

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

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI FRATERNITY NEWSLETTER

May 2020

VOLUME XXXII NO. 5

Consecration to Mary in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

On **Friday, May 1st, 2020**, the Catholic Bishops of Canada will consecrate their individual dioceses or eparchies to Mary, Mother of the Church, seeking her protection during the Coronavirus pandemic, similar to what other Episcopal Conferences throughout the world have already done. Along with the Bishops, pastors, families, groups, individuals and other faith communities may likewise choose to join the consecration as part of the global effort to unite in faith and prayer in this most difficult time.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC), in fraternal communion with the leadership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has agreed that this Marian consecration be held on the same day in both countries, making this a most meaningful and powerful intercession throughout North America to the Blessed Mother. Pope Francis has already offered up a moving Prayer to the Virgin Mary for protection in light of COVID-19 last March 11, 2020.

The first day of May holds particular significance as it marks the beginning of an entire month to honour the Blessed Virgin Mary. "May is the month dedicated in a special way to the Mother of Christ. We believe that she is, in a spiritual but real sense, our mother too," said the Most Reverend Richard Gagnon, Archbishop of Winnipeg and CCCC President. "We turn to her and ask for the help of her powerful and maternal prayers to God for us. To consecrate ourselves to Mary means to be united with her in entrusting our lives entirely to God."

(excerpt from CCCC website, April 23, 2020)



Mary, Health of the Sick

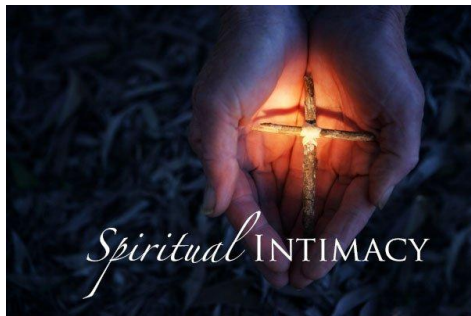
May Fraternity Meeting - IMPORTANT

St. Francis of Assisi fraternity will hold its May monthly meeting on **Sunday, May 3rd, via ZOOM, beginning at 2:00 p.m.**

This will be an abbreviated meeting but will include the Ongoing Formation session presented by Sr. Gemma (refer to article on Formation below). The meeting will include a hymn, opening prayer, formation, appreciations, business, including a proposal for holding small groups (4-5 persons) to further discuss the formation topic, closing prayer and final hymn.

We look forward to you joining us on Sunday. You will be notified of the Zoom meeting link immediately prior to the meeting.

Formation



Our next gathering will be focused on the theme of Intimacy. While we realize that there are many faces of intimacy, like physical, emotional and mental, there is also spiritual intimacy that is for us all, whether we are single, married or religious.

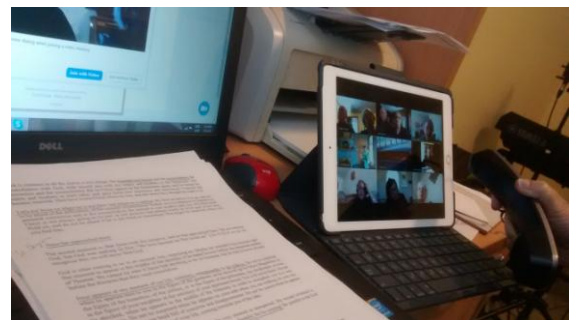
In *“The Way of St. Francis”*, Murray Bodo explores intimacy as a relationship with God and all our brothers and sisters, and invites us to pursue the challenge as well as the joy of finding God in our human love for, as he says, God and humanity are one in the mystery of Incarnation.

Invitation to Reflect

Members of the fraternity are invited to read Chapter 15 on Intimacy in *“The Way of St. Francis”* by Murray Bodo, OFM. Also reflect on Articles 4 and 5 of the OFS Rule as well as Article 9.1 and 20.1 of the OFS General Constitutions.

Ongoing Formation

Within the context of a Zoom meeting, members of St. Francis of Assisi and Brother Leo fraternities reflected on the 2020 Easter Letter from Tibor Kauser, Minister General of the OFS. The reflection focused on Mary Magdalene, Thomas, the disciples on the road to Emmaus and Peter, and how they reacted to the death of Jesus. Kathleen May began by sharing on the reality that “Jesus was not there”. Sr. Gemma Dunn shared on how “Jesus had approached them”. Claudia Batchilder



continued by sharing on the how “Jesus had called them”. And Tom Wilkinson concluded by sharing on the “Importance of being in community”. The following is a synopsis of what they shared.

Jesus was not there (Kathleen May)

Jesus was not there, where they thought he ought to be.

We often seek him where he is not there, and he does not intend to be there in our own plans and in our self accomplishments.

Let us reflect on Mary Magdalene, needing to hold onto Jesus, and her feelings of abandonment; Thomas having doubts and needing ‘proof’; the disciples on the road to Emmaus having hoped that Jesus would redeem them; Peter leaving his vocation fearful and confused. They all had expectations of Jesus and felt despair that he was no longer ‘there’.

In my own reflection, when I have felt that Jesus was not there, I noticed I am coming from my rational mind and my ego. For example, when I want recognition for my holy Intentions, I want positive results from my continued efforts, and I seek reward for my sacrifices.

But it does not take me long to realize Jesus is not there. Nor does he intend to be there.

He is not my cheerleader, not my boss, or anything else I want or expect.

He is my Savior. It’s not about me. It is about his love for me.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less”. As I understand, when I think of myself less is the only time Jesus can be present.

Jesus Approached (Sr. Gemma)

This is the great spiritual principle of God’s initiative or grace - a gift freely given. God in Jesus and in the Spirit approaches us in the ordinary and extraordinary experiences of our lives and usually always in an unexpected manner! As Tibor said, our role is (1) to be more acutely aware of God’s presence everywhere, (2) to be thankful when we recognize God’s presence, and (3) to be open to surprises.

As I reflect on COVID-19 affecting the whole planet, I hear daily about how we can have a healthy “physical” response (handwashing, social distancing, staying home) and “emotional” response (daily exercise, slowing down the pace, meditation, finding joy in each day, keeping connected etc.). Now I am thinking about a “spiritual” response that will open us to Jesus’ approach.

So, as an example, I am using the physical response as a model. (1) When we handwash for 20 seconds, why not pray the Our Father, repeat a mantra, think about the miracle of water or the miracle of your hands. (2) While practising social distancing with neighbors is a great time to greet your neighbors, find out how they are doing, share something special about yourself, and wish them well. (3) While staying inside, think of it as a prolonged Sabbath, providing us time to open ourselves to the Word of God, to meditate and contemplate, gain a new appreciation for

silence, solitude and a slower pace of living, time for more spiritual reading. Remember Psalm 46; “Be still and know that I am God.” – an invitation to rest, relax, watch and wait, and to trust that God is in the midst of it all.

I believe that God will find us just where we are - at home, like Thomas and Magdalene - around the table/ walking outdoors like the Emmaus disciples - at our work or volunteering like Peter - and in those quiet moments if we are open to his coming.

As Winston Churchill once said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste!”

Jesus Calls Them (Claudia Batchilder)

Can we go from being “I” people to where Jesus is sending us?

Mary Magdalene went from “I” will hold on to Jesus, which we all must do, to ‘going to her brothers and sisters and telling them’ the message of the resurrection by her life.

For Thomas it was about his belief—unless I... unless I...to “ My Lord and my God! ” And that cry on behalf of all of us has been heard down the centuries. Thomas went forth touching the wounds of people who suffer—the wounds of Christ. We can too.

On the Road to Emmaus, I believe we are the unnamed disciple. They were so disappointed that things didn’t go the way they had planned. We are also called to recognize our distress. But not to stop there. Be open and able to recognize Christ among us—in His Word and in the Eucharist, which nourishes us, and then go back to build up the community of Christ.

I am not your rock! I have denied you! I am afraid, so I am going back to what it was like before – fishing. But when the sun (Son) rises, someone calls to drop the net on the other side - and what a great catch! That’s how Peter and Jesus’ love story began three years before. Now Peter has to trust and keep on fishing in love for the sheep. As do we. And we need to find new ways to do it. Peter was told by Christ that he would become weak but, when he was stronger, that he was to go and strengthen his brothers and sisters. With the Word and Spiritual Communion-- we can!

Importance of Community (Tom Wilkinson)

I believe the main point expressed in this item is a call to unity of all Secular Franciscans around the world. I appreciated the analogy of the four characters from the Easter Gospels with ourselves and how, in each case, they went back and shared with their “community” what they had seen and experienced. Is this not the same for us when we gather as Secular Franciscans? We encounter Christ as we pray together, especially in the prayer of the Church, our formation, our fraternal sharing and in our fellowship. This is community. This is fraternity. This is family. We come together, we share our experiences, we pray for each other’s needs/intentions and we grow in our love for God and each other.

At last fall's retreat, Fr. Benny Vincent encouraged us to "open your ears and listen". Seek and find Jesus in new experiences and be grateful to God for surprises.

Finally, I appreciated Tibor's challenge for us to be united with our many thousands of sisters and brothers around the world. "Be aware, that in each single moment around the clock, a Secular Franciscan sister or brother is praying somewhere around the world. What a unity"!

May this spirit of lived unity in fraternal prayer and purpose be a source of joy as we proclaim our Risen Saviour, Jesus! Alleluia!



JPIC Moment

Attached is an article on "Earth Day" by the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) team - Nancy, Joan, Maureen, Mike, and Marion M.
(Attachment 1)

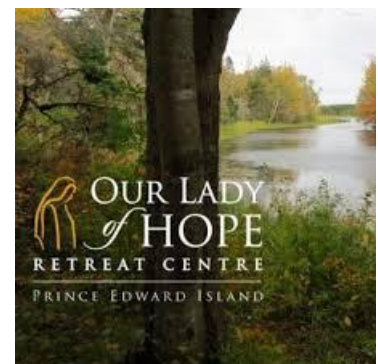


Annual Fraternity Retreat 2020

The St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity annual retreat will be held on

September 25-27, 2020
at Our Lady of Hope Retreat Centre
in Bayview, PEI.

The retreat begins at 6 pm on Friday evening and concludes at 1 pm on Sunday (after lunch). Our retreat leader is **Sr. Marianna Jung, FMM** who works in St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Park Extension (Montreal). The theme of the retreat is **The Life and Spirituality of St. Clare**. Registration forms for the retreat will be available in June.



May Birthday

May 26

Brad Goodick

Happy Birthday, Brad!
Blessings to you, Maureen and your family.



Newsletter

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

Upcoming Events

Fraternity Meeting - **Sunday, May 3rd, via ZOOM, beginning at 2:00 p.m.**

Fraternity Meeting Dates for 2020 in St. Francis of Assisi parish centre, Cornwall

Sunday, June 14 7-9 p.m.

Sunday, July 12 7-9 p.m.

August: no fraternity meeting (annual picnic)

Sunday, September 13 7-9 p.m.

October: no fraternity meeting (annual retreat)

Sunday, November 8 2-4 p.m.

Sunday, December 13 2-4 p.m.

Earth Day

In an article in the Guardian April 22, 2020 we were told “with today marking the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, milestones of the environmental movement, indigenous peoples are increasingly at the forefront of global struggles” They tell us we are looking in the wrong direction for answers to climate change. The human race will only survive if we start putting our minds at the service of our hearts.

We have thousands more environmental organizations than we had 50 years ago yet Mother Earth life support systems are coming to the edge, and no one is asking why.

A 14 minute film “Wisdom Weavers of the World” can be found at <https://www.wisdomweaver.world>. It is a starting point for an open ended series of events and collaborations to inspire people to ask themselves how they can make a deeper contribution to the lives of their communities and the planet. The film advocates that we listen to our heart and follow our path. May it be clear; and for the good of all. **We have one earth. Our challenge is to make every day an earth day, look within your heart for the answer to what you (we) can do to make our earth a better place for all.**

Pope Francis: Highlights of his Earth Day Message

"Today we celebrate the fiftieth Earth Day," he began. "This is an occasion for renewing our commitment to love and care for our common home and for the weaker members of our human family. As the tragic coronavirus pandemic has taught us, we can overcome global challenges only by showing solidarity with one another and embracing the most vulnerable in our midst."

We have sinned against the earth," Pope Francis said in a forceful **Earth Day message** Wednesday that reinforced the religious leader's commitment to the environment. In his remarks he also warned that harming the earth put human life at risk.

"There is a Spanish saying that is very clear about this," he said. "It goes: 'God always forgives; we humans sometimes forgive, and sometimes not; the earth never forgives.' The earth does not forgive: if we have despoiled the earth, its response will be very ugly."

He praised local and international environmental movements and highlighted youth-led climate strikes. But the pope's message was not only a warning. He also proposed solutions.

It will be necessary for our children to take to the streets to teach us the obvious: we have no future if we destroy the very environment that sustains us," he said.

He also held up the knowledge of **indigenous** communities as an example of an alternative way of interacting with the planet.

"They teach us that we cannot heal the earth unless we love and respect it," he said. "They have the wisdom of 'living well,' not in the sense of having a good time, no, but of living in harmony with the earth. They call this harmony 'living well.'"

He concluded with a call to action both for world leaders and ordinary citizens.

"It will help if people at all levels of society work together for the good of all. How can you contribute in your small way?"

From your JPIC team (Nancy, Joan, Maureen, Mike, and Marion)