrote, "I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest prayer, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes" (Dn 9:3). In the fifth century B.C., after Jonah's preaching of conversion and repentance, the town of Ninevah proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, and the king covered himself with sackcloth and sat in the ashes (Jon 3:5-6). These Old Testament examples evidence both a recognized practice of using ashes and a common understanding of their symbolism.

Jesus Himself also made reference to ashes. Referring to towns that refused to repent of sin although they had witnessed the miracles and heard the good news, our Lord said, "If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they would have reformed in sackcloth and ashes long ago" (Mt 11:21).

The early Church continued the usage of ashes for the same symbolic reasons. In his book, *De Poenitentia*, Tertullian (c. 160-220) prescribed that the penitent must "live without joy in the roughness of sackcloth and the squalor of ashes." Eusebius (260-340), the famous early Church historian, recounted in his *The History of the Church* how an apostate named Natalis came to Pope Zephyrinus clothed in sackcloth and ashes begging forgiveness. Also during this time, for those who were required to do public penance, the priest sprinkled ashes on the head of the person leaving confession.

In the Middle Ages (at least by the time of the eighth century), those who were about to die were laid on the ground on top of sackcloth sprinkled with ashes. The priest would bless the dying person with holy water, saying, "Remember that thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return." After the sprinkling, the priest asked, "Art thou content with sackcloth and ashes in testimony of thy penance before the Lord in the day of judgment?" To

which the dying person replied, "I am content." In all of these examples, the symbolism of mourning, mortality and penance is clear.

Eventually, the use of ashes was adapted to mark the beginning of Lent, the 40-day preparation period (not including Sundays) for Easter. The ritual for the "Day of Ashes" is found in the earliest editions of the Gregorian Sacramentary, which dates at least to the eighth century. About the year 1000, an Anglo-Saxon priest named Aelfric preached: "We read in the books, both in the Old Law and in the New, that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast." As an aside, Aelfric reinforced his point by then telling of a man who refused to go to Church on Ash Wednesday and receive ashes; the man was killed a few days later in a boar hunt. Since this time, the Church has used ashes to mark the beginning of the penitential season of Lent, when we remember our mortality and mourn for our sins.

In our present liturgy for Ash Wednesday, we use ashes made from the burned palm branches distributed on the Palm Sunday of the previous year. The priest blesses the ashes and imposes them on the foreheads of the faithful, making the sign of the cross and saying, "Remember, man you are dust and to dust you shall return," or "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." As we begin this holy season of Lent in preparation for Easter, we must remember the significance of the ashes we have received: We mourn and do penance for our sins. We again convert our hearts to the Lord, who suffered, died and rose for our salvation. We renew the promises made at our baptism, when we died to an old life and rose to a new life with Christ. Finally, mindful that the kingdom of this world passes away, we strive to live the kingdom of God now and look forward to its fulfillment in Heaven. □

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THE ANNUNCIATION

Excerpted from The Liturgical Year, Abbot Gueranger O.S.B

A tradition, which has come down from the apostolic ages, tells us that the great mystery of the Incarnation was achieved on the twenty-fifth day of March. It was at the hour of midnight, when the most holy Virgin was alone and absorbed in prayer, that the Archangel Gabriel appeared before her, and asked her, in the name of the blessed Trinity, to consent to become the Mother of God. Let us assist, in spirit, at this wonderful interview between the angel and the Virgin: and, at the same time, let us think of that other interview which took place between Eve and the serpent. A holy bishop and martyr of the second century, Saint Irenaeus, who had received the tradition from the very disciples of the apostles, shows us that Nazareth is the counterpart of Eden.

In the garden of delights there is a virgin and an angel; and a conversation takes place-between them. At Nazareth a virgin is also addressed by an angel, and she answers him; but the angel of the earthly paradise is a spirit of darkness, and he of Nazareth is a spirit of light. In both instances it is the angel that has the first word. 'Why,' said the serpent to Eve, 'hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?' His question implies impatience and a solicitation to evil; he has contempt for the frail creature to whom he addresses it, but he hates the image of God which is upon her.

See, on the other hand, the angel of light; see with what composure and peacefulness he approaches the Virgin of Nazareth, the new Eve; and how respectfully he bows himself down before her: 'Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with thee! Blessed art thou among women!' Such language is evidently of heaven: none but an angel could speak thus to Mary.

Scarcely has the wicked spirit finished speaking than Eve casts a longing look at the forbidden fruit: she is impatient to enjoy the independence it is to bring her. She rashly stretches forth her hand; she plucks the fruit; she eats it, and death takes possession of her: death of the soul, for sin extinguishes the light of life; and death of the body, which being separated from the source of immortality, becomes an object of shame and horror, and finally crumbles into dust.

But let us turn away our eyes from this sad spectacle, and fix them on Nazareth. Mary has heard the angel's explanation of the mystery; the will of heaven is made known to her, and how grand an honor it is to bring upon her! She, the humble maid of Nazareth, is to have the ineffable happiness of becoming the Mother of God, and yet the treasure of her virginity is to be left to her! Mary bows down before this sovereign will, and says to the heavenly messenger: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word.'

Thus, as the great St. Irenaeus and so many of the holy fathers remark, the obedience of the second Eve repaired the disobedience of the first: for no sooner does the Virgin of Nazareth speak her fiat, 'be it done,' than the eternal Son of God (who, according to the divine decree, awaited this word) is present, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in the chaste womb of Mary, and there He begins His human life. A Virgin is a Mother, and Mother of God; and it is this Virgin's consenting to the divine will that has made her conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost. This sublime mystery puts between the eternal Word and a mere woman the relations of Son and Mother; it gives to the almighty God a means whereby He may, in a manner worthy of His majesty, triumph over Satan, who hitherto seemed to have prevailed against the divine plan.

Never was there a more entire or humiliating defeat than that which this day befell Satan. The frail creature, over whom he had so easily triumphed at the beginning of the world, now rises and crushes his proud head. Eve conquers in Mary. God would not choose man for the instrument of His vengeance; the humiliation of Satan would not have been great enough; and therefore she who was the first prey of hell, the first victim of the tempter, is selected to give battle to the enemy. The result of so glorious a triumph is that Mary is to be superior not only to the rebel angels, but to the whole human race, yea, to all the angels of heaven. Seated on her exalted throne, she, the Mother of God, is to be the Queen of all creation. Satan, in the depths of the abyss, will eternally bewail his having dared to direct his first attack against the woman, for God has now so gloriously avenged her; and in heaven, the very Cherubim and Seraphim reverently look up to Mary, and deem themselves honored when she smiles upon them, or employs them in the execution of any of her wishes, for she is the Mother of their God.

Therefore is it that we, the children of Adam, who have been snatched by Mary's obedience from the power of hell, solemnize this day of the Annunciation. Well may we say of Mary those words of Debbora, when she sang her song of victory over the enemies of God's people: 'The valiant men ceased, and rested in Israel, until Debbora arose, a mother arose in Israel. The Lord chose new wars, and He Himself overthrew the gates of the enemies.'" Let us also refer to the holy Mother of Jesus these words of Judith, who by her victory over the enemy was another type of Mary: 'Praise ye the Lord our God, who hath not forsaken them that hope in Him. And by me, His handmaid, He hath fulfilled His mercy, which He promised to the house of Israel; and He hath killed the enemy of His people by my hand this night. . . . The almighty Lord hath struck him, and hath delivered him into the hands of a woman, and hath slain him.' □

A CATHOLIC PROGRAM FOR LENT

Jennifer Gregory Miller

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It should not be enough to slide through Lent by just observing the fast and abstinence laws or giving up chocolate. We should all undertake a Lenten program, an inward cleansing and purification, for oneself and the family. The program needs to be planned and organized. Ask the question: What shall I and my family do this year for Lent? Goals and activities should be realistic and reasonable, and parents should make sure that their children know why these practices are being adopted, rather than merely forcing these upon them.

After deciding our goals, both individual and family, we need to arrange our schedules, plan the different events and make adjustments to our life to put these resolutions into practice. Our daily life doesn't stop just because Lent is here. The challenge is to observe the spirit of Lent and perform the works of Lent while living in a secular culture, to remain in the world but not become a product of it.

Three Categories for a Personal Program

There are three principal works for Lent, as taught to us by Christ: prayer, fasting and mortification, and almsgiving. More categories from Catholic tradition can be added, such as Good Works, Education, and Self-Denial. All are linked to each other. It is through prayer that we know Christ, understand His Will for us. Through our prayers we open ourselves to charity, generosity towards others and self-denial to ourselves.

1. **Prayers.** "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God" (St. John Damascene). We communicate with God and work on our relationship with God. There are many forms of prayer that we can and should practice, both interior and exterior prayers.

- Ideally, the members of the family should participate in daily Mass. If this is not possible, the readings from the Mass should be read and meditated upon daily. This could be done as a family, perhaps at the dinner meal. The Mass is the prayer of the Church, and the highest form of prayer. It also unites us with the whole Church in public prayer.
- A strong emphasis should be made in frequent reception of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. We should learn how to daily examine our consciences.
- Another prayer of the Church is the Divine Office, or Liturgy of the Hours. Praying the Divine Office unites our prayers with the Liturgy of the universal Church.

The Stations of the Cross are special during Lent, because they meditate on the Passion of Christ. Usually the

Stations are offered at the parish church on Fridays in Lent. They can also be prayed together as a family.

Other Prayer Suggestions:

- The daily rosary, especially prayed together as a family
- Visits to the Blessed Sacrament
- Personal meditation, especially with Scripture
- Spontaneous short prayers or ejaculations, such as "Jesus, I trust in You."
- Praying the Angelus at the 12:00 and 6:00 hours
- Morning and Evening Prayers
- Prayers Before and After Meals
- Spiritual Communions
- Praying the Seven Penitential Psalms (especially appropriate during Lent)

Included in our Prayers category we add our Education and Reading. During Lent (and throughout the year) we need spiritual enlightenment. We can find this through spiritual reading, both individually and as a family. This is a prerequisite to a continued growth in the spiritual life. Maria Von Trapp suggests three categories in our Lenten reading program:

1. Something for the mind. We should do some research, study the papal encyclicals, read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, delve into Church history, study Catholic philosophy.
2. Something for the soul. This should be deeper spiritual reading that gives a program, guidance, and spiritual direction, including writings of the saints like St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thérèse of Lisieux or St. Francis de Sales.
3. Something for the heart. We need inspiration. The best way is to read biographies of Christ, Mary, saints or people who put their spiritual life into action. Bishop Fulton Sheen's Life of Christ is excellent Lenten reading.

Scripture is an excellent source for all these categories. The Church strongly encourages study and meditative reading of the Bible.

2. **Fasting and Abstaining.** We must fulfill the minimum requirements of the Church for fasting and abstinence. But there are other forms of abstaining and fasting. We must remember that when we do "give up" something, it should be completely, not saved for later. The money we save from not buying a cup of coffee should be given as a donation to charity. The time we don't watch TV should be spent doing spiritual reading, or family time. Below are

some examples of other forms of fasting or abstaining:

- Refrain from complaining, gossiping, grumbling or losing one's temper.
- Reduce or eliminate time surfing the Internet or playing video games.
- Abstain from favorite drinks, desserts or foods.
- Curb forms of entertainment such as TV, dining out, movies.
- Give up smoking, caffeine, beer and liquor.
- Eat less at meals, or eat fewer snacks between meals.
- Fast or abstain extra days in Lent besides Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- Eat without complaining.
- Make simple meals that are healthy, but less appealing to the sense of taste.

In fasting, we are also practicing Self-Denial. This is the area that tests our will-power. We have the opportunity to give up innocent pleasures without complaining: radio, TV, internet, personal time or leisure, secular reading. We can choose one area in Lent and try to persevere throughout the 40 days. This is not just a test of wills -- the main intention is purification, and making reparation for the offenses against the Mystical Body of Christ. So even if these actions are done in private or secret, they help us grow in our spiritual life, and benefit the whole Church.

3. **Almsgiving and Good Works.** In the opening Gospel of Lent on Ash Wednesday, Matthew 6:1-6; 16-18, we are told to pray, fast and give alms. Almsgiving is not a thing of the past, but still a necessity in becoming saints. Almsgiving is also tied closely with fasting. Whatever we give up, the money we save should go to the needy. It should be given away to the missions, the Church or a worthy charity. In a family with small children it helps to make this a visual practice by, for example, having a jar or box in the center of the table as a reminder and measure of progress.

It is also considered "almsgiving" to give one's time and goods to those who are in need, i.e., donating time for a soup kitchen, giving clothes to charity, visiting the shut-ins and elderly, driving those without transportation and other similar practices.

Under this category we include Good Works, a positive aspect of almsgiving. We can use the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy as a guide for ways to show charity toward others. Good works deal with two kinds of action: perfection of our daily duties and perfection of charity toward others.

Our daily duties include our job as a spouse, as a parent, as a child, as a worker or student. We need to strive to do our best in these capacities, even if that means being more patient, more cheerful, more efficient, more charitable, less critical, less gossiping, or less backbiting. We need to make the most of the time we are given each day; we should not waste time. This is the positive area of our Lenten program. We should work on virtues, like obedience, charity, humility, chastity and perseverance.

How can I improve my daily duty? *Daily Duty at Work:* We should make sure that we don't waste time. We are being paid to be productive, so we should curb spending work time surfing the Internet, answering personal phone calls, and writing personal email. And the work we do should be efficient and our best, not shoddy, hastily completed work.

Daily Duty with Family: We can improve the quality of our family life by spending time reading and doing family activities together instead of watching TV and playing video games. If a family dinner isn't a common occurrence, we should schedule a few nights a week for everyone to have dinner together. We then can enjoy being together, talk and share events with each other and maybe read some Lenten reflections while at dinner. And every member in our family deserves to be treated charitably and patiently. We need to make concerted efforts to be cheerful in our home, not just save it for strangers. Our family deserves the best.

Daily Duty with Personal Time: At the end of our life at the personal judgment, we will be accountable for every moment of our lives. Is all the time used wisely, or is there room for improvement? Are morning and evening prayers in the routine? Can we spend more personal time for prayer, or discipline ourselves to get enough sleep (in order to be less irritable and more productive)? Many of us postpone or procrastinate personal jobs, prayer and reading for some other time. But now is the time to make the best of our daily duty. □

Pope's Message for Lent 2014

By making himself poor, Jesus did not seek poverty for its own sake but, as Saint Paul says 'that by his poverty you might become rich'. This is no mere play on words or a catch phrase. Rather, it sums up God's logic, the logic of love, the logic of the incarnation and the cross. God did not let our salvation drop down from heaven, like someone who gives alms from their abundance out of a sense of altruism and piety. Christ's love is different! When Jesus stepped into the waters of the Jordan and was baptized by John the Baptist, he did so not because he was in need of repentance, or conversion; he did it to be among people who need forgiveness, among us sinners, and to take upon himself the burden of our sins. In this way he chose to comfort us, to save us, to free us from our misery. It is striking that the Apostle states that we were set free, not by Christ's riches but by his poverty. Yet Saint Paul is well aware of the 'the unsearchable riches of Christ', that he is 'heir of all things'.

So what is this poverty by which Christ frees us and enriches us? It is his way of loving us, his way of being our neighbour, just as the Good Samaritan was neighbour to the man left half dead by the side of the road. What gives us true freedom, true salvation and true happiness is the compassion, tenderness and solidarity of his love. Christ's poverty which enriches us is his taking flesh and bearing our weaknesses and sins as an expression of God's infinite mercy to us. Christ's poverty is the greatest treasure of all: Jesus wealth is that of his boundless confidence in God the Father, his constant trust, his desire always and only to do the Father's will and give glory to him. Jesus is rich in the same way as a child who feels loved and who loves its parents, without doubting their love and tenderness for an instant. Jesus' wealth lies in his being the Son; his unique relationship with the Father is the sovereign prerogative of this Messiah who is poor. When Jesus asks us to take up his 'yoke which is easy', he asks us to be enriched by his 'poverty which is rich' and his 'richness which is poor', to share his filial and fraternal Spirit, to become sons and daughters in the Son, brothers and sisters in the first-born brother.

It has been said that the only real regret lies in not being a saint (L. Bloy); we could also say that there is only one real kind of poverty: not living as children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ.

Our Witness

We might think that this 'way' of poverty was Jesus' way, whereas we who come after him can save the world with the right kind of human resources. This is not the case. In every time and place God continues to save mankind and the world through the poverty of Christ, who makes himself poor in the sacraments, in his word and in his Church, which is a people of the poor. God's wealth passes not through our wealth, but invariably and exclusively through our personal and communal poverty, enlivened by the Spirit of Christ.

In imitation of our Master, we Christians are called to confront the poverty of our brothers and sisters, to touch it, to make it our own and to take practical steps to alleviate it. Destitution is not the same as poverty: destitution is poverty without faith, without support, without hope. There are three types of destitution: material, moral and spiritual. Material destitution is what is normally called poverty, and affects those living in conditions opposed to human dignity: those who lack basic rights and needs such as food, water, hygiene, work and the opportunity to develop and grow culturally. In response to this destitution, the Church offers her help, her diakonia, in meeting these needs and binding these wounds which disfigure the face of humanity. In the poor and outcast we see Christ's face; by loving and helping the poor, we love and serve Christ. Our efforts are also directed to ending violations of human dignity, discrimination and abuse in the world, for these are so often the cause of destitution. When power, luxury and money become idols, they take priority over the need for a fair distribution of wealth. Our consciences thus need to be converted to justice, equality, simplicity and sharing.

No less a concern is moral destitution, which consists in slavery to vice and sin. How much pain is caused in families because one of their members – often a young person - is in thrall to alcohol, drugs, gambling or pornography! How many people no longer see meaning in life or prospects for the future, how many have lost hope! And how many are plunged into this destitution by unjust social conditions, by unemployment, which takes away their dignity as breadwinners, and by lack of equal access to education and health care. In such cases, moral destitution can be considered impending suicide. This type of destitution, which also causes financial ruin, is invariably linked to the spiritual destitution which we experience when we turn away from God and reject his love. If we think we don't need God who reaches out to us through Christ, because we believe we can make do on our own, we are headed for a fall. God alone can truly save and free us.

KNOWING OUR SAINTS

ST. FRANCES OF ROME

FEAST DAY: MARCH 9

www.wikipedia.org

Frances of Rome, Obl.S.B., (Italian: Santa Francesca Romana) (1384 – March 9, 1440) is an Italian saint who



was a wife, mother, mystic, organizer of charitable services and a Benedictine oblate who founded a religious community of oblates, who share a common life without religious vows.

Life. Frances was born in 1384 in Rome to a wealthy and aristocratic couple, Paolo Bussa and Iacobella dei Roffredeschi, in the up-and-coming

district of Parione and christened in the nearby Church of St. Agnes on the famed Piazza Navona. When she was eleven years old, she wanted to be a nun, but, at about the age of twelve, her parents forced her to marry Lorenzo Ponziani, commander of the papal troops of Rome and member of an extremely wealthy family. Although the marriage had been arranged, it was a happy one, lasting for forty years, partly because Lorenzo admired his wife, and partly because he was frequently away at war.

With her sister-in-law Vannoza, Frances visited the poor and took care of the sick, inspiring other wealthy women of the city to do the same. Soon after her marriage, Frances fell seriously ill. Her husband called a man in who dabbled in magic, but Frances drove him away, and later recounted to Vannoza St. Alexis had appeared to her and cured her.

When her mother-in-law died, Frances became mistress of the household. During a time of flood and famine, she turned part of the family's country estate into a hospital, and distributed food and clothing to the poor. According to one account, her father-in-law was so angry that he took away from her the keys to the supply rooms; but gave them back when he saw that the corn bin and wine barrel were replenished after Frances finished praying.

During the wars between the pope in Rome and various anti-popes in the Western Schism of the Catholic Church, Lorenzo served the former. According to one story, their son, Battista, was to be delivered as a hostage to the commander of the Neapolitan troops. Obeying this order on the command of her spiritual director, Frances brought the boy to the Campidoglio. On the way, she stopped in the Church of the Aracoeli located there and entrusted the life of her son to the Blessed Mother. When they arrived at the appointed site, the soldiers went to put her son on a horse to transport him off to captivity. The horse, however, refused to move, despite heavy whipping. The superstitious soldiers saw the hand of God in this and returned the boy to his mother.

During a period of forced exile, much of Lorenzo's property and possessions were destroyed. In the course of one occupation of Rome by Neapolitan forces in the early part of the century, he was wounded so severely that he never fully recovered. Frances nursed him throughout the rest of his life.

Frances experienced other sorrows in the course of her marriage with Lorenzo. They lost two children to the plague. Chaos which ruled the city in that period of neglect by the pope and ongoing warfare between him and the various forces competing for power on the Italian peninsula. The city of Rome was largely in ruins—wolves were known to enter the streets. Frances again opened her home as a hospital and drove her wagon through the countryside to collect wood for fire and herbs for medicine. It is said she had the gift of healing, and more than sixty cases were attested to during the canonization proceedings.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, "With her husband's consent St. Frances practiced continence, and advanced in a life of contemplation. Her visions often assumed the form of drama enacted for her by heavenly personages. She had the gift of miracles and ecstasy, as well as the bodily vision of her guardian angel, had revelations concerning Purgatory and Hell, and foretold the ending of the Western Schism. She could read the secrets of consciences and detect plots of diabolical origin. She was remarkable for her humility and detachment, her obedience and patience".

On August 15, 1425, the feast of the Assumption of Mary, she founded the Olivetan Oblates of Mary, a confraternity of pious women, under the authority of the Olivetan

monks of the Abbey of Santa Maria Nova in Rome, but neither cloistered nor bound by formal vows, so they could follow her pattern of combining a life of prayer with answering the needs of their society.

In March 1433, she founded a monastery at Tor de' Specchi, near the Campidoglio, in order to allow for a common life by those members of the confraternity who felt so called. This monastery remains the only house of the Institute. On July 4 of that same year, they received the approval of Pope Eugene IV as a religious congregation of oblates with private religious vows. The community later became known simply as the Oblates of St. Frances of Rome.

Frances herself remained in her own home, nursing her husband for the last seven years of his life from wounds he had received in battle. When he died in 1436, she moved into the monastery and became the superior. She died in 1440 and was buried in Santa Maria Nova.

Veneration. On May 9, 1608, she was canonized by Pope Paul V, and in the following decades a diligent search was made for her remains, which had been hidden due to the troubled times in which she lived. Her grave was identified on April 2, 1638, and her remains were reburied in the Church of Santa Maria Nova on March 9, 1649, which since then has been her feast day. Again, in 1869, her body was exhumed and has since then been displayed in a glass coffin for the veneration of the faithful. The Church of Santa Maria Nova is now usually referred to as the Church of St. Frances.

Patronage. In 1925, Pope Pius XI declared her the patron saint of automobile drivers because of a legend that an angel used to light the road before her with a lantern when she traveled, keeping her safe from hazards. Within the Benedictine Order, she is also honored as a patron saint of all oblates. She is also a patron saint of widows. □

Continued from Page 7

Pope's Message for Lent 2014

The Gospel is the real antidote to spiritual destitution: wherever we go, we are called as Christians to proclaim the liberating news that forgiveness for sins committed is possible, that God is greater than our sinfulness, that he freely loves us at all times and that we were made for communion and eternal life. The Lord asks us to be joyous heralds of this message of mercy and hope! It is thrilling to experience the joy of spreading this good news, sharing the treasure entrusted to us, consoling broken hearts and offering hope to our brothers and sisters experiencing darkness. It means following and imitating Jesus, who sought out the poor and sinners as a shepherd lovingly seeks his lost sheep. In union with Jesus, we can courageously open up new paths of evangelization and human promotion. □

Dear brothers and sisters, may this Lenten season find the whole Church ready to bear witness to all those who live in material, moral and spiritual destitution the Gospel message of the merciful love of God our Father, who is ready to embrace everyone in Christ. We can do this to the extent that we imitate Christ who became poor and enriched us by his poverty. Lent is a fitting time for self-denial; we would do well to ask ourselves what we can give up in order to help and enrich others by our own poverty. Let us not forget that real poverty hurts: no self-denial is real without this dimension of penance. I distrust a charity that costs nothing and does not hurt.

May the Holy Spirit, through whom we are 'as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything', sustain us in our resolutions and increase our concern and responsibility for human destitution, so that we can become merciful and act with mercy. In expressing this hope, I likewise pray that each individual member of the faithful and every Church community will undertake a fruitful Lenten journey. I ask all of you to pray for me. May the Lord bless you and Our Lady keep you safe". □

"...I am your Mother Mary.

This day of my beads, pray for those who perished because of others' outright disregard of their existence. Many lives have been taken caused by selective desire to have specific gender for their children.

My children open your hearts to those who come to you for help especially if their needs involve mental & spiritual deprivation caused by birth dislocation.

Offer your prayers to souls who stay behind in years gone by. Pray for those souls who are still in your world, my children. Pray and offer your penance and sacrifices for them, my children."

Mary, Your Lady of Grace
02142014

GOD TOUCHED ME

WALKING IN THE PATH OF GOD

***“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord.
“They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”***

Jeremiah 29:11

By Guada, a devotee

Born the youngest of 5 girls, I was the baby of the family. My sisters pampered me and I was dependent on them for all my needs. I was born and raised a Catholic but not practicing even though we had a store which was within walking distance to the church. I was what you call a "late bloomer" as far as my religious life is concerned and started going to church on Sundays and holy days of obligation when I was already an adult. My life was geared to parties and having fun with friends.

In the year 2000, I was first introduced to the 2000 Hail Mary devotion by a former high school classmate. My objective was not really to pray but to bond with a friend. Because of the delicious pansit, I endured the whole day of prayers. I was introduced to a world of prayer and I am very grateful to my friend for introducing me to this other side of life. I was able to join a pilgrimage to Europe with the financial help of my sister. My ego was fed more and more as I was introduced to priests, Bishops and Archbishops. Everyone thought I was wealthy because in our hometown, only the wealthy could afford to travel out of the country. Because of this whole new world opened to me, I began to idolize my friend. Not really understanding God's teachings, I did not see anything wrong with fortune telling, usury and other negative things that I saw going on in our group.

My friends and I talked about venturing into the mortuary business and we never thought of attending wakes and funerals as a work of mercy. We discussed about catering, and other needed arrangements for a fee. I, on the other hand, was asked to bring black or white outfits to sell to the bereaved family and relatives and this I did on only one occasion. Looking back to what I used to do, makes me wince.

In 2009, I came to the USA through my sister's petition. I attended devotions and 2000 Hail Mary but these were quite far from where we live. Then, one day in church, my nephew met a lady who was a regular guest at the restaurant where he works, They recognized each other and my nephew asked her if she knew a 2000 Hail Mary devotion group close by. She mentioned Mila Lumba and gave us her phone number. I immediately contacted Mila and she told me that there will be a 2000 Hail Mary devotional prayers at her house that Saturday. My sister and I went there and were the first ones to arrive since it was just less than a five minute-drive from our house. We stayed and joined the prayers until the end. Then, we were invited to attend First Saturday devotions in Laughlin and at St. Francis de Sales, the Cenacle at The

Enclave, and the Eternal Father Devotion every first Sunday of the month.

Since then, I have been attending all the devotions and celebrations of The Spiritual Army of God the Father while my sister attends every time she has time off from her work as a nurse. We look forward to those days every month. This time, it is no longer for the food but for the prayers and cenacle that make me feel fulfilled as I learn something new each time, One of the ladies who attend the 2000 Hail Mary devotion told me that I have joined the right group who will be able to guide me spiritually,

In my daily life, I feel God's hands guiding me through everything even those things that I used to take for granted.

Slowly, I am feeling a spiritual awakening and I am starting to learn more about our faith. I realize now that I did not really know anything as day by day I learn more by reading the newsletter of the Spiritual Army of God the Father, articles and meditations published in The Word Among Us magazine, joining Cenacles/Bible studies and scripture lesson sharing with friends, I hunger for more lessons on faith and for learning more of God's words.

I know God is with me in this yet another journey sincerely seeking Him. I ask everyone reading my story to please pray for me [and my family] for God to be gentle as He keeps on working on me. His vision for my life is worth the wait! ☐

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

- You are enjoined to practice Eucharistic Adoration at least an hour a week. Let us render God adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition. Kindly check with your respective parishes for schedules. Some churches are open 24-hours for Eucharistic Adoration.
- Pray at least one rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary daily.
- Pray the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy at 3:00 PM and at 9:00 PM daily.
- Pray the Angelus at 6:00 PM daily.
- Pray the Pro-Life Scriptural Rosary [www.rosaryoftheunborn.com] to make reparation for the crime of abortion.
- Think of ways to make reparation to Mary for the sins committed against Jesus and Mary. A very good one is to join the **First Saturday devotion**; another is the **2000 Hail Mary devotion**.
- Spend an afternoon with your children learning about different local charitable organizations or needy families to whom the alms from the family's Lenten Jar will be given.
- Pray the Stations of the Cross. This is an excellent practice that should not only be confined to Lent but ought to be prayed on Fridays throughout the year.
- Say an extra Rosary for the conversion of a sinner.
- Visit someone who is sick or lonesome. Offer to say the Rosary with them. □

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

FOR PRAYERS HEARD AND PETITIONS GRANTED

Thank you, Eternal Father, for Your Will that transformed our sorrow into joy, our tears of anguish into tears of thanksgiving. Our physical and spiritual re-creation, through Your Healing Hands, kept us enclosed and revived in our hope for renewed lives as we look up to the heavens praising You, in Jesus' most Holy Name, through the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother, and of the angels and saints.

Olivia & Emma

Our double blessings, Olivia and Emma, couldn't wait any longer -- they are eight weeks early! They were due in April, but they decided to come out at 4:51 and 4:53 AM on February 24. Thank you Father God for their gift of life and for continuing to touch us with your many miracles in our lives each and every day! Thank you Mother Mary for interceding for us unceasingly!

Maybel & Romel

I thank God for always guiding me in every event of my life and for protecting me.

Mila

Thank you God for giving us your Son who redeemed us.

Fed

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION

The Spiritual Army of God the Father and the 2000 Hail Mary Group of Northern California acknowledge with thanks our generous March sponsors of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion. We are grateful that we have merited their partnership and support in providing a venue of spirituality and fellowship for the devotees of our Blessed Mother. The devotion continues to be a constant success.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Betty Ayasao

Los Angeles, California

Circe Abrea | Dorie Cortes
Beth & Frank Lim | Alice Ng
Ben & Vincie Ong | Aida Tuason

SPIRITUAL ARMY NEWS DISPATCH

THE INFANT JESUS FIESTA

The Spiritual Army of God the Father celebrated its 8th Sinulog Festival



for the Holy Infant Jesus on January 18, 2014 at Saint Casimir's Lithuanian Mission Church at Atwater in Los Angeles. The festival commenced with floral offering to the Infant Jesus by His devotees, and a Holy Mass, concelebrated by Fr. Vincent Hughes of St Francis Church and Fr. Tom Karanauskas, pastor of St. Casimir. Devotees filled St. Casimir's church to full capacity!



There were some teary-eyed devotees at the children's song and oral participation in the Liturgy and at Fr. Vincent's homily focusing on the Infant Jesus and the family. He said that whatever statue of the Infant Jesus - Sto Nino de Cebu, Infant Jesus of Prague, Sto Nino de Atocha, Welcoming Jesus, etc., there is only one and the same Infant Jesus who we celebrate at the Sinulog. He called in the children to the altar and asked them if they have an image of the Infant Jesus at their homes and if they pray with their parents every night. Laughter emanated when the children admitted with no embarrassment that they do not pray with their parents because the parents are either sleeping or watching TV.



2014 PROJECTS

THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER MINISTRY WILL CONTINUE THE PROJECTS ENVISIONED IN 2013 AND IN ADDITION, WILL FOCUS ON CONTINUING EVANGELIZATION IN WORDS AND IN DEEDS THROUGH :

1. TARGETING INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE SEEKING GOD IN PRAYERS AND/OR THROUGH OUTREACH PROGRAMS.
2. EXPANSION OF THE 2000 HAIL MARY'S TO INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP SPONSORSHIP EITHER IN OUR PRESENT CONVENT/CENACLE HOUSE VENUE OR INDIVIDUAL RESIDENCES.
3. ENHANCEMENT OF OUR PRESENT INSTANT CARE PACK FOR THE HOMELESS/INDIGENT INDIVIDUALS TO CATER TO THEIR SUMMER NEEDS. THIS INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO ADDITIONAL ITEMS SUCH AS TOOTHBRUSH, SOAP, FACIAL TOWEL , TOOTHPASTE, ETC.
4. FURTHERANCE OF OUR DEVOTIONAL CELEBRATIONS FOR MOTHER MARY'S CORONATION, INFANT JESUS, DIVINE MERCY AND ETERNAL FATHER FESTIVITIES.
- 5 THE LATTER PART OF THIS YEAR WILL BE OUR PILGRIMAGE TO THE APPARITION SITES OF OUR MOTHER MARY. THIS YEAR'S THEME IS: "SEEKING CHRIST THROUGH THE SACRED PLACES OF HIS BLESSED MOTHER"

UPCOMING EVENTS

TOY DRIVE FOR THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL [ONGOING]

FEAST OF THE DIVINE MERCY
SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2014
THE MONASTERY OF THE ANGELS
1977 CARMEN AVENUE ON
GOWER
LOS ANGELES, CA 90068
STARTING AT 2:00 PM

MOTHER MARY'S CROWNING
SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2014
CONVENT OF THE SISTER DISCIPLES
OF THE DIVINE MASTER
501 N. BEAUDRY AVENUE
LOS ANGELES, CA 90027
STARTING AT 8:30 AM
ALSO
AT THE CENACLE HOUSE
IN THE ENCLAVE
8455 W. SAHARA AVENUE #172
LAS VEGAS, NV 89117
STARTING AT 1:00 PM

**PILGRIMAGE TO MOTHER
MARY'S APPARITION
SHRINES
PORTUGAL | SPAIN |
FRANCE**
DECEMBER 4-21, 2014
DAILY ACTIVITIES AND OTHER
INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE AT
WWW.SPIRITUALARMYOFGOD.ORG

\$400 GUARANTEES YOUR
RESERVATION AND YOU HAVE UNTIL
OCTOBER 3, 2014 TO PAY
PILGRIMAGE COST

Following the Mass was a procession of the Infant Jesus around the block led by parishioners of St. Casimir dancing the Sinulog -- a dance which consists of two steps forward and one step backward, done to the sound of the drums. Dancing continued on to the Church Hall as revelers hoisted their own Infant Jesus images, chanting "Pit Senor", which means a call to the Lord! The Sinulog was interspersed with an exciting public auction of religious items, a photo booth to capture the tandem of devotees and their Holy Infant Jesus images, a quiz on the Spiritual Army's projects and activities, which won devotees beautifully framed photos of our very own Infant Jesus, if they answered correctly; a raffle for an iPad Mini and other prizes, and good food overflowing! The auction, the raffle and the photo booth reaped a considerable amount to fund the

Army's outreach programs and projects for 2014.

Thousands of miles away, in Canjulao, Lapu-Lapu City Philippines, another celebration was held to give honor, glory and thanksgiving to God the Father, the Black Nazarene and the Infant Jesus. This extension ministry of the Spiritual Army is coordinated and financed by the descendants of Serapio and Cresencia Berdin.

Congratulations and a big thank you are in order to all the members, relatives, friends and benefactors of The Spiritual Army of God the Father for generously sharing their time, talent and treasure for this yet another fitting occasion to bring more people closer to God. Viva Sto. Nino! ☐



DEVOTION SCHEDULE



THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER

cordially invites you to the following devotions:

IN LOS ANGELES:

1st Saturday Devotion

The Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | 501 N. Beaudry Avenue | (213) 250-7962
Holy Mass starts at 8:30 A.M. | 1st Saturday Devotional Prayers follow.

Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the Month

The Monastery of the Angels | 1977 Carmen Avenue on Gower | (323) 466-2186
11:20 A.M. - Rosary to the Father | 11:50 A.M. - Holy Mass
1:00 P.M. - Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament
Confession ongoing from 11:20 A.M. to 11:45 P.M.

2000 Hail Mary Devotion – March 22, 2014

at the Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | starting at 8:30 a.m.

Please call Victor at (213) 385-7798 if you wish to become a Sponsor of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion.

IN LAS VEGAS:

1st Saturday Devotion

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117 at 1:00 PM
Cenacle will be at 10:00 AM before the devotional prayers.

Please call Evelyn at (702) 274-4315 for entry to The Enclave or for more information.

Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the month from 2:00 to 3:30 P.M.

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave | 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, | Las Vegas, NV 89117

2000 Hail Mary Devotion – March 22, 2014

Please call (702) 255-9616 or (702) 274-4315 for

dates and venues for the coming months or for more information or if you wish to Sponsor the Devotion.

IN LAUGHLIN, NEVADA:

1st Saturday Devotion

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church | 3055 El Mirage Way
Holy Mass starts at 8:00 A.M. Devotional prayers follow.

IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA:

1st Saturday Devotion

2000 Hail Mary Devotion

Please call (650) 766-2071 for dates and venues for the coming months or for more information.

For Sacramento:

Please call Precy Rieta (916) 564-3733 | Caring Sturgill (916) 897-3194 | Maria Rosario (916) 230-7756.

IN SAN DIEGO

Rosary to the Father

Monday – Saturday after the 8:00 A.M. Mass [Look for Iris Haj]
St. Mary's Church | 1160 S. Broadway | Escondido, CA 92025

IN THE PHILIPPINES

2000 Hail Mary Devotion - Metro Manila Area

Letty Rollan has organized the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion in various areas of Metro Manila through the members of the "Mother Butler." Please call her U.S. Vonage phone (510) 779-6652, text her at Manila #916-384-9300, and/or call her Manila landline 939-4677. Mention Mila Lumba's name to be recognized