

SUMMER 2022 • VOL.27, NO.2

The Way of St. Francis

A photograph of a stone path leading through a stone wall towards a valley. The path is made of large, flat stones and is bordered by a high stone wall on the left. In the background, a valley with rolling hills and a small town is visible under a hazy sky. A tall, dark cypress tree stands on the left side of the path.

Retreat
to Assisi

THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS PROVINCE OF SAINT BARBARA

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 SUMMER 2022 • VOL.27, NO.2

The Way of St. Francis is a free publication, for those who provide time, treasure, and talent to the Franciscan friars, Province of St. Barbara (OFM). We appreciate your support, and welcome your comments. Address letters to the editor or any other questions to *The Way of St. Francis*, 1500 34th Avenue, Oakland, CA 94601 or email us at TheWay@sbofm.org.

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* * *



Life is a journey, goes the saying, a pilgrimage, always with surprises around the bend. This road on the edge of Assisi, next to the wall, points to how places can open us up within.

Photo: Greg Friedman, OFM

www.sbfranciscans.org



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Retreat to Assisi

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dear friends

Peace & all good!

As we go to press, the pandemic is still with us, with mixed reaction, as we adapt to Covid's new presence among us. Our ministries have struggled mightily for these two years since it all started. For our province's five retreat centers, it's been incredibly difficult. So we decided to feature them in a special section in this issue.

The retreats are one of the treasures of our province. They provide a place for quiet, for an encounter with beauty. They provide a setting for you, in groups or alone, to hone your listening skills, your discernment of how God is acting in your life.

Those encounters can be in a highly structured program or in an encounter with an inspiring speaker. Or a retreat may simply provide a break, allowing us to retool ourselves for the everyday. Whether it be group retreats, speaker series, zoom opportunities, individual guided retreats, or just some peace and quiet, our retreats are vibrant centers of care.

Each of us, as we cope with whatever the future holds, are finding our bearings in a slightly different world. Who couldn't use a little space to renew their inner spirit? We Franciscans have tried, for many years, to provide that space for the people we serve.

"Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile," our Lord tells his disciples. "So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place" (Mk 6:31).

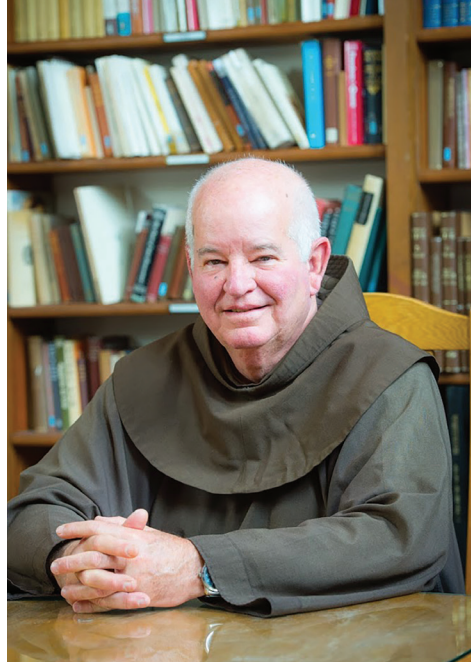
Not to state the obvious, but that's good advice! Take a look at our special section on retreats and consider some ways in which they might be of service to you as *you* reclaim your future.

In our next issue we'll be talking in detail about some exciting news in our Franciscan family, a radical new collaboration among the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) Franciscans nationwide. You can get a foretaste of that in Brother Keith Warner's article on p. 22.

Faternally,

David Gaa, OFM

Minister Provincial, Province of St. Barbara



calendar



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM

San Damiano Retreat
Danville, California
sandamiano.org
925-837-9141

***The Story of St. Clare with
Sr. Margaret Carney***
8/5–7

**Facilitator: Sr. Margaret Carney,
OSF**

In anticipation of the Feast of St. Clare on August 11, we are honored to welcome Sr. Margaret Carney, author of *Light of Assisi: The Story of St. Clare*. It is the story of a quiet revolutionary who stood in no man's shadow.

***St. Francis of Assisi: Teacher
of Prayer***
9/30–10/2

**Facilitator: Fr. Wayne Hellmann,
OFM Conv.**

"The brothers begged him to teach them how to pray." We will follow how Francis taught his brothers to pray, by reflecting on his own development in prayer, even into the Lord's Prayer and the eucharistic prayer.

***Fr. Laurence Freeman "One
Mind, One Heart: Unified
Consciousness"***
10/2–7

**Facilitator: Fr. Laurence
Freman, OSB**

The World Community for Christian Meditation's (WCCM) theme of 2022 is Unified Consciousness. This is not a merely intellectual or abstract issue because the survival of humanity may well depend upon the evolution of our consciousness. The mind of Christ within each of us is the same mind that contains all of us. The meditator experiences this in real time by being able to see herself in others and others in herself.

In this silent retreat, Laurence Freeman will explore the personal healing involved in unifying ourselves with ourselves and with others. This retreat will also serve as an introduction and a deepening to the practice of meditation.

***Fourth Step Recovery
Retreat***

11/18–20

Facilitator: Fr. Anthony Garibaldi, OFM

The goal of this Fourth Step Retreat is to provide a time and safe space for a person to take this important step on his or her recovery journey. The retreat is open to members of any 12-step group (AA, NA, OA, etc.). In order to remain anonymous, you will not be asked to identify your particular group.

***Entering into the Heart of
Advent***

12/2 3 p.m.–12/4 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Colette Lafia

During this weekend retreat, we'll deepen our Advent experience by opening our hearts to the path of surrender—living in acceptance and trust—and responding to the call of God in our lives, as Mary did. Participants will receive a copy of Colette's award-winning book, *Seeking Surrender: How a Trappist Monk Taught Me to Trust and Embrace Life*.

New Year's Retreat

**12/30–1/1 (optional 12/29
check-in)**

**Facilitator: Fr. Charlie Smiech,
OFM**

Ring in the New Year with a renewed spirit!

Franciscan Renewal Center
Scottsdale, Arizona
thecasa.org
408-948-7460

***Boundless Compassion for
Self and Others***

9/9–11

**Facilitators: Ruth Baker and
Colleen Shepard**

Boundless compassion is a way of life that begins with self-compassion. In Mark 10,

(continued on page 29)

along the way

Open Our Hearts

By Dan Lackie, OFM

A recent high point for me was the chance to hear the Marcus Roberts Trio playing the music of George Gershwin, accompanied by the Santa Barbara Symphony. Or was it the jazz trio accompanying the orchestra? No matter, it was an amazing experience for my ears and for my toes and feet that refused to sit still under my seat.

And it was more than “toe-felt,” it was a *heartfelt* experience, too, brought about by the power of music to bring to life what is old while connecting it to something completely new. It was the mesmerizing improvisations and riffs that Mr. Roberts and his companions spun out from Gershwin’s gorgeous themes.

The Australian theologian Anthony Kelly has written that in a certain respect the Church can be defined as “that part of the world which has come alive to the extent of God’s gift.” And what an extensive gift that is, all around us! As Jesus pours out his life in our midst, he gives us a mission of love, empowered in



Photo: Sanjiv Gurrung

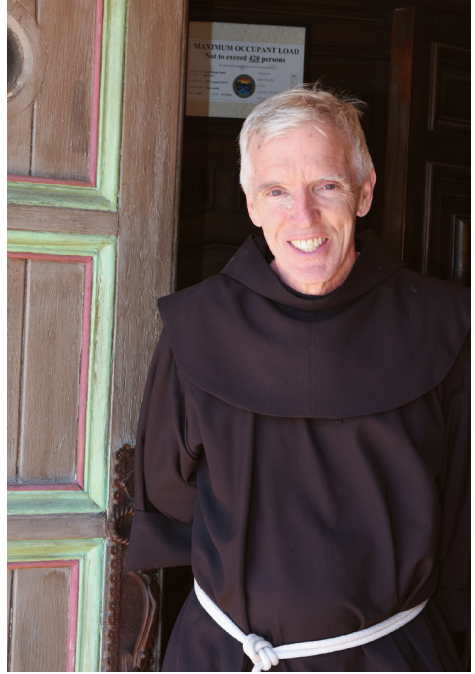


Photo: John Feister

us through the Holy Spirit. We are each called to be made new, again and again, in our encounter with Christ.

For St. Francis and his followers those Christ-encounters come especially through the poor. I'll never forget the brothers and sisters my friar companions and I encountered in Guatemala City during our 10-month immersion many years ago. The day we left, a mother and a son who had become our friends walked through the rain and mud to present us with a gift, a wooden cross brightly colored with flora, in the Latin American style. We sat humbled at that kitchen table. The cross became new for me that day.

As disciples, we are witnesses of these things, and I pray, as Paul writes to the Ephesians, that “the eyes of our hearts be enlightened” to “the hope that belongs to our call.” And when that happens, maybe our feet will get into the act and we’ll start “*hearing music when there’s no one there*”—but that’s Irving Berlin, isn’t it. Sorry! ♦

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

donor profile

Father Joe Schwab: Animator of Support

By Joe Ledbetter

Father Joe Schwab has devoted his life to helping people understand who Francis was, how he was motivated by God's spirit, and how each of us can carry that same inspiration. He is newly named Director of Development for the Saint Barbara Province.

In Father Joe's booklet, "Franciscan Spirituality in 7 Steps," Step 6 is, "Nothing humans have the ability to do has the capacity to make God do something." The statement goes to the heart of human motivation too: Healthy people act out of freedom. After all, we're made in God's image.

He would be happy to share those seven tenets of Franciscanism with anyone who will listen. Father Joe has served for the past 24 years as executive director at Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, and as an occasional guide to pilgrims in Assisi, birthplace of Sts. Francis and Clare. His work in Scottsdale, from the outset, was renewal of the then 50-year-old center, regenerating a Franciscan vision within a bustling retreat ministry. Over the years he did that quite successfully, living in Franciscan community while nurturing Franciscan understanding and commitment among the center's lay staff and growing worship community.

That worship community, the Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels, is a key part of the center. There, a vibrant Catholic community extends open arms to anyone searching for deeper meaning. And that, in a nutshell, describes Father Joe's style of ministry.



Father Joe Schwab, pet lover

Father Joe led the community in locating resources for, and building or renovating, a number of facilities to improve the ministry (including leading fundraising totalling \$22 million during his tenure). All of these facilities fall under the earliest, and enduring name for the center, the Casa de Paz y Bien, "the house of peace and good."

Raised in Cincinnati and Phoenix, Father Joe felt called to the Franciscans. He worked as a lay brother for 30 years, then was ordained as priest, an unusual step for a friar. "It was the people at ministry sites who asked me to be a priest," he explains.

And perhaps that's the story for Father Joe today. He has completed a long commitment as leader of the center "with great character of spirit," in the words of a coworker. At the same time there was a need for a friar to help all of those who want to support Franciscan ministries across the Province. "My role is to assist a donor of any capacity. I want to help them create a better world, through generosity for the sake of those in need." Welcome, Father Joe! ♦

.....
Joe Ledbetter is Development Communications Manager for Saint Barbara Province.

snapshot



It was Santa Barbara's "Blessing of the Fleet," an annual charity fundraiser in the waters off Stearns Wharf, not far from the Old Mission. Fathers Larry Gosselin (l) and Dan Lackie enjoyed a morning of "peace and good"—and a little preaching!



on the cover

Assisi Pilgrimage

FRANCISCAN MINISTRIES

In April 2022, 18 leaders from seven provincial ministries went on pilgrimage to Assisi, led by experienced Franciscan guides Father Joe Schwab, OFM, and Sister Joanne Schatzlein, OSF. Here are some personal reflections on the experience.

Joseph Schwab, OFM
Development Director;
Secretary, Franciscan Ministries

Preparing to lead an Assisi pilgrimage requires a multitude of details: navigate ever-changing flight arrivals, review lodging reservations, make phone calls, do emails, and reacquaint with Italian employees at so many places from restaurants to hardware stores and even

laundromats. Each time, I need to knock the rust off my Italian as I invite others into an intercultural experience.

All this detailed work helps the pilgrims to have a quality experience of growth in their spiritual lives and in an awareness of the Franciscan cultural heritage that is the foundation for ministry at our institutions. I love to do pilgrimage leadership because it helps so many people encounter the roots of why we Franciscans do ministry. We want to invite people to experience Jesus Christ in our contemporary world through the lens of Sts. Francis and Clare. For this particular pilgrimage we ask people to go deeper into the reasons for the existence of their particular ministry site



Faith and place are partners, explains Father Joe at Assisi's Portiuncula, birthplace of the Franciscans. He co- led 18 leaders of the Province's sponsored ministries.



From anti-poverty ministers to those who help retreatants find space for God, 17 lay leaders from St. Barbara Province were on pilgrimage, together, in Assisi, Italy.

(eight this time) and how they can make an impact in the future using elements of our spiritual tradition. We teach them and help them apply what they learn to present-day realities.

It's good for me to spend the first few days of preparation in Rome because in the midst of so many details of planning, I, too, have to learn to let go of the stress, to notice the flowering trees and Easter flowers, the beauty of people from all over the world, the gray-green Tiber flowing through the city as it has for thousands of years, telling me that we're working with God's time, not ours.

I'm preparing to help pilgrims enter into the process of a journey in which the Spirit will lead in both expected and surprising ways. I always know: They will be different people when they leave Italy!

During this pilgrimage, we will visit a lot of places important to Sts. Francis, Clare, and the early Franciscans, religious and lay. All of these experiences are challenges to us to understand how Francis, Clare, and their early followers adapted

and made choices in leadership in response to new ideas and possibilities.

We will spend time asking ourselves what we can do today as our institutions respond to contemporary issues. There will be personal learning, shared experiences, and the interchange of ideas, both practical and idealistic.

The dynamics of change were nothing new in the 13th century and they are still moving us today. The places we're visiting help us to reflect and plan institutional leadership in light of the culture of the Franciscan story. The past is helping us prepare for the future. It's an enriching time to be together!

Kathleen Flanagan,
Chair/President, Franciscan Ministries,
Oceanside, California

This Assisi pilgrimage, sponsored by Franciscan Ministries, was developed to be a time of reflection and experience for lay leaders. Who were the original lay Franciscans? What was their role in ministry during the formative years of



Here in Cortona,
home of St. Margaret,
pilgrims reflect on
their own desires
to step forth in
faith. Each of us
experiences ongoing
conversion.

Photos Courtesy of Franciscan Ministries

the Franciscan movement? Insights into those lives can provide a foundation for lay leadership today.

On a pilgrimage, Franciscan history is shared through story and place. It is one thing to know Clare fled from her home to join Francis' way of life. It is another to actually walk through Assisi on the path she walked, through the gate where she left the city and realize the commitment it must have taken to make that journey, knowing that there was no coming back.

Our pilgrims also found St. Margaret of Cortona particularly relevant. Other pilgrims and I related to her ongoing conversion, and in our personal desires to move forward on our own spiritual journeys.

Our group heard of the people that helped Margaret along the way and enabled her to develop a ministry to the sick, like the people we serve every day. These are people who have been rejected by their family and society, young people who are victims of trafficking, people condemned for what they did to survive in an unjust world. Margaret was one of the highlights of the pilgrimage.

We achieved our goals for the pilgrimage: to educate our ministry leaders about Franciscan history and its rele-

vance today, to form a sense of community that would lead to greater collaboration among ministries. What surprised us was that several of our pilgrims said that it also gave them a stronger commitment to the Franciscan mission of their ministry.

Diane Catlin
Board Chair, Franciscan Renewal Center,
Scottsdale, Arizona

As I reflect on my experience in Assisi and Rome for our Franciscan pilgrimage, I realize I need to learn even more! Our trip was organized for leaders in our ministries to recognize the link between past and present at every stop.

It is important to learn about St. Francis' journey, from birth to death, in order to understand what the Franciscan Way means. Learning about St. Clare and her journey helped solidify my understanding of the Franciscans. Once you add in the other saints, I completely understood how the Franciscans have lasted over 800 years and are still going strong!

I will bring my learnings to our board of directors at Franciscan Renewal Center. I have ideas on how to engage them more around Franciscan themes. All of this will help us to nourish and grow a Franciscan spirituality as the future unfolds.

Carlo Fiatarone
Director of Mission, St. Anthony Foundation,
San Francisco, California

Assisi stands out as a city. You see people, pilgrims, visitors, travelers, people who knew Francis, people who didn't, from all over the world, coming together in this welcoming spirit. It's an opportunity to step back in time. Assisi seems like a throwback in time as you try to put yourself in the mindset of who St. Francis was. What was the world, even the landscape, he lived in?

On the way in, you read that Assisi is called the city of peace; you're in a setting where people are coming together in harmony. It's just amazing to hear about St. Francis who lived in a time of so much turmoil and warfare—yet Assisi becomes the antithesis of that, a place of peace. That's what we're called to do in Franciscan ministries, to be peace-makers. Assisi is a testament to that.

I was taken by San Damiano, too, in the fields below Assisi. There's a sense of community. I imagine all of the sisters there eating together, praying together, standing in support of one another. I'm aware even of Francis and his invitation and support of St. Clare. It's a physical sign of what we were called to do as Franciscans and in the world to rebuild

the Church and to bring people together.

Francis and Clare both were unexpected leaders, at least in the ways maybe they were expected to lead. Yet they listened to their hearts and they followed God's call to use the gifts they had been given for the greater good.

As a leader at a Franciscan ministry, I believe that Francis and Clare brought people together by first going to the periphery, going to the margins. People felt heard and recognized by each of them, which was visceral and maybe new in some respects in their time. But they built relationships and they brought people to God through the work they did and by setting example.

It's a reminder to me: Franciscan ministry is not just about burying my head into a computer and being behind my desk; it's about being out there among the people who we work with, among the people we serve. This pilgrimage, that awareness, is really going to allow us to step into our spirituality in a way that is really Franciscan.

That's really what God is calling us to do. ❖



sacred space

St. Clare's Basilica

BY JOSEPH H. SCHWAB, OFM

While visiting holy sites, the pilgrim or tourist can choose to accept an invitation, that is, what are the levels of meaning this location has made available to me—whether a natural setting or human construction. As in other places, this is true in the Basilica of St. Clare. Which messages are proclaimed? Do I have eyes that can see and ears that can hear, or am I only prepared to relate to the obvious? Through discernment, this basilica tells a story about a spiritual journey.

This building helps on the journey through images, as seen in frescoes, glass, and paintings. It assisted through choices made in liturgical furnishings, design, and acoustics. The church invited us to consider our own participation in biblical events and to translate our imagination into contemporary challenges and daily life.

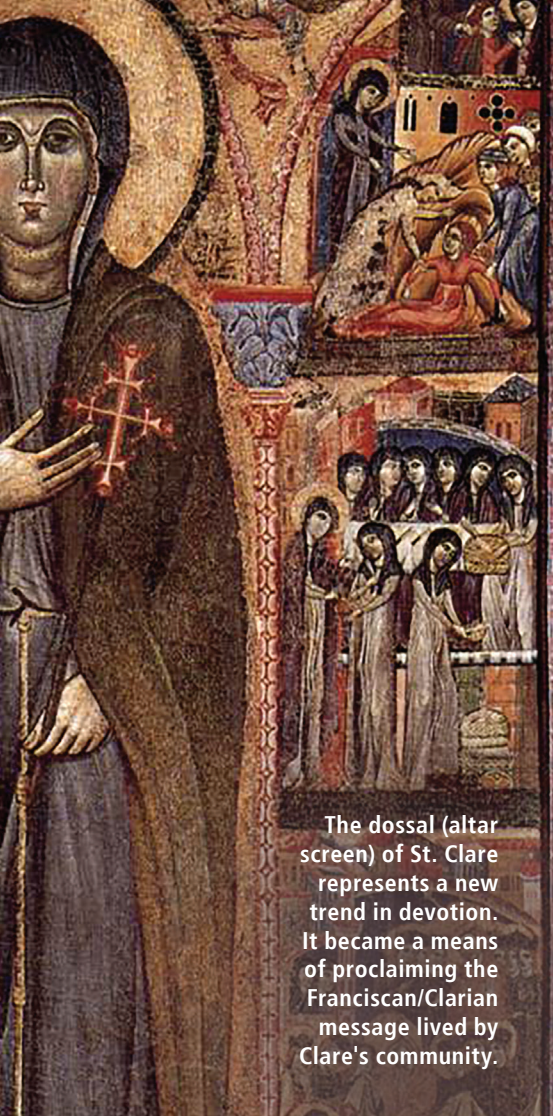
Most of all, through the medium of this building we are introduced to an exceptional woman, St. Clare, who remains an inspirational figure and our sister at the same time.

Underlying all of this, we can come to know a feminine, original way of Gospel living. It was developed by and for women in response to challenges and differing visions of reality and transcendence. And yet, the bodily senses of hearing and vision are celebrated



here and play significant, even essential roles in enclosing the deeply personal, spiritual insights of St. Clare in a physical expression—that is, her own life and this building that both memorializes and reveals.

The church and monastery complex were decidedly located next to the city and were quickly enclosed within its walls. The place was deliberately chosen to provide civic and spiritual meaning for several reasons: to complement the Church of St. Francis on the other side of the town by reflecting that architecture while simultaneously preserving the original place of burial of St. Francis and ultimately the permanent one of



The dossal (altar screen) of St. Clare represents a new trend in devotion. It became a means of proclaiming the Franciscan/Clarian message lived by Clare's community.

Photo: Wikimedia Commons

features, bells, and stained glass, a process that has continued into modern times. Nor were the Poor Clares of Assisi unusual in their desire to utilize decorative elements in their church. Despite the fact that the very influential St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) and some Franciscans spoke against the use of decorations in monastic buildings, “Female monasticism of the later Middle Ages turned the tables. Far from holding up an ideal of imageless devotion to the laity, it led the way in introducing new genres and novel practices, not just in the full spectrum of devotional imagery, but extensively illustrated prayer books, icons, painted retables (altar backdrops) and custom-made devotional compendia.”

The building and its decorations became a means of incarnating and proclaiming the Franciscan/Clarian message for these cloistered women.

It would be incorrect to assume that the nuns had no social contact with civic events and public activities. They were in fact in contact with families, ecclesial, and civic officials, particularly in times of threat or difficult decision-making. As noted elsewhere, they “spoke with insights, spoke as prophets and visionaries, interceded for their communities, counseled princes and popes.” People went to them for advice, counsel, and divine favor. St. Clare was no exception to this, as we know from early documents concerning her life.

With ears to hear and eyes to see, we, too, may come to realize the revelations of the Franciscan message from the Poor Clares that this building, with relics and art, offers to the contemporary viewer. With reason, we can regret the loss of so much of the earlier decorative program of the building, but we can also rejoice that art has been added into recent times. Significant antique objects have survived and still help us imagine and thus experience the world of the past and the world to come through their mediation.

(continued on page 28)

St. Clare. Both saints and their churches were considered to be of prime civic value and indeed continue to be so in contemporary times. Unlike many medieval cathedral cities, Assisi shifted its focus onto two saints of the medieval world rather than the Blessed Virgin or martyrs of the early church whose relics repose within the nearby Cathedral of San Rufino. This is quite exceptional.

Meaning and Images

The process of the development of meaning continued as the Church of St. Clare was constructed, decorated, and furnished with frescoes, panel paintings, altars, liturgical objects, architectural

‘Come and Rest Awhile’

Why take a retreat? Let’s count a few ways. Maybe to clear away the day-to-day and listen more closely to God’s voice within? That might be in a group setting or as an individual; it might be a highly structured retreat, or it could be more free-flowing. It could be Catholic or not. It might be an experience guided by a spiritual director or it could just be some quiet time. It could be a time to listen to inspiring preachers, to worship with a close-knit group. Or it could just be a beautiful respite from these past two years.

We’re devoting a section of this issue of *The Way of St. Francis* to reintroduce our readers to five retreat ministries of the Saint Barbara Province. All are open, welcoming groups and individuals.

We had to choose some impartial order to present these five retreats. We start in Arizona and head over to the Pacific Coast



Franciscan Renewal Center

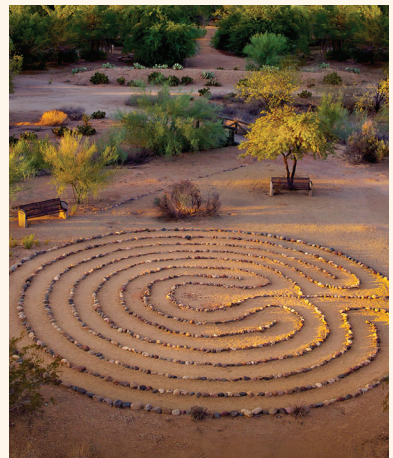
The Casa de Paz y Bien began as a humble Franciscan retreat center in 1951, offering the first married couples retreat in the nation. Now, as the Franciscan Renewal Center (FRC), or "the Casa," people of all faiths and traditions come here to experience renewal on 25 acres of picturesque desert beauty framed by Camelback and Mummy Mountains.

Activities include educational and private retreats, meeting spaces and lodging for nonprofit groups, joyful worship in the Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Angels, donation-based behavioral health counseling by licensed therapists, spiritual direction, and volunteer ministries that assist the poor or vulnerable and build community fellowship. Amenities include remodeled private guest rooms with temperature control, delicious meals, a swimming pool and spa, labyrinth, meditation chapel, desert walk, healing garden, and the Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine.



Did you know?

-  Lobby and San Damiano Auditorium are remodeled (2021), new Community Life Center (2018), new Our Lady of the Angels Church (2017).
-  New Assisi Guest Lodge (2015), Perricone Plaza guest rooms and pool/spa remodeled (2013).
-  We have a book! *House of Peace and Good: The Biography of a Community*, by Laurie Devine, celebrates our recent 70-year anniversary.
-  The pandemic actually introduced new people to FRC. We remained open for private and small group retreats in 2020.



"The Grief and Loss retreat and mood that was created made a group of 10 strangers feel comfortable and connected while healing and learning how to help each other."



Oceanside, CA
sanluisrey.org
760-757-3651

Mission San Luis Rey

The Mission San Luis Rey Retreat Center, located in Southern California, is a historical and spiritual place that allows guests to detach from day-to-day pressures and focus inward. In the spirit of St. Francis. We welcome all people of goodwill as well as groups of all faiths whose goals and objectives harmonize with our own: to meet, create, and forge deep and meaningful connections. We offer well-appointed meeting rooms, chef-prepared meals, and comfortable guest accommodations.

Did you know?

T Our 56 acres have ample space to encourage prayer, meditation, and reflection. It includes our chapel, labyrinth, Stations of the Cross walk, and gardens.

T Our historic church and parish allow guests to attend Catholic services while on the property.

T Our museum boasts artifacts and information about our rich Native American and Franciscan history.

T We offer single-day and overnight retreats for individuals and groups, also Franciscan-themed events.

T We have beautiful grounds and delicious food!

"I was so blessed at my retreat; I met an old friend, made some new acquaintances, and experienced the beauty and sacredness of Mission San Luis Rey."










Serra Retreat

Serra Retreat is a Catholic retreat and conference center in a beautiful setting for peace, serenity, and reflection. Located between the mountains and the ocean in Malibu the Franciscan friars continue the ecumenical tradition begun in 1943 for welcoming groups, private retreats, workshops, conferences, and meetings.

This includes church groups, schools, non-profit and profit organizations, to reflect, plan, and set new goals. Serra Retreat invites you to move forward in your spiritual life, embodying Serra's famous statement: "Always go forward, never turn back." Friars and staff invite you to "come apart and rest awhile."

Did you know?

-  Serra Retreat sits on 26 acres with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Monica Mountains.
-  There are beautiful handmade Malibu tiles throughout Serra Retreat.
-  We have 60 guest rooms and can accommodate up to 120 guests.
-  You can meditate and pray the beautiful Labyrinth as well as the Stations of the Cross walking path.
-  In 1970, a violent fire nearly destroyed the retreat. Thankfully, some of the original building still stood. Slowly the friars and faithful followers began to rebuild.



"I have had profound moments of meeting the living Triune God on the retreat grounds through wildlife, sunsets, community meals, in the chapel, and being with the Serra staff."



San Juan Bautista, CA
 stfrancisretreat.com
 831-623-4234

St. Francis Retreat

St. Francis Retreat Center, located in historic San Juan Bautista, California, provides a peaceful and contemplative environment conducive for renewal of mind, body, and soul. In the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, the Center's staff commits itself to stewardship of the earth by honoring and preserving the Center's natural surroundings while extending hospitality and spiritual support to peoples of all faiths.

Did you know?

-  We will begin our 75th year of operation this fall!
-  8,000 guests annually come for retreats and days of recollection from congregations, recovery groups, schools, and associations.
-  We are California Green Business certified. We strive to live the ideals of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'*.
-  73 acres feature native vegetation, hiking trails, San Juan Bautista Valley views, wild deer, and turkeys.
-  Nutritious and delicious meals are tailored to dietary needs of our guests.

"We love the quiet rural setting, the excellent meals, and the attention the staff pays to our needs. You make it easy for us to have a great retreat!"





San Damiano Retreat

The mission of San Damiano Retreat is to provide a hospitable place of spiritual renewal for people of all faiths in the tradition of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi.

San Damiano Retreat is nestled in the hills of the Las Trampas Ridge, 30 miles east of San Francisco. Attend one of our many sponsored retreats, experience your own personal retreat, and/or meet with a spiritual director. We also welcome hosted retreat groups. Our 78 guest rooms all have private restrooms and wifi.

Did you know?

- 🔍 Explore our peaceful 55 acres of gardens, fountains, hiking trails, and views.
- 🔍 Walk the labyrinth in our Canticle Garden.
- 🔍 Walk the Stations of the Cross in nature.
- 🔍 Listen to life's whispers: flowing water, birds singing, deer treading lightly.
- 🔍 Enjoy three square meals served buffet-style in our dining room.
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"San Damiano is a thin place between heaven and earth."



'Let Us Begin Again'

BY KEITH DOUGLASS WARNER, OFM



For the past 10 years, Order of Friars Minor (OFM) Franciscans across the United States have been praying about, discerning, and planning in a big way. The question? How to respond to a changing pastoral reality. As an older, larger presence yields to smaller numbers of younger friars, how should the Franciscans be structured? All of the ministries can't be supported. What do we keep? What moves completely to lay leadership? What new works do we need to take up? We have undertaken a process of "Renewal and Restructuring."

The most visible result of this is a merger, a *restructuring*, of six Franciscan provinces, including St. Barbara Province, into one larger, national province. The preparations for this merger have begun and will result in the formation of a new US province in October 2023.

The less visible, but ultimately most spiritually significant result of this process is *renewal*, a reimagining of our Franciscan life and ministry in the United States. I have been assigned a key role in helping our friars discern just what that renewal could look like. I'd like



Photo: Jeffrey Bruno, Courtesy of Wikimedia

The old and the new—people and technologies—come together in a renewal and restructuring of OFM Franciscans in the United States.



Fresco by Frank Jaspers, OFM

The name of the game for Franciscans today is to play from the same page. Here an interprovincial group of friars plays at liturgy during the Denver Chapter.

to provide an overview of our renewal process that is helping the friars to discern a new way of being present in our communities.

The three pillars, the framework, of this process are: 1) exploring our friars' sacred memory; 2) exercising our prophetic imagination; and 3) developing communal discernment, which is very much aligned with the synodal process of the whole Catholic Church. In what follows I'll describe each of these.

Sacred Memory

We've come a long way in 800-plus years! As society changes, the Franciscan movement changes too. But we build our futures on the foundations of our past. What have we lived? What have we learned? How has the Spirit, the very presence of Jesus, inspired us?

During my gatherings with small groups of other friars—in person and online—we gain inspiration and learn from communal and personal memories. We share our sacred stories of Jesus, of Francis and his earliest followers. Then we share our own wisdom tradition, the inspiring friars who have gone before

us. Each of the US provinces has offered unique gifts; these, too, are foundations for a future together. And, of course, there are our own personal vocational calls, of how God has called us and gifted us with brothers along the way.

In this renewal, we wish to gather these sacred stories using in-person and digital storytelling to foster engagement, holy exchange, and prayer. Any authentic renewal, after all, respects and learns from what has gone before. This is sacred storytelling.

Practically speaking, we have set about a program of telling “what we have seen and heard,” both from within (personally) and from without (community). This surely will not happen overnight! Friars will be learning new digital skills to pull this off. But, as St. Francis reminded his friars, now is the time “to begin again.” That spirit of a new beginning drives our coming together in a new way. It is a spirit that will help old friars learn new things—and younger friars to learn from their older brothers!

Prophetic Imagination

This term was coined by Old Testament

scholar Walter Brueggemann to demonstrate how we all are called to act in countercultural ways to challenge consumerism, militarism, and nationalism. *Prophetic imagination* invites us to envision and live out the kingdom of God in our time and place. For example, in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls us to care for God's creation, empower the poor, and live in harmony with creation. Our question for our renewal: How can we name and claim a prophetic spirit as we face the future?

What does God want for the world? This is a key question for all people to consider! What do we do? What do we say? We can bring about the reign of God by what we do, and how we live and love. That is foundational to Christianity.

It may be hard to wrap our heads around such lofty discernment. So, in my sessions with friars, I seek practical ways to help make the connection. For example, at a gathering of friars earlier this year in Detroit, after spending some time exploring our sacred memories of earlier friars and life experiences, we headed down into the city.

We visited the Solanus Casey Center, which helps tell the story of this Capuchin Franciscan who started a soup kitchen during the Great Depression and touched thousands of lives as a personal



confessor. We visited an urban garden, part of a literally grassroots economic renewal program in a city hounded by poverty.

In the wake of those visits, we asked the friars, "What would you like to see happen among Franciscans in the next five years? What future do you desire? What is your vision for Franciscans in the coming decades?"

So many of us get caught in our present patterns! How can we imagine a different future, one aligned with the inbreaking reign of God?

Communal Discernment

Now perhaps comes the most difficult part, but it is one that both is built on



Being present to the poor is a key to being Franciscan. At St. Anthony Foundation in San Francisco, friars conduct a ministry of hospitality on the streets.



Photo Courtesy of US & Franciscans

The 2019 Chapter of Mats in Denver was a chance for friars from around the country to get to know each other and share their charism.

the two before it, and continues to feed them over time, in a circle of animation. Discernment calls forth again sacred memory, which feeds prophetic imagination, which leads to communal discernment—repeat!

What is communal discernment? Together as friars and collaborators, we ask, What are the choices we need to be making now? Pope Francis calls this “spending time with the future,” which we do together in prayer, and then make decisions together to live out the kingdom of God.

This discernment is part and parcel with the spirit of synodality that Pope Francis is inspiring in the Church today. *Synodality* means “to walk together.” It comes naturally to Franciscans, considering the very way that St. Francis discerned what to do with his life in fraternity.

St. Francis’ spirit of receptivity to holy newness guided us in the development of our rule. It has also enabled us to continue discerning how to live that rule anew in every age, so that we, like St. Francis, may become “living tongues” (Thomas of Celano) capable of proclaiming the Gospel to the people among whom the Lord sends us, especially the poor, “who are our teachers” (*General Constitution*). That spirit of receptivity

lies at the heart of our Franciscan vocation.

Sacred memory, prophetic imagination, and communal discernment merge into a breathlike integration, so that we all might, in a sense, be breathing in a common rhythm. The result is to align our minds, hearts, and spirits in a way that allows us to move forward together. At least that’s the result on a good day. This process depends upon how open we are to the Holy Spirit, and you and I know from experience, this can vary day to day!

This method of reclaiming the past, developing our imagination, and charting our path to the future is not merely an exercise. Our goal is that it will find expression in all corners of our new province, helping us to move forward together. That is true to St. Francis’ admonition, “Let us begin again.” He famously finished his sentence, “for up until now we have done nothing.” That’s a humble way to encounter our every moment. ❖

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Brother Keith Douglass Warner, OFM, is Special Assistant for Renewal Initiatives for the new US OFM Franciscan province.

among the friars

Franciscan Lessons from Mom: Poverty

BY MAUREEN K. DAY

I have a hunch that religious orders' most compelling charisms and practices are rooted in families.

Take, for instance, the Benedictines and their renowned hospitality; families have been making room for others long before St. Benedict suggested the practice. Dominicans take great pride in their preaching. But how many sermons did you hear growing up from parents, aunts, uncles, siblings and more? And while the sermons that are more of an admonishing flavor might stand out, far more often they were—I hope—encouraging and celebratory. Really, parents cornered the market on bringing *caritas* and *veritas* (charity and truth) together millennia before St. Dominic did.

As closely associated Franciscans are with poverty, good and loving families no doubt served as the inspiration for this. As a mom, I'm excited by the ways Franciscans have elevated and developed poverty. But we need to clarify what we mean by poverty in the Franciscan tradition to really appreciate how mothers continue to model this.

Franciscan poverty tends to be sorely misunderstood by those outside our tradition. Many people think of poverty in the negative sense, as a lack of goods. To clarify, I don't mean negative as bad,

but in the sense of taking away or opposing something. For example, there are negative commandments telling you not to do something, like "Thou shalt not steal." There are also positive commandments telling you to do something, like, "Honor your father and mother."

So Franciscan poverty isn't to deny oneself or abstain from material goods. Positive to the core, Franciscan poverty is a deep generosity of all that one has, including oneself.

This understanding of poverty is a fundamentally other-regarding attitude of service and love. It affected Francis' approach to work; in Francis' day nobles and clerics were not expected to engage in manual work. When early Franciscans (both the friars and the seculars) engaged in difficult or socially devalued work—such as farming or care for the sick—they were in solidarity with the poor as well as other laborers.

There is other devalued work, closer to home. Regardless of how unbelievably important and human it is to craft a Halloween costume, plan a birthday party, host Thanksgiving, scrub a toilet, tend to fruit trees and—most of all—raise a human being, it tends to be socially devalued.

In fact, scholars of family studies

Franciscan poverty is positive to the core, something moms know about.

Pictured here at Niagara Falls are Maureen Day and her children, Veronica and David.



Photo courtesy of Maureen K. Day

noted that across nearly every culture, childcare does not routinely fall to “fully adult” men; childcare is typically provided by females of all ages, male children, and elderly men, but rarely by healthy adult men. It is assumed to be beneath them. For Francis to encourage his brothers to engage in socially devalued work put him in solidarity not just with laborers of his day, but with active mothers and fathers today.

Instead of directing our attention to goods or objects, Franciscan poverty focuses on human persons and their spiritual and material needs. This other-regarding way of being and a loose holding of possessions births a joyful asceticism, which facilitates intimacy with Christ and easily witnesses to others that all one needs is this intimacy, rather than material objects.

Once we understand poverty as radical generosity, it is easy to see the ways mothers have done this through the centuries. Francis recognized this in his *Rule for Hermitages*: when a friar was freed for prayer—whom he called “the son”—the friar who attended to his needs was called “the mother.” Mothers are the ones who give, serve, and offer care, ready to put everything aside for the one who is most vulnerable.

But, I want to be sure we can see the

difference between generously giving of oneself and completely depleting oneself. Mothers—and women generally—have been expected to give at the expense of themselves. At an address on the 25th anniversary of John Paul II’s apostolic letter *On the Dignity of Women*, Pope Francis corrects this, saying that “women are called to service, not servitude.”

He continues, “I suffer—speaking truthfully!—when I see in the Church . . . that the role of service that we all have, and that we must have—but that the role of service of the woman slips into a role of servitude.” It happens in our society, in our families, in our Church. We all need to be on guard against this so that maternal generosity comes as a free, life-giving gift, not an exploitative expectation.”

My other concern is that our times are not care-friendly. In *The Second Shift*, sociologist Arlie Hochschild notes that women have been the center of the domestic sphere for centuries. As our markets have become industrialized and moved outside the home, as our economies have become global, as our schools become larger and more professional, and as our neighborhoods are more anonymous, care has gradually been whittled away from many public spheres.

Hochschild argues that families, especially domestic culture, are one of the last

places acts of care happen. Yet today's rushed families often buy out of domestic tasks: heat-and-eat meals, yard work, housecleaning, child-care, eldercare, dog-walking, and more. What happens when we push domestic work aside so that we can hurry to "real life," where we don't think about wiping cobwebs from corners or patching a jacket? What do we lose when we don't see the love that these acts make manifest? I worry about what we're leaving behind, and I'm sure Francis would too.

Moms—biological, adoptive, or maternal presences—and active fathers have mastered the many practices of loving generosity that are

central to Franciscan poverty. We need to look to them for wisdom and formation. We should discover ways to bring this care to our social worlds, especially to the most vulnerable. Although moms may have started this notion of poverty, I'm thankful to the Franciscans for recognizing it, elevating it, and developing a systematic theology so that we may make a generous poverty manifest in our hearts and world. ❖

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Maureen K. Day is an associate professor of Religion and Society at the Franciscan School of Theology. Her latest book is Catholic Activism Today (NYU Press).

St. Clare's Basilica: *(continued from page 15)*

The frescoes in the vaults above the altar present images of saints in heavenly glory while lower wall spaces were used primarily to present the stories of holy people throughout the ages. Some of these wall spaces include images of the funeral of St. Clare with quite expressive and animated scenes of the people of the time involved in that liturgical and civic event. The scheme allowed the average viewer to view her or himself as involved in the events and dramas of the Bible and saints in an age when few people were literate. Although most could not read letters mainly due to the enormous cost of writing books by hand, this lack was compensated for by the fact that all could read images, colors, and symbols—frequently in a way better than contemporary viewers.

A high point of her life is depicted just before death when, according to the witness Sister Benvenuta in the Process of Canonization, the saint is covered with a textile of "heavenly substance" by the Virgin Mary herself. This scene is so exceptionally important on the dossal that the Blessed Virgin is depicted twice in the same event. Given the importance of textiles for medieval women in understanding the Incarnation noted previously and typically missed in most research, as well as the significance of spousal imagery in frescoes, this event could readily be interpreted as Clare being clothed

with the Incarnate Word himself—for Jesus the Christ unites his heavenly divinity with his earthly humanity, while now uniting the earthly Clare with his divinity. Assisting in this heavenly clothing is Christ's mother, Mary, who gave him his first earthly clothing and now prepares the earthly Clare for her heavenly union with her divine spouse.

The central image depicts Clare dressed in the tunic and cloak of the Franciscan movement. These items are cloth of low quality, the kind of fabric available to the poor. These drab, poor textiles help remind the viewer that God, in the Incarnation, took on the lowly estate of humanity so that humans could be caught up into Divinity. Thus, the images of Clare in her drab habit and the image of her being covered with the textile of "heavenly substance" are meant to be taken as examples of conformities between her and Jesus Christ. This is a challenge to all Christians: to make Christ present in their lives and to recognize him in the poor, whatever role one might have in society.

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This article is adapted from the booklet, "The Basilica of St. Clare: The Story Behind the Story," by Joseph H. Schwab, OFM. ❖

Jesus asks Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus responds, "I want to see again!" What do you want Jesus to do for you? Here is your opportunity to ask for what you need. We'll explore "Wisdom of Tenderness," a deeper compassion for the marginalized, grief for all, and compassion for the environment. Prayer, teachings, videos, and music will be used to help you learn in the way that best reaches you. Themes include non-judgment, nonviolence, forgiveness, and mindfulness.

***Your Story, Your Legacy
Retreat: A Full Sensory
Exploration***

10/7 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Mary Dunn

This full-day retreat will engage you in a thoughtful and inspiring look at the stories of how you came to be the person you are and the qualities of your life that can be a true legacy to future generations. Join us for a soulful day of self-discovery and spiritual companionship that will renew and strengthen you for the journey ahead.

***The Way to Peace: Daring
to Stretch Beyond Our
Comfort Zone***

10/14 4 p.m.–10/16 10 a.m.

Facilitator: Philip Chircop, SJ

During this retreat we will look deep into the gospel call for peace through nonviolence by exploring and unwrapping the Peace Prayer of St. Francis. We will let music, stories, poetry, and silence boldly but gently

challenge us to resist the forces of evil and negativity with the spirit of goodwill, gratitude, and generosity.

**Serra Retreat
Malibu, California
serraretreat.com
310-456-6631**

Women's Retreat

9/9–11 & 11/4–6

**Facilitator: Sr. Carol Quinlivan,
CSJ, & Fr. Charlie Smiech, OFM**

Let us walk in faith and in confidence. Join us in this retreat and be renewed and refreshed for a future filled with goodness and countless blessings.

***Sunlight of the Spirit/
Women's Serenity Retreat***

10/21–23

Facilitator: Diane Deats

Sunlight of the Spirit. A Women's 12-Step Recovery Retreat.

Men's Retreat

10/28–30

**Facilitator: Sr. Carol Quinlivan,
CSJ, & Fr. Charlie Smiech, OFM**

Let us walk in faith and in confidence. Join us in this retreat and be renewed and refreshed for a future filled with goodness and countless blessings. If the wording seems the same as to the left, it is! Men and women BOTH need renewal.

Send Pictures of Your Pets in Costume



St. Francis is the namesake of our order and is the patron saint of the environment and animals because he loved all creatures. We're planning something special for the Feast of St. Francis this year (October 4, 2022) and you and your pets could be a part of it. Celebrate with us by sending photos of your pets in costumes to TheWay@sbofm.org no later than August 31st.

at last



This painting by Friar Daniel Barica captures the spirit of Francis: joyful, open, at one with nature, in love with all creation.



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