

*St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity
Cornwall, P.E.I.*

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FRATERNITY NEWSLETTER

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Feast of St. Clare of Assisi

The following is an excerpt from a letter written to the Poor Clares by Fr. Michael A. Perry, OFM, Minister General, on the occasion of the Feast of St. Clare 2020. The full text of this letter is attached (Attachment 1).

“Lord God, look, I have been left here alone with you.” You probably recognise that this heartfelt cry of desolation was uttered by our Mother St. Clare on Christmas Eve 1252 when, incapacitated by her serious illness, she could not join her sisters in celebrating the Nativity of the Lord. How can we fail to see in it the lament of Jesus during his agony in the Garden of Olives? And that of so many of our brothers and sisters who, threatened by Covid-19, suffer isolation so distressing for the human heart?



Yes, the Lord does not save us from history but within history, he does not save us from Covid-19, but within Covid-19, he does not save us from loneliness, but within loneliness, he does not save us from fear, but within our fears.

Compassion means to suffer with. This virus has taught us that we are all in the same boat; it indiscriminately attacks rich and poor, powerful and small, just and sinful. In solidarity with suffering humanity, help us to persevere in prayer to hope against all hope: “Our help is in the Name of the Lord!”. This solidarity transforms the limits of human boundaries to include every human person, every living being, enabling us to embrace our true identity as interconnected beings living in a common home. This awareness helps us to assume the role God has given us as promoters of dignity and protectors of the human community and the environment, *Laudato Si’*.

Perhaps this event will also be an opportunity to build a new world based no longer on the paradigm of globalisation, at the commercial or cultural level, but on a return to the local, to the family, to the regional. Can we not dream of a new vision of work, business and the economy that is more inclusive and based on solidarity, where the soul and vulnerability would be its fertile foundations?

Annual Fraternity Picnic and Temporary Profession of Nancy Murphy

The annual fraternity picnic will be held on **Sunday, August 16th, 2020, 3:00PM – 5:00PM** at Joan McDonald's cottage, at which time, the fraternity will *joyfully celebrate the Temporary Profession of Nancy Murphy*. The ceremony will begin shortly after 3:00PM and will be held outdoors to facilitate safe-distancing. The rite of temporary profession will be followed by a time of fellowship.

Since we are not permitted to have a buffet or pot-luck meal during the COVID pandemic, the Council has decided to forego the traditional picnic "gourmet" meal together. Instead, you are asked to please bring your own snack and beverage for a time of celebration following Nancy's profession. You may also wish to bring your own garden chair.



Please note: All are strongly encouraged to wear a face mask.

In case of inclement weather, the fraternity will meet at St. Mary's Parish church in Montague at 3:00PM. An email will be sent by 10:30AM Sunday morning only IF the event is relocated to Montague. Otherwise, the event will go as planned at Joan's cottage.

Annual Fraternity Retreat 2020 - CANCELLED

It is with regret that the Council has made the decision to cancel the fraternity's 2020 annual Retreat.

Most years, the retreat has attracted 30-32 participants. Although Our Lady of Hope Retreat Centre in Hope River can accommodate up to 38 persons, the Council was concerned that the retreat centre would not be able to accommodate safe distancing in the meeting rooms, dining room and especially the chapel.



While some groups are continuing to hold retreats and other spiritual gatherings at the retreat centre, for the most part, these are smaller groups where safe distancing can be more easily facilitated.

In consideration of the demographics of our retreat participants and the need to ensure that we are able to provide assurance for people's safety in these times of COVID-19 pandemic, Council believes that we cannot risk the health and well-being of our members and guests. Therefore, Council has made the difficult decision to cancel the retreat for this year.

Sr. Marianna Jung, FMM of Montreal, who was to be the retreat leader, has agreed to come next year and share on the life of St. Clare and her contribution to Franciscan spirituality.

Below, you will find information on a possible alternate spiritual activity that would happen this same weekend of September 26/27.

Retreat Option



With the fraternity retreat weekend cancelled, Our Lady of Hope Retreat Centre could be open that weekend to anyone who would be interested in spending a beautiful weekend in silent prayer and reflection.

Earla and Martin Avery have indicated that they are willing to accommodate a private group of fraternity members or friends that would like to spend the weekend of Sept. 25-27 at the Retreat Centre. There would be no programming or speaker and each person or couple would be welcome to make use of the

grounds and facilities. However, meals can only be provided for a minimum of 12 persons and persons attending cannot bring their own food.

This could be an excellent opportunity to get away for a peaceful weekend with God in the silence of nature and prayer. If you are interested in participating in such a great experience, please contact **Gerry Gabriel at 902-628-3896 or geraldfgabriel@gmail.com**. The deadline for registering for this retreat is August 28, 2020. For further details, feel free to contact Gerry.

Well4Africa Project



Well4Africa is an initiative launched by the National Fraternity of Canada whose objective is to dig wells for some of the struggling communities in Africa and thus allow them to have their own source of fresh, clean water.

The OFS National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Team is calling all Secular Franciscans from across Canada to join in this life-saving initiative. Without a doubt, *Well4Africa* has and will continue to save lives in African communities where people can only dream of having clean water, the essential gift of creation. The *Well4Africa* project will yield many benefits for the communities involved, including better health for its inhabitants, a reduction of illness and diseases, concrete support for farming, the growing of vegetables and the planting of trees, a reduction in the stress experienced by its people, especially for women who are normally responsible for fetching water for their families and carrying it over long distances, better education and safety of children, and an overall boost to the development of local communities.

Funds raised by Secular Franciscans in Canada will be used to support the provision of water to the villages surrounding St. Lawrence Parish in Malawi, Africa. Approximately \$10,000 CAD will be required to see this project to its completion.

Members of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity are asked to submit their donations to Ruth Cassidy at your earliest convenience. Donations can also be given to Ruth at the fraternity picnic.

August Birthday

August 1	Ron Bolger
August 6	Gerry Gabriel
August 12	Ruth Cassidy
August 21	Ginny MacDonald



Happy Birthday, Ron, Gerry, Ruth and Ginny. Blessings on you and your families!

Newsletter

Newsletter items are always welcome. You may send them before the last Wednesday of the month to Doug Clorey at jdclcorey@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

Annual Fraternity Picnic and Temporary Profession of Nancy Murphy on **Sunday, August 16th, 2020, 3:00PM – 5:00PM** at Joan McDonald's cottage.

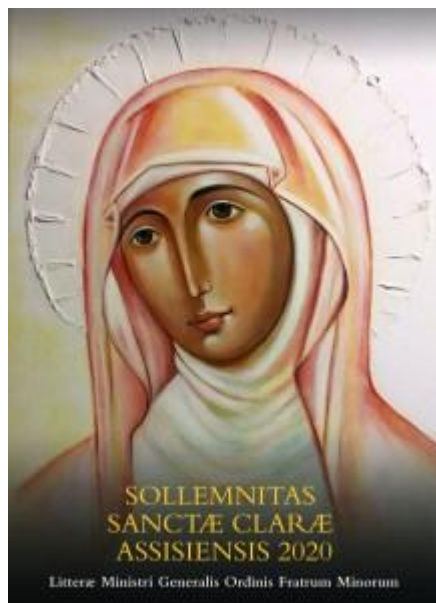
In case of inclement weather, the fraternity will meet at St. Mary's Parish church in Montague at 3:00PM. If and only if the event is to be held at the church, an email will be sent by 10:30AM Sunday morning.

FEAST OF ST. CLARE 2020: LETTER OF THE MINISTER GENERAL

The Lord does not save us from history but within history

My dear Poor Ladies of St. Clare, may the Lord give you His peace!

“Lord God, look, I have been left here alone with you.” You probably recognise that this heartfelt cry of desolation was uttered by our Mother St. Clare on Christmas Eve 1252[1] when, incapacitated by her serious illness, she could not join her sisters in celebrating the Nativity of the Lord. How can we fail to see in it the lament of Jesus during his agony in the Garden of Olives? And that of so many of our brothers and sisters who, threatened by Covid-19, suffer isolation so distressing for the human heart? On that night, Clare experienced deep loneliness: Francis, who next to God was her only consolation, had died[2]; the friars were in conflict; and she herself was alone, carrying the burden of her infirmities. It is this loneliness that she presents to the Lord, and God gives her the consolation of hearing the hymns sung by the friars in the Basilica of St. Francis.



Because of Covid-19, a certain community of Poor Clares was forced to adopt maximum isolation measures. Each sister had to stay in her cell to assist recovery and to avoid infection, making it impossible to gather in the choir and refectory. So painful and so distressing! These sisters told me how consoling it was for them to follow the liturgies presided over by Pope Francis on little radios, listening to his homilies which became the basis of a form of life reduced to its essentials. “A time is coming [...] when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me”[3].

Yes, the Lord does not save us from history but within history[4], he does not save us from Covid-19, but within Covid-19, he does not save us from loneliness, but within loneliness, he does not save us from fear, but within our fears.

And hasn't fear become our daily lot and our companion since the beginning of this pandemic? Fear of the other from whom we must protect ourselves, fear of the wolf that has entered the sheepfold, fear of the evil at work inside us, fear of transmitting death to the other, fear that becomes panic when the virus does its deadly work on our loved ones, and when our own symptoms suddenly give alarming signals. How we tremble before the death of the Poor Crucified One who, asphyxiated, placed his spirit in the hands of the Father! If the coronavirus shakes us so much, it is because it touches the vital breath within us and destroys it... Fear also of the separation and abandonment that some of you experienced when you had to entrust your sister to hospital care, when you saw her leave without being able to be with her at the moment of the great passing.

What is striking is that the death of St. Clare seems to have taken place in a climate of an astonishing heavenly presence: Clare saw the King of Glory coming to her[5], a Sister saw a multitude of virgins approaching the saint's bed in procession, and the Virgin of virgins bowing her face maternally to that of Clare[6]. Speaking to her soul, Clare whispered: "Go calmly in peace, for you will have a good escort"[7]. When the door to the Communion of Saints is opened, can one die alone?

"My sisters and daughters, do not be afraid because, if the Lord is with us, the enemy cannot harm us. Have confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ because He will free us"[8]. After several weeks in a long tunnel with Covid, sisters told me how the Good Shepherd had kept his promise: "no one will snatch my sheep out of my hand"[9]. They give thanks for all the solidarity they received, for the attentive and competent medical care they were given, for the intense prayer that, on all sides, young and old alike, raised them to heaven so that they might be freed from illness.

It is seldom a pleasure to take the place of the leper, the one from whom others flee. But when one allows oneself to be loved in that situation, what a sweet fragrance arises, what a space of welcome, communion, and charity then opens up!

Yet another community generously responded to the appeals of the poor at their door, even though they worried about the financial difficulties they faced because of lockdown. To their astonishment, benefactors also knocked at the monastery door to offer their contribution. In her great and centuries-old experience, the Church rightly implores the Lord to deliver humanity "from plague, famine and war". She knows that the health crisis leads to an economic crisis, which can, unfortunately, lead to a social crisis. Indeed, many of you share this concern for tomorrow with your loved ones affected by unemployment. More than ever, we are invited to trust in Providence, because so far the Lord has not abandoned us, nor will he abandon us. Living in simplicity, avoiding all waste; living in solidarity, doing our best to do any good we can do.

Perhaps this event will also be an opportunity to build a new world based no longer on the paradigm of globalisation, at the commercial or cultural level, but on a return to the local, to the family, to the regional[10]. Can we not dream of a new vision of work, business and the economy that is more inclusive and based on solidarity, where the soul and vulnerability would be its fertile foundations?

We are counting on you and on the wisdom of your way of life to help us to dare to be new following this crisis. Unexpectedly and abruptly, during the phases of confinement, we were forced, like you, to make do with restricted spaces and to remain there for a long time. This was in total contrast to the normal way of our society characterised by extended spaces (journeys, social networking, etc.), and frenetic rhythms ("everything, right away", ever greater speed, etc.). Some will have retained from this experience only the limitation of freedom that it entailed, the challenge of finding oneself facing one's own deadly dynamics, relational violence due to lack of communication, lack of forgiveness, lack of acceptance of the other. And we perceive the richness of your witness: the enclosure is a small battlefield in the heart of the planet, where you teach us not so much about *fuga mundi* as about fleeing from flight from the world[11], where

you teach us to live in the depths of space, to enter into the colour of the different hours of the day and into the *kairos* of God, alternating words and silence building relationships of communion with the help of the Spirit. It is very touching that some of you while sadly missing the Eucharistic celebration, the centre of your day, accepted this situation as a call to live and strengthen the “sacrament of our sister”.

This sacrament of our sister, which not only makes our brother Jesus present but is also a bearer of salvation and health, because we have experienced that by taking care of ourselves we have taken care of our sister. Likewise, our sister, in taking care of herself, has also taken care of others.

Your monasteries are reservoirs of peace, serenity, hope, and compassion for those who are on the front lines of the battle. In the helplessness that we experienced with you because we were unable to go out to help the sick and the needy, we dared to pray intercessory prayer with you. Not only praying for ourselves or others in their loneliness or sickness, but also for those risking their health and lives by taking care of others.

With our Mother St. Clare, keep your gaze fixed on the Poor Crucified One, listen to him cry out: “All you who pass by the way, look and see if there is any suffering like my suffering”. Let us respond with one voice, with one spirit to the one who cries and weeps: “Remembering this over and over leaves my soul sinking within me”^[12]. May the compassion that you can show from a mother’s heart become a fragrant perfume^[13] that can console so many afflicted and sick people, supporting health personnel who are so generous and devoted, encouraging families, and inflaming the hearts of the young people whom the Lord is calling to follow him.

Compassion means to suffer with. This little virus has taught us that we are all in the same boat; it indiscriminately attacks rich and poor, powerful and small, just and sinful. In solidarity with suffering humanity, help us to persevere in prayer to hope against all hope: “Our help is in the Name of the Lord!”^[14]. This solidarity transforms the limits of human boundaries to include every human person, every living being, enabling us to embrace our true identity as interconnected beings living in a common home. This awareness helps us to assume the role God has given us as promoters of dignity and protectors of the human community and the environment, *Laudato Si’*.

In this year we commemorate the witness of the first Franciscan martyrs killed in 1220: they lived the martyrdom of blood. Is it not given to us, as to St. Clare, to live the martyrdom of patience^[15], the “passion of patience”^[16]? Both are fruitful: if Tertullian could say that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of new Christians, is it not the same for the toil of patience?

Rome, July 25th, 2020
Feast of St. James

Fr. Michael A. Perry, OFM
Minister General and Servant

- [1] PC III, 30.
- [2] TestCl 38.
- [3] Jn 16:32.
- [4] Cf. John Paul II, *homily* 8 December 2004.
- [5] PC IV, 19.
- [6] PC XI, 4.
- [7] PC XI, 3.
- [8] PC III, 18.
- [9] Cf. Jn 10:28.
- [10] Cf. Giuseppe Buffon, *Il futuro sotto la mattonella – Osservatore Romano* 24 April 2020.
- [11] Cf. Brother David d'Hamonville, Abbot of En Calcat, *La Règle, La communauté et la règle bénédictine, Vivre ensemble longtemps*, KTO broadcast.
- [12] 4LAg 25-26.
- [13] Cf. Jn 12:1-8.
- [14] Ps 124:8.
- [15] Cf. M. B. Umiker and F. Sedda, *Santi per attrazione*, Edizioni Terra Santa, Milano 2020.
- [16] Cf. Madeleine Delbrel, *La joie de croire*. Edizioni Terra Santa, Milano 2020.