

The Way

of St. Francis



Ministry

at San Solano

Prayer, Fraternity, Joy, Service

The Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara are members of a Roman Catholic religious order, from a diversity of backgrounds and cultures, dedicated to serving the poor and promoting justice, peace, care of creation, and reconciliation in the joyful and prophetic spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

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The Way of Saint Francis SPRING 2021 • VOL.26, NO.1

The Way of St. Francis is published by the Franciscan Friars of California, Inc. It is a free magazine to those who provide their time, treasure, and talent to friars in the Province of Saint Barbara. The friars welcome your comments concerning *The Way of St. Francis*. You can contact the friars at Franciscan Friars of California, Inc., 1500 34th Avenue, Oakland, CA 94601 or via email at TheWay@sbofm.org.

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Friar John Gibbons, OFM, is one of four friars who serve 40 chapels in the Tohono O'odham nation, surrounded by Arizona and beyond, into Mexico. It is in the desert, amid nature's beauty from flatlands to nearby mountains.

Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM

www.sbfranciscans.org



inside

Social Engagement

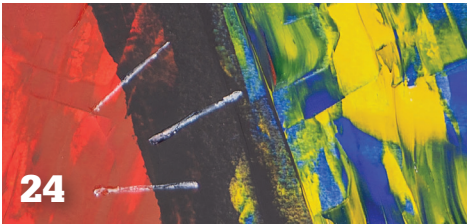
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dear friends

Peace & all good!

We need some healing. As this issue went to press, the six provincials of the Order of Friars Minor in the United States, myself included, had issued a statement of challenge and consolation following the unprecedented attack on the US Capitol. We rightly named the violent efforts undemocratic. We mourn the loss of life, the damage to our nation.

"As friars, we are committed to being instruments of peace and reconciliation for all of our sisters and brothers in the world," we wrote. "As United States citizens, we cherish the democratic values that our nation has tried to live since its foundation."

It's true that there is a growing divide in this nation, fueled by economic disparities that have grown scandalously in recent decades. Lack of respect for different racial, ethnic, and religious heritages are beneath this discord too.

"As friars, we pledge to work with all who promote human dignity, the common good, and peaceful and respectful dialogue. We reject violence as a means to achieve a desired end and want to promote nonviolent means to restore justice." Will you join us in that pledge?

The pandemic and all of the politics around it have made matters even worse. It is hard to believe that we are approaching half a million deaths. Let's pray and cooperate fully in every effort to eradicate this threat to our well-being. God wants better for us, but we have to do our part.

Let us be people of hope. Let's beat the pandemic, and let's work together in peace to heal the divisions of our society.

God bless,
Fr. David Gaa, OFM
Minister Provincial, Province of St. Barbara



Photo: ©www.peterjordanphoto.com

calendar



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM

***The Retreat Centers of St. Barbara Province present
Lenten Days of Recollection
Wednesdays of Lent
Presented on Zoom***

February 17:

Now is the Acceptable Time.
God's Grace is Now.

Fr. Ken Laverone, OFM
.....

February 24:

Am I One of God's Chosen
Ones? If So, How Does God
Treat Those Not Chosen?

Fr. Paul Botenhagen, OFM
.....

March 3:

What Is in My Heart? Does It
Need to Be Broken Open Before
It Can Be Healed?

Fr. Ken Laverone, OFM
.....

March 10:

Earning My Way to Commu-
nion With God. Is This What
We Must Do?

Fr. Paul Botenhagen, OFM
.....

March 17:

It's Not Easy to See Something
Die, Even Though I Know That
New Life Will Come.

Fr. Ken Laverone, OFM
.....

March 24:

Am I Dressed in the Attitude of
Christ?

Fr. Paul Botenhagen, OFM

**9 a.m. Opening Prayer
and Session 1**

10 a.m. Session 2

11 a.m. Mass and Closing

Program Cost: \$10 per ses-
sion/person. Once you have
registered, an e-mail confirma-
tion will be provided with an
invitation link to join the Zoom
sessions online. All sessions
will originate from St. Francis
Retreat in San Juan Bautista,
California, and will only be
available via Zoom because of
the ongoing pandemic.

Register online:
stfrancisretreat.com

Or by phone: 831-623-4234

***Zoom Online: A Lenten
Series—The Artist's Rule,
Part II by Christine Valters
Paintner***

**Tuesday mornings: February 16,
February 23, March 2, March
9, March 16, March 23, all at
10 a.m.**

Kathy Miranda, MA, will be
exploring Nature as a Source of
Revelation, Simplicity, Creat-
ing Your Own Rule of Life, and
growth in Creative Expression.

**Presented by San Damiano
Retreat Center**

Danville, California
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

***The Celtic Way of Praying:
A Way of Be-ing (Zoom)
with Sr. Carol Quinlivan, PhD***
March 5 at 9 a.m.

The Celtic Christian propensity
to find the Divine in all created
nature speaks with uncanny
relevance to many of the con-
cerns of our present era. These
ancient Christians experienced
living and praying as insepa-
rable, giving rise to a profound
sense of belonging. The
ancient wisdom, visual images,
poetry, prayers, and blessings of
Celtic spirituality take us beyond
words to nourish our imagina-
tion and restore what we have
neglected or forgotten.

Program cost: \$10 per person.
**Presented by the retreat houses
of the St. Barbara Province**
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

***Emmaus Retreat for
Grieving Parents—In Person***
March 12–14

Of all the pains that life can hand
us, arguably the most searing is
the loss of a child. During this
weekend, just as Jesus joined his
distraught disciples on the road
to Emmaus, we pray for all of
our parents and we ask Jesus to
join us as we walk the horren-
dous journey of grieving our loss
every day.

continued on page 27

along the way

Daybreak

By Dan Lackie, OFM

Early one morning several months ago, as I carried a plastic basket of wet T-shirts and socks to the clothesline, I saw the colors orange, yellow, and red making a line of their own across the sky above the treetops: It was daybreak. Here was an invitation to a new day and, more, a promise fulfilled: *In the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death (Luke 1:78–79).*

The Incarnation (Christmas) and the Resurrection (Easter) are points of daybreak, highlights on our liturgical calendar. Christ breaks through the darkness and shadows of our lives. When our eyes and ears are opened, from time to time creation can summon us to hope—the colors of the sky, the sound of a bird, the whisper of a breeze. Then, as the Eastern wisdom says, “After enlightenment, the laundry.”

During this sacred season of Lent, I’m carrying baskets of unfinished business,



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM



Photo: John Feister

weighed down by the long pandemic suffering, memories of violence, feelings of bitterness, past failures, and frustration. Yet in the Resurrection as in the Incarnation, the Messiah is revealed not in the conquering energy that crushes an oppressor outright, but in a brief glimpse inviting me to become an active, conscious part of the design of love as it opens its next beautiful phase. Dawn is building a temple. “Come to me, you who find life burdensome.” Here is a temple of the Spirit filled with the power and light of God’s promise.

St. Francis let the Gospel rearrange his understanding of the world and move him into action in rebuilding a people of gentleness and compassion. With all of creation surrounding us as a summons and a challenge, God wants to clear our vision, too, and bring us into life!

Father Dan Lackie, OFM, is pastor of St. Barbara Parish, Old Mission Santa Barbara.

When our eyes and ears are opened, creation summons us to hope. This Lent, let us see and hear the summons, then answer.

donor profile

In the Thick of It

By Joe Ledbetter

In 1968, Peigin Barrett left a job she loved as Assistant Curator at the National Geographic Society's headquarters in Washington, D.C., to teach in one of D.C.'s underserved public schools. "It was a life-altering decision to join others in becoming change agents in the world," she recalls.

On April 4, 1968, Peigin was teaching a second-grade class when the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Washington exploded as word spread. Crowds gathered. The pain of the African American community was palpable. The ghettos, where black families lived, were on fire. Years of racism and injustice funneled into riots.

"That's where I first met the Franciscans," Peigin says. "I walked into a church that had become a place where people in need could come for help. I met many volunteers, including Brothers Peter and John. Working in the thick of it on the streets with them gave me my first introduction to the calm, unstoppable endurance of the Franciscan Friars.

Peigin's life progressed in service of people, wildlife and the environment. Peigin served as the executive director of the Marine Mammal Center and was a presidential appointee to the federal Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee. Peigin was also the executive director for LITA (Love is the Answer), an organization matching lonely and isolated elders in care facilities with volunteer friends.

In 2007, Peigin met Father John Gibbons. "You could see the light of Jesus shining through him. He inspired me



Photo Courtesy of Peigin Barrett

Peigin Barrett, circa 1999.

to trust that God's light will guide me through all challenges," Peigin says. They kept in touch when Father John was stationed in Siberia and are friends today.

Father John was assigned to a desolate area in Siberia where the villagers had not seen a priest for generations. Although there was a two-story building with an apartment and indoor plumbing there for his use, John lived in a humbler building with an outhouse, like his neighbors. He was a priest with no church, no parishioners. Father John traveled long distances from village to village teaching of the way of Jesus. Soon, five friars joined him. They built a friary, a grotto dedicated to Our Blessed Mother, and a homeless shelter managed by five Korean sisters. The parish had been formed.

"The Franciscan way is the way I believe," Peigin reflects. "I've worked in non-profits all my life. I've never sought material wealth. Whatever I have left when I'm called home, I want to go to support Franciscans, like Father John, who humbly works with the poor."

If you would like to help support our ministries or be featured in a donor profile, contact development director Joe Ledbetter: jledbetter@sbofm.org or (510) 536-3722, ext. 109.

snapshot

Life thrives even in places we think of as barren. In the Sonoran Desert this Gila woodpecker will find a home and food in the Saguaro Cactus, a cavity, ample fruit, and insects nearby. He will fly across the desert radiating beauty—a creature fully alive in creation.





Entering Lent

From a Hermitage

BY MAUREEN K. DAY

I saw it first in an email I received mid-June 2020: “Blursday.” This was how a friend described our collective existence in the months following the shelter-in-place orders. The normal rhythms of our life had been disrupted and one day flowed into the next without any of the typical markers to distinguish them. Then summer came and went without the vacations and visiting we normally enjoy.

When fall picked up I knew I’d teach my graduate students from home while my “quaranteens” logged in for their first years of middle and high school. Advent and Christmas posed their own challenges. I had to sift through our traditions and see how’d I adapt them,

or simply table them, and maybe get creative with new ideas.

And now I shift my gaze to Lent. When I first wondered how I would spend this Lent, a part of me balked, asking myself, “Aren’t we all perpetually in a desert?” I wondered what I could do to make Lent meaningful and not just suck me dry. The prospects were discouraging.

Then a group of colleagues and I got an email from Matt Manion of Villanova University. He began his email with, “I pray you are all staying safe and sane as we continue to live through the many opportunities 2020 has given us to lean more heavily on God.”

Full. Stop.



Photo Courtesy of The Casa FRC Instagram

At the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, the labyrinth’s stillness beckons. This second pandemic-Lent invites us to “lean more heavily on God.”

Ashes or not, Lent is a season of renewal. Father Michael Weldon, OFM, distributes ashes at St. Mary's Basilica in Phoenix in a time before pandemic masks.



Photo: ©www.peterjordanphoto.com

Matt's email reminded me that even though life had become truly difficult, if I looked at my reality in a different way, I could see the ways I had missed God's presence and promise. For one, I could see how fragile my life was as well as our human society, and remember how utterly dependent upon God we all are. That is a gift. Second and more broadly, I was invited to see my world differently, asking myself, "What am I missing as I look at my quarantined reality?"

The theological term for interpreting reality in a new way is *imagination*. Scripture gives us a great example of imagination in the parable of the Good Samaritan. A Jewish man is robbed and left for dead on the side of the road. The priest and Levite saw the victim as a source of contamination. They would not be able to perform their religious duties if they touched him, so they passed by. The Samaritan saw not a source of contamination or even an enemy (as a Samaritan might have seen a Jew), but instead saw a human being in need of help, so he showed the man mercy. Same reality, different imaginations. And wholly different imaginations lead to wholly different responses.

At one point I was quick to notice the things I'd lost in my COVID life. With a shift in imagination, I can instead make

the choice to contemplate what I might gain. Only with this shift did I remember the importance of the eremitical tradition for Franciscans. As Dutch historian Bert Roest notes, hermitages were profoundly important for Francis and in the founding of the Order. But he was caught in a tension. On the one hand, Francis felt called to active ministry. On the other, he also felt called to seclusion and prayer. Francis reconciled these by alternating between the two. And until COVID, with all the busyness of life, I had only been able to live the apostolic part of this vision. A life of ministry in the world filled my time.

Don't get me wrong, a life of ministry in the world is great! My husband and I are productive professionals and grateful parents. Our kids participate in a variety of activities in their school, community, and parish. But as we inserted ourselves into the patterns of society, we didn't realize that there was no place to step out of the pattern. There was no place to pause, to contemplate, to be with God in an intentional and *lengthy* way.

And this is also what happened to the Order. Quite early, in fact, the apostolic aspects of the Franciscan experience were elevated and the eremitical aspects were marginalized, and at times the latter were even described as a use-



Our Lord gave everything so that we might have the fullness of life. In our 2021 pandemic-hermitage, how do we embrace that?

less luxury that contributed to spiritual idleness! Despite the negative descriptions, the eremitical tradition was never completely lost.

And, with the difficulties of COVID, we are all dwelling in a hermitage. Granted, not truly in restful contemplation, as many of us are still up to our eyeballs in meeting essential needs in-

While I remain in my hermitage, for Lent and beyond, I will think about what sort of world I want to re-emerge into. What do I want the “new normal” to look like?

person or remotely. But a lot of nonessential things have been cut from our lives. I’ve done my share of mourning. But, with a shift in imagination, I’ve also been able to approach this season (of Lent, as well as this season of our lives) with gratitude.

So as I remain in my hermitage for an undetermined length of time, I’m planning to make the most of it. One thing I used to find myself thinking regularly was, “I cannot wait until everything goes back to normal.” When people spoke of a post-COVID “new normal” (read: masks, social distancing, and online education to avoid seasonal out-

breaks), I could feel my muscles tense. There was no way I could live in that reality. I wanted the old normal!

But from my hermitage, I am reminded that the old normal had its problems: racism, climate injustice, threats to human life, poverty, consumerism—the list is far too long.

Although I’m uncertain about the future, I have the present. While I remain in my hermitage, for Lent and beyond, I will think about what sort of world I want to re-emerge into. Using the word *new* in the sense of Easter newness, what do I want the “new normal” to look like? What sorts of personal and social practices will this entail? How can I support conversations and conversions in these COVID times?

This Lent, may we grow toward God in this eremitical moment, emerging with renewed imaginations. ♦

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Maureen K. Day is an assistant professor of Religion and Society at the Franciscan School of Theology, and a research fellow at the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University as well as the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at University of Notre Dame. Her new book is Catholic Activism Today (NYU Press).

Entrepreneurial Spirit in a Franciscan Key

BY JOHN FEISTER

Brother Keith Douglas Warner has a dream. He wants to connect a younger generation of American university students with sustainable development programs worldwide, for the good of both. He teaches at the Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship at Santa Clara University.

"We have worked with more than a thousand social enterprises around the world," says Brother Keith. "We help them improve their business skills and strategies, and determine how they create positive social change in the world. It's sort of like an executive MBA for social change organizations." It all starts, for students, with Brother Keith's class, "Introduction to Social Entrepreneur-

ship." And, by junior year, some students are selected for Brother Keith's Global Social Benefit Fellowship. It's a program of mentored, field-based study and research within the Miller Center's worldwide network of social entrepreneurs.

At the Miller Center, says Brother Keith, "we use business skills and strategies to serve the poor and protect Mother Earth." His Sisters Blended Value Project (SBVP) is working with a large association of Catholic sisters in eastern Africa, helping them to develop community-sustaining economic projects.

There are, no exaggeration, 30,000 sisters in 300 congregations there, and that is growing. "Many of them have been dependent upon charity contribu-



Photo: Keith Douglas Warner, OFM

Laywomen Lauren Serfas (right) and Avery James, research partners, receive new chicks for a poultry social enterprise with the Assumption Sisters of Eldoret, Kenya.

Sister Judith Barnabas is launching a sustainable coffee cooperative in Uganda. She shows off 6,000 new coffee seedlings.



Photo: Keith Douglas Warner, OFM

tions from North Europe or North America,” explains Brother Keith. “They’re trying to create a new organizational model to deliver their mission, one that allows them to be more self-sustaining.”

Franciscan Sister Mary Florence Anaso’s community, the Little Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, participates in the Sisters’ Blended Value Project. Her congregation has 720 professed members, plus 100 women in various stages of formation in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, and a few in the United States. “We learned about Miller Center when Sister Mary Cecilia Njeri, our Superior General, attended a workshop in Nairobi where Brother Keith was present,” says Sister Mary Florence. That workshop was sponsored by ACWECA, a federation of east-African sisters’ congregations.

“When she came back to Uganda, she shared about the value of sisters’ involvement with social enterprise.” Sister Mary Florence became enthusiastic: “I realized that the program would fit in my efforts in farming.” Much of her work as Secretary for her congregation is behind a desk, but she’s a farmer at heart—her off-time is spent raising pigs, chickens, and cows. “I have never been able to make revenue from it,” she says, but that

is changing. “With the interaction with ACWECA and Miller Center, I am able to see the importance of doing business with the aim of revenue. That will improve the lives of the sisters, as well as those we serve. I see a bright future.”

These Franciscan sisters are helping some of their layworkers, whose wages are limited by the sisters’ resources, to set up home enterprises. They name their program Mother Kevin Social Enterprise, after their Irish missionary foundress. “We wish to help them start up their own business in their home, to be able to raise money to sustain their families,” she says. She helps them develop skills in poultry farming, for example. “It is a very friendly business for any simple family setup. It has quick returns and requires limited space.”

In a nutshell, the sisters train single moms to become microentrepreneurs, who raise eggs, chicken, rabbits, and various crops. The sisters market the eggs, chickens, and the rest through their networks of Catholic institutions.

It’s all part of an effort to build a local economy that works for local families. That’s what brings people beyond sustenance, survival, living. “SBVP is a vehicle for me to reach out to the poor

and marginalized,” Sister Mary Florence says. Her plan is to scale things up as they go, “by involving sisters from different regions where we work and also in our formation houses.”

The sisters’ niche will be organic products. “In the back of our minds we want as much as possible to preserve Mother Earth.” That includes recycling, “from chicken, piggery, and rabbit droppings. We improved our vegetable gardens—this year we harvested over [440 pounds] of tomatoes.”

This Sisters Blended Value Project is indeed a blend of values: The sisters get ahead, their local communities get ahead. Academics, such as Brother Keith, call that “measurable or observable social change in people’s lives,” he explains, and adds two more ingredients to the blend: “improved sustainability, and caring for Mother Earth.”

For Santa Clara University and for Brother Keith, there’s another important dimension: training a future corps of social entrepreneurs and advocates. Lauren Serfas is one of 160 students who participated in the fellowship since 2012. She was a 2019 Global Social Benefit Fellow, sent to Kenya to work with the Eggpreneur program. The name says it all: It’s a program to develop egg-growing, egg-selling entrepreneurs, in many ways similar to the Mother Kevin program in nearby Uganda. “During my two months there, I spent about 5 weeks living with Catholic sisters (Assumption Sisters of Eldoret), trying to understand how to best incorporate the model of Eggpreneur into their congregation.

“That summer was by far the best

and most transformative experience in my life!” she says. “Rather than creat-

“Rather than creating a sense of dependency on others...it empowers the community to create their own sustainable, innovative solutions.”

ing a sense of dependency on others (as in the charity model), it empowers the community to create their own sustainable, innovative solutions.”

She brought an important lesson home: “I realize we (the university students) are not the ‘saviors.’ Rather, we are simply companions on the sisters’ journey, encouraging and supporting them along their way.”

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A warm brood is a happy brood. Sister Mary Florence Anaso (right) nurtures new chicks with Sister Rose Tumitho, using a heat lamp to keep them warm. Hear it from the sisters themselves on the web at bit.ly/3assXyP.



Photo: Keith Douglas Warner, OFM

Through the Lens of “*Fratelli Tutti*”

BY MICHAEL BLASTIC, OFM

In his encyclical “*Fratelli Tutti*,” Pope Francis presents a compelling blueprint for social engagement, a way of actively participating in society, that can lead to a better world for all. Pope Francis explains that his inspiration was St. Francis of Assisi as a model of “fraternal love...that transcends the barriers of geography and distance.” He points to the encounter of Francis of Assisi with Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil as a model of social engagement because St. Francis “approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them

become even more themselves.” The Poverello’s lifestyle of brotherly and sisterly encounter, care, and solidarity are qualities for social friendship that Pope Francis develops.

Franciscans live the Gospel by following in the footsteps of Jesus. They understand that Franciscan mission includes social engagement, which is modeled on the life of the disciples. In the 13th century “Earlier Rule” Franciscans describe their mission as a “going about the world,” taking nothing for the journey, sent by Jesus to be peace-



Photo: Jeffrey Bruno, Courtesy of Wikimedia

Pope Francis knew from the start the insights and witness of St. Francis of Assisi would capture the world’s imagination. The key: Love one another.



Fresco by Giotto di Bondone, Courtesy of WikiCommons

The encounter of St. Francis and Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil is a blueprint for us all. It's a challenge to take chances beyond the familiar, to listen with a loving heart, to build bridges.

bearers to the people and communities they encounter, where they accept hospitality as pilgrims and guests (see Luke 10:1–11).

The brothers and sisters met people where they were actually living, in the ordinary, everyday conditions of life. They sat down at table with them and shared the food and drink offered. In response to the hospitality of their hosts, they shared the good news of healing, forgiveness, and the peace of God's reign. In a real sense then, Franciscan mission, then and today, is accomplished through participating in social life inspired by the example and words of Jesus Christ.

Francis of Assisi learned this through his encounters with lepers. "The Lord led me among [lepers] and I did mercy with them," he wrote. Francis was clear about what God did and wanted from him—God didn't ask Francis to do something to or for the lepers; God led Francis to share mercy with the lepers as his brothers and sisters through encounter, care, and solidarity.

In "*Fratelli Tutti*," the pope comments on the parable of the Good Samaritan

(Luke 10:25–37), stating that the parable, "Speaks to us of an essential and often forgotten aspect of our common humanity: we were created for a fulfillment that can only be found in love. We cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. Instead, we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering."

The pope echoes St. Francis' experience of the suffering and pain of those who were forgotten and excluded—Francis encountered lepers as brother and sister, he cared for them, and he stayed with them in solidarity. This is the way of social engagement necessary to build a better world for all.

Encounter.

Franciscan social engagement begins with the "ability to sit down and listen to others, typical of interpersonal encounters," with respect for the reality of the other as they are, and not as one might want them to be. Pope Francis characterizes authentic encounter as "social friendship," as a summons

to “act as neighbors,” like the Good Samaritan, as a call to transcend oneself for the common good by “relating to differences,” and seeing ourselves through the eyes of the other.

These characteristics of encounter are a call to conversion, a summons to a change of heart that turns one from a focus on self to a focus toward the other. Francis of Assisi’s engagement with lepers led him to leave the commune of Assisi and its social values that were intent on power, personal comfort, and excess, and to move outside the walls of Assisi to live among the marginalized. With the outcasts of Assisi, Francis and his brothers and sisters began to build an alternative society. It was a community based on the renunciation of the exercise of power over others, with a commitment to hard work and sharing, and to living simply with what was sufficient for the day.

The pope describes this kind of commitment as “social charity,” which makes us “love the common good.” This is the way of dialogue: “Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word: ‘dialogue.’” This makes possible a “culture of encounter,” he writes, which is the basis for a fraternal



economy and a fraternal politics.

Care.

Seeing the other as “deserving of one’s time and attention” is what it means to care for another. This challenge of the parable of the Good Samaritan provides the theological basis for Pope Francis’ vision of a fraternal society. The parable confronts us with questions: “Will we bend down to touch and heal the wounds of others? Will we bend down and help another to get up?” If yes, then we begin caring for the other by accepting the reality of the other as they are, even if they are different and even if they disagree with us.

Pope Francis asks that we “seek



Friars David Gaa (right) and Martin Sanabria offer a ministry of hospitality, helping people stay safe from pandemic, outside St. Boniface church in San Francisco.



Photo: Saint Barbara Province Archives

Friar James Seiffert lies prostrate as he professes solemn vows. The call to fraternity in the broadest, most inclusive sense, is what Pope Francis calls us to.

out others and embrace the world as it is, without fear or pain or a sense of inadequacy, because there we will discover all the goodness that God has planted in human hearts." There is goodness in the other and in the world, and care allows us to experience this. Care is expressed in tender love, which "is a love that draws near and becomes real. A movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands." To authentically care for another is to come near to them and to accept them as one's brother and sister—it is the way of Franciscan social engagement.

Solidarity.

Francis of Assisi moved toward the outcasts, the marginalized, to share life with them. He sought to live among them in fraternal solidarity—they sat down at table together in solidarity and shared life. Pope Francis writes that solidarity "means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the appropriation of goods by a few." Solidarity finds expression in service, which means "caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people." Solidarity looks "to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and

even, in some cases, 'suffers' that closeness and tries to help them." Solidarity is the face that compassion takes on a social level. Ultimately, as the pope says, "We need to develop the awareness that nowadays we are either all saved together or no one is saved."

Pope Francis concludes by praying that God "pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace. . . . May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognize the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us." The challenge of "*Fratelli Tutti*," inspired by the spirit of Francis of Assisi, is that we work in society to establish a culture of authentic *encounter*, loving *care*, and committed *solidarity*. That culture heralds the coming of God's reign. ❖

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Father Michael W. Blastic, a widely known Franciscan scholar and author, of Holy Name Province in the eastern US, helps direct the interprovincial novitiate at Old Mission Santa Barbara.

on the cover

Serving Among the Tohono O'odham

* * *

BY JOHN GIBBONS, OFM

(Opposite page) The road through the Tohono O'odham nation leads to many faith communities, all in one parish.

(Right) Cemeteries are fully decorated for All Souls Day, here at Mission San Xavier del Bac.

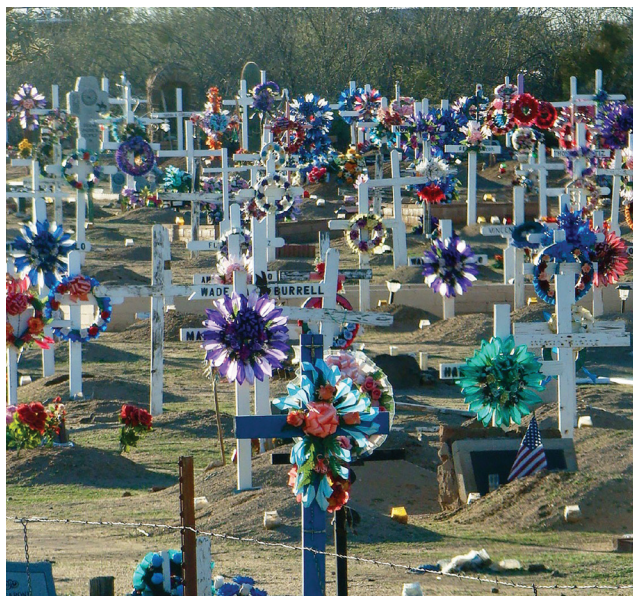


Photo: Cathy Cline, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

It is early morning, the heavens black but for a shy sprinkling of stars. My battered pickup follows the blinking lights of the funeral procession: three other pickups (the leader with the coffin strapped to the bed) and a jeep. We feel our way south 19 miles to the Mexican border, then turn west for another 45 minutes on the border patrol's washboard road—the kind of road that effectively reseats your kidneys. As we climb the hills, the day dawns silver. Then the sky is a dusty burnt orange in my rear-view mirror, finally transformed to flaming rose, silhouetting sacred Baboquivari Peak, before melting into daylight. So, I feel blessed to be prayed by Creation into this morning, and to be invited to complete my part in the sequence of funeral rituals of the Tohono O'odham—literally the “Desert People.”

I am grateful for funerals. In the open air of a graveside service, at this critical moment in their lives, we can connect. There are sobs, but there are also laughter, stories, and songs to honor the deceased. The O'odham are comfortable with death, everyone is invited and included. The vexing issue for a

pastor these COVID-19 days is limiting the number of people and the length of the vigil, which traditionally can last for days, and keeping people distanced and masked. Cherished traditions die hard, particularly traditions that have developed and endured over millennia.

We arrive. The coffin is carefully wiped free of its dust coat, then placed under a makeshift sheets-and-plywood enclosure decorated with candles and artificial flowers. Family members gather, and we pray a commendation service (funeral Masses are suspended during the pandemic) and bless the grave. The grave had been dug the afternoon before but needs some trimming. I grab a shovel and help out—as a priest doing funerals every week, I am an expert on graves. We trim and measure the pit, meanwhile the band warms up and plays. The deceased man liked music, so the body is serenaded. I would stay longer—presence is highly valued in this culture—but a Zoom meeting awaits.

In normal times the ministry of this mission has fuller expression: The pastor and I would visit the local jail each week. I would generally bring my guitar



to begin and end with a song, read the Sunday Gospel, and discuss with the inmates what this has to do with their lives and choices and future. I would also make weekly rounds at the dialysis center, an integral element of people's lives here since so many are diabetic, by some counts close to 50 percent. Patients arrive from all over the reservation, so it is a place to share news, to find out how families are doing in far-flung districts. It's typical ministry, in some ways, except that it's different. We few friars cover an area the size of Connecticut, regularly visiting 28 chapels and more than 40 on at least an

occasional basis for funerals, feasts, and sacramentals. We gratefully rely on our Native lay ministers for most of the catechetical outreach, and to cover funerals or other events when we are swamped.

We are four friars living in a cluttered, rambling, homey friary attached to the village church. Brother Peter is our guardian and maintenance man. Brother David is our senior brother and handles the books. Father Ponchie is the pastor and Father John his associate. We pray together every day, morning and evening. We also have a good balance of pastoral work and physical labor, tending to the constant upkeep of the mission buildings; at the moment Brother Peter is remodeling the guest bathroom. We cook for one another, take turns with the dishes, celebrate each other's birthdays and the various religious and secular feasts. We generally hang out our clothes to dry—another element



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM

Author John Gibbons, OFM, is on the pastoral team at San Solano Missions. He lives in a culture not his own, with honor and respect.



Center Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM; Outer Photos: ©www.peterjordanphoto.com

From far left: For Brother Peter today it's the roof; maintenance at the mission is nonstop.

The distant Baboquivari Peak, the stillness of early morning: to say the area is strikingly beautiful is an understatement.

Father Ponchie Vasquez, OFM, preaches at one of the 40 chapels that San Solano Missions Parish serves.

of the contemplative life, enjoying the beauty of the mountains as the laundry is pinned up and taken down. Topawa is a good place to be, a good place to pray. The desert naturally lends itself to contemplation—the stark beauty of desert plain and mountains, the variety of cacti and scraggly trees, the many birds, rabbits, coyotes, and other wildlife. The O'odham are part of this rhythm. They cannot be rushed. They make decisions by consensus, which takes time, listening, reflection, patience,

I have yet to learn the O'odham language; it is not a practical necessity. But I have taken a few classes at the O'odham community college on their history and culture, and Native American literature. It has heightened my awareness of the ongoing effects of colonialism, stereotyping, racism, economic injustice, environmental degradation, and also of the Native American "fight-

back" to reclaim what has been lost, to straddle and integrate traditional values with contemporary lifestyle. The O'odham are collectively poorer than their counterparts off the reservation; there are few well-paying jobs on the rez.

Balance, harmony, and acceptance are key values. There is an undercurrent of the sacred here—perhaps that sacred connection to creation that has not been lost despite loss of land, loss of honor, and the ravages of a vastly different diet, lifestyle, and system.

Migrant ministry is also a common,

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(Left to Right) Friars David Paz, Ponchie Vasquez (pastor) and Peter Boegel, with John Gibbons, are the pastoral team.



Photo: ©www.peterjordanphoto.com

concerning care

Racial Harmony and Racial Discrimination

BY MARK SCHROEDER, OFM

With all that's in the headlines about racism, I meditated on wondering where I learned as a boy about the values of racial harmony and discrimination. My mother's father, my grandpa, entered my consciousness; I respected him highly my whole life—he died when I was 40 years old.

Frank Spingola was born in 1900 in San Jose, California, to parents who emigrated from Italy. His best friend was George Chan, whose parents immigrated to San Jose from China. My grandpa met George at their elementary school. They remained close friends until George died, and their persistently loving relationship remains vivid in my memory.

San Jose was divided into neighborhoods by race. Blocks of "Chinatown" (as my grandpa called it) bordered blocks of Italian families and shops, which bordered blocks of Mexican families and shops. My grandpa told stories of gang wars between the Chinese and Italians. In fact, 'til the day he died, he had a small bullet lodged in his hand after being shot as a teenager during gang vio-

The painting on these pages is by the author, offered for reflection. How do we move from mood, to analysis, to action? A guided meditation can help nudge us along that path.



lence. And my grandpa never “favored” people of Mexican heritage because he felt they “pushed” themselves into the Italian neighborhood when he was young.

So I learned that friends from diverse races could cherish the gift of lifelong friendship. And I learned that deep-seated negative perceptions could brand a certain kind of people for one’s lifetime.

Now, dear reader, please consider my painting you see printed here. First impression: What feeling or mood

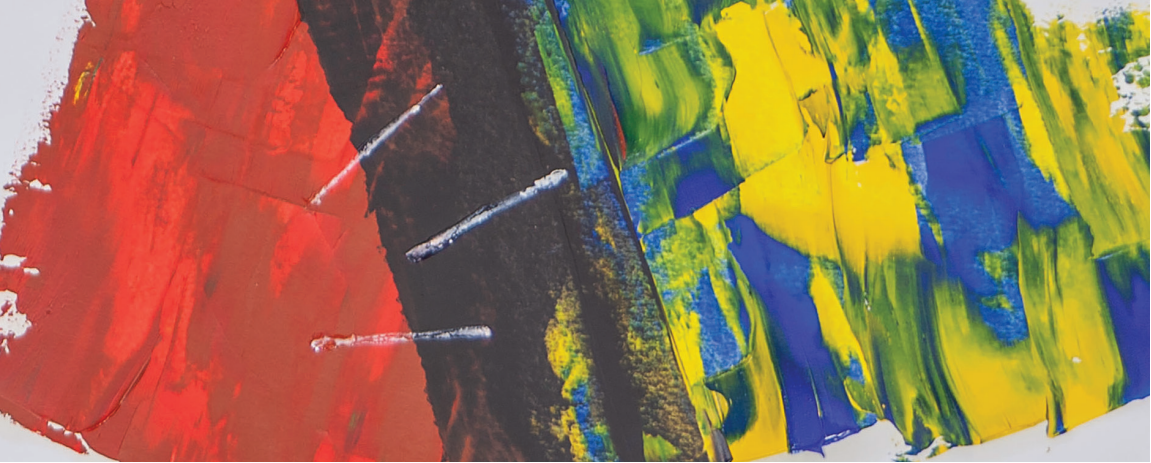
does your first look at this artwork bring up in you?

Now to view my artwork, with the lens of exploring racism. I have presented both chaos and harmony in the right half. Jagged lines and complementary colors. Yet I hope there is a flow you see as the colors merge and move. On the left half, what do you see? Two bold statements? I have presented separation and strength.

Look, please, at the total painting. Take it all in. Take time to gaze, really gaze, at the entire painting.



Painting by Mark Schroeder, OFRM



There are three lines close to the center. What do those represent to you as you consider your personal values that profoundly influence your own quest for racial harmony and your own mistakes in racial discrimination. Stop, meditate for a moment. What do those three lines say to you?

I have learned that there are four systems of racism:

1. Geographic Racism. The haves create segregated neighborhoods or rural areas that racially and economically isolate certain people. Thus we hear talk of the divide of the rich and the poor. Think about the city you live in.

2. Institutional Racism. In the US white privilege often goes undetected because we fall into an attitude of “that’s how it’s always been.” All of us need to be honest and need to challenge our institutions to change. Think about employment opportunities, corporation structures, education, health care, the legal system, governments, and dare I say even the Catholic Church in the US.

3. Environmental Racism. In his encyclical “*Laudato Si*” Pope Francis has opened up the eyes of Catholics worldwide to discover that racism is directly connected to pollution and poverty. Not many folks draw these connections. Think about your city and state—where are the local garbage dumps? Chemical spew-

ing manufacturers and oil producers? Nuclear waste depositories?

4. Individual Racism. Think of what you have grown up learning—whether consciously or unconsciously. Think of how local, national, and church culture and systems have affected you. As we heard from the young poet Amanda Gorman during this January’s Inauguration celebration: “We’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace.”

Back to my painting: Look again. Gaze for more than a few seconds, please. Now what do you see in what I put onto the canvas?

If you were to paint a picture of racism, what would you depict? What colors would you choose? What mood would you like your audience to sense? The late Representative John Lewis, himself a lifelong civil rights leader, wrote, in *Across That Bridge*, “Use the words of the movement to pace yourself. We used to say that ours is not the struggle of one day, one week, or one year.... Ours is the struggle of a lifetime, or maybe even many lifetimes, and each one of us in every generation must do our part.”

As Franciscans, we can believe in the power of nonviolent change! We can be honest—with ourselves, with our family and friends, and with those we meet in our social circles. Besides just

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EMFGP (EMMAUS Ministry For Grieving Parents) is a unique ministry that serves the spiritual needs of grieving parents whose children of any age have died by any cause, no matter how long ago. We focus on the promise of eternal life and the rich teachings of our faith to help these terribly broken parents.

Presented by Marianne Gouveia and Gregory Eckerman
Franciscan Renewal Center

Scottsdale, Arizona
thecasa.org
480-948-7460, ext. 132

Zoom Online: "Rejoice and Be Glad! Manifesting Compassion and Justice"

March 13 at 10 a.m.

How can we invite ourselves and those around us into deeper compassion? What can we do to ensure dignity for those on the margins of our society? How can we foster community in and across our various social worlds? These questions and more will animate this interactive retreat as we explore the challenges and graces humanity faces today through the lens of Catholicism's social justice teachings. Participants will walk away more strongly connecting compassion and justice as well as better equipped to make these manifest in their world.

Program cost: sliding scale.

Facilitator: Dr. Maureen K. Day, PhD

San Damiano Retreat

Danville, California
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

Holy Week Retreat

Part 1: March 28–31

Part 2: April 1–3

As we are planning for Holy Week 2021, we are hopeful that we are able to gather on campus, in-person for this very special retreat. However, we are also aware that we don't know what the COVID-19 situation will be, so please understand we may find it necessary to cancel or move to a virtual retreat. If this is necessary, you will be appropriately refunded. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Fr. Steven McMichael will be joining us for the Holy Week Retreat. Fr. Steven's theme will be Celebrating Easter with Mary Magdalene and the Blessed Mary. The Apostle Paul tells us that without the resurrection of Christ, our faith is meaningless (1 Corinthians 15). Since the resurrection is the center element of our faith, it is important to understand what this means for Christian belief. The medieval Franciscan tradition gives us much to reflect upon regarding the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection. This retreat will focus on this tradition and help us to understand what it means to be an Easter person. Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary will serve as our guides toward our own resurrection.

Lodging (including meals)

available

Franciscan Renewal Center

Scottsdale, Arizona
thecasa.org
480-948-7460, ext. 132

Zoom Online: Sisters in Spirit

Monthly Series: March 30, April 27, June 29, July 27, all at 11 a.m.

San Damiano will be offering a monthly series for women. We will look at these women scripturally, historically, and spiritually and find our similarities and/or differences. No Bibles or books required, simply your presence and your thoughts and experiences. We will have time to take a break, and time for discussion and sharing too. Sisters in Spirit (SIS) will be held with the following topics in mind:

March 30: Miriam and Mary—Support, Leadership, and Guidance

April 27: St. Joan of Arc

June 29: Deaconesses

July 27: St. Mother Teresa

Facilitated by Jan Stegner, MTS, MMC

San Damiano Retreat

Danville, California
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

Zoom Online: Easter Series—"The Samaritan Woman: The Meeting at the Well"

May 5, May 11, May 18, May 25, all at 11 a.m.

Program cost:

\$20 per person/session

Facilitated by Jan Stegner, MTS, MMC

San Damiano Retreat

Danville, California
sandamiano.org
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With Our Compliments ...



Our Free Document Organizer Completes Your Estate Plan



The Franciscan Friars are pleased to offer a complimentary estate-planning organizer. A place to store completed legal documents, the organizer also prepares you to create or update your will or living trust and contains a checklist of accounts, assets, and instructions so your loved ones can easily find what they need in case of emergency. When completed, the organizer lifts a burden from your loved ones and can save both them and you time and expense.

To receive your free organizer, please call:
Joe Ledbetter at (510) 536-3722,
or go to sbfranciscans.org/organizer



Entrepreneurial Spirit in a Franciscan Key
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There was even a deeper transformation for this student. Upon her return home Lauren applied to live with the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus congregation, where she could further discern her vocation. That step stemmed “directly from the hope, resilience, and joy of the Catholic sisters.” Entrepreneurship is fueling that.

And Brother Keith, as faculty at the Miller Center, is fueling that social entrepreneurship. He scouts and helps develop some of the African projects, he nurtures and educates students who will work in them. The effect is personal, societal, ecological, spiritual—it’s all of one piece. Says Brother Keith, speaking of the sisters, “they become the architects of their own future, not waiting for other people to do it, but learning how to do it for themselves.” His students are learning to do the same. ❖

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John Feister is editor of this publication.

Racial Harmony and Racial Discrimination
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talking about it or worrying about it, we can take action! And always, we must remain a people of hope, as John Lewis reminds us—it’s gonna take a long time. ❖

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Brother Mark Schroeder, OFM, is Guardian at Old Mission Santa Barbara. He is the Franciscans for Justice Animator for the Provinces of St. Barbara and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Check out franciscansforjustice.org and “Franciscans for Justice” on Facebook and Instagram.

Serving Among the Tohono O’odham
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though unpredictable, part of our lives. We live 19 miles north of the Mexican border, and despite the ubiquitous border patrol presence, some migrants evade capture and seek sanctuary in our mission chapel. Since we friars are guests on the reservation, and our principal ministry is to the O’odham, we walk a delicate line sheltering migrants. We strive to be men of peace and justice toward all. We offer sanctuary, providing food and drink and a secure place to rest. But if the border patrol tracks them to our chapel, we respect the law and the work these agents are tasked to do. Also, we cannot jeopardize our ministry to 10,000 baptized O’odham Catholics for the sake of a few migrants, however compelling their situation. Most O’odham are understanding and tolerant of the migrants; whether they choose to help or hinder, we accept their decisions.

At day’s end, we are here to serve the O’odham nation as ministers of the Gospel, at their invitation. Welcome we are, but we are foreigners nonetheless. This desert has been home to the O’odham and their Hohokam ancestors for thousands of years. The Franciscans have been missionaries here for 100 years. We help bury the dead, we nurture the faithful, we honor creation as Franciscans would. It is a privilege to do so. ❖

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Father John Gibbons, OFM, served as a deacon and newly ordained priest at Mission San Xavier del Bac, also part of the Tohono O’odham Nation. Following a brief assignment with the Mescalero Apaches, he was missioned to the Russian Far East where he served over 15 years. In 2018 he returned to the desert to continue his mission among the O’odham.

at last



The San Solano mission bell in stillness rings: Live thankfully, we are in God's hands.

Photo by Bradley Tuel, OFM

Lord, take my life and let me
be your presence in our world.

Let my hands be your hands
to lift up and support.

Let my voice be your voice
to comfort and encourage.

Let my eyes be your eyes
radiating hope and love.

Let my welcoming smile
draw others to you.

Let my whole being delight
in everything you have made.

And when you call me home,
let my passing show
that your will brings peace
and joy and life eternal.

—Murray Bodo, OFM

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