

FRANCISCAN NETWORK

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Dear Friends,

St. Bonaventure tells us that St. Francis was a kind person whose heart melted whenever he saw a poor person or a leper. (He must surely have smiled down on his namesake, Pope Francis, who has declared this a Jubilee Year of Mercy.) Francis practised compassion, imitating Jesus, who identified with the least of His brothers. He firmly believed that each person was created in the image of God, and that to respect a person is to respect Christ in that person.

His response to the poor was to help them wherever and whenever he could, with no concern for the personal cost. He gave them the clothes off his back, food, altar decorations and often helped them carry a heavy load by putting it on his own shoulders.

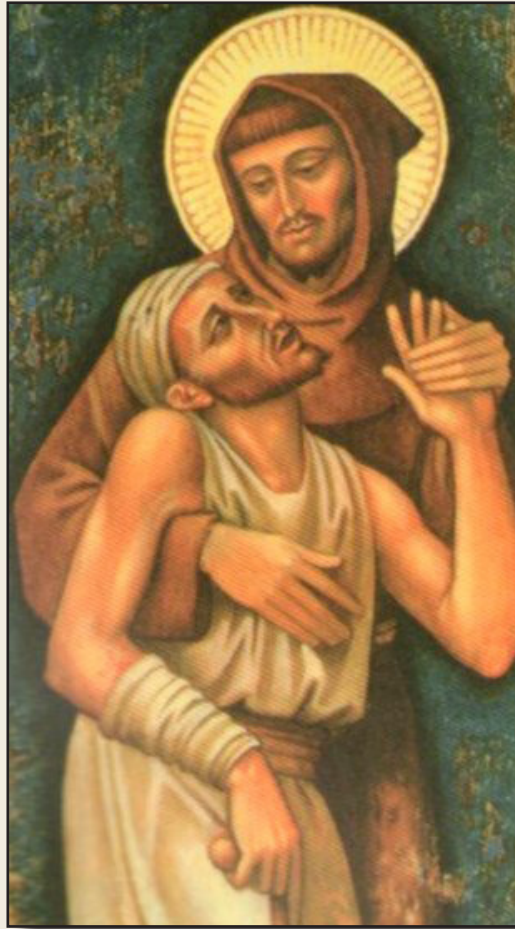
Perhaps the greatest lesson that Francis teaches us is that compassion spirals out in wider and wider circles, and includes those whom many regard as unlovable. Francis saw Christ in the poor and the suffering.

Through our own openness to the Spirit, love for others grows – we awaken to the pain and suffering of our brothers and sisters, thus learning to connect with those around us. We feel compelled to share their brokenness, and to cry out with them in their suffering. Let us pray the following prayer of St. Francis often during this year.

*“Lord, may we love our neighbour as ourselves by drawing them all to Your love,
by rejoicing in the good fortune of others as well as our own,
and by sympathizing with the misfortune of others,
never giving offence to anyone.”*

May you all enjoy a happy and blessed Jubilee Year of Mercy.

- Sr. Liz



Bastia Umbria

Bastia Umbria was once an Abbey – nowadays it is a cemetery Chapel.

Towards the end of March 1211, St. Francis accompanied St. Clare here to protect her from the anger of her relatives.



They were furious that she had left home after her consecration to God in the Chapel of St. Mary of the Porziuncola. However, not long after coming here, Clare had to ask to be taken to a safer monastery on Mount Subasio, known as St. Angelo of Panzo. Here too she was followed by her angry family after her sister Agnese left home to join her.

They attempted to take both girls home by force, but the Lord intervened. When Clare's uncle Monaldo raised his arm to strike her, it became paralysed. After that, all departed in fear after seeing what had taken place and peace was restored. Finally Clare and Agnese left for San Damiano where Clare established the Poor Clare Order.

God's Mercy transforms human hearts:

It enables us, through the experience of human love, To become merciful in return.

- Pope Francis

St Lawrence O'Toole

A Parish nearby has St. Lawrence (often spelled Laurence) as its Patron, and the other day someone asked me if I knew anything about the life of this saint. Sadly, I had to reply that I really knew nothing about him, so looked him up in my Book of Saints where I discovered the following facts of his life.

Lawrence (Lorcan) O'Toole was born in 1128 near Castledermot in Kildare of a marriage between the chieftain families of the O'Tooles and the O'Byrnes. His father, Maurice, had been a former Leinster chieftain who was subdued by the stronger MacMurrough family.

As a pledge of loyalty he had to hand over his youngest son, Lawrence, then aged 10, who was kept a hostage for two years and was badly mistreated during this time. By the time Maurice came to reclaim his son, Lawrence knew that he had a



monastic vocation. He became a monk at Glendalough and was elected Abbot at the age of 25.

His duties included not only the government of the monastery, but also the relief of famine that raged at that time, and the suppression of the brigands in that area – many of whom were apostate monks. In 1162, at the age of 34, he became Archbishop of Dublin, the first native-born Irishman, and his appointment marked the end of Viking domination in Dublin.

Lawrence was a man of prayer who lived an austere life, even as Archbishop of Dublin, always helping the poor, especially the homeless children. Another prominent characteristic was his ability to broker peace talks between warring England and Ireland. In all the subsequent vicissitudes of the Anglo-Norman invasion, Laurence kept steadfastly on the side of the Irish.

It was Ireland's good fortune that Lawrence O'Toole died abroad. His life was written by a Canon of Europe a few years after his death, and as a result the document survived when so many other valuable Irish writings were lost. In his memory, a French sea-port was called after him, as well as a great Gothic church being dedicated to him.

Lawrence was canonised by Pope Honorius 111 in 1225, just 45 years after his death. He has a place in the calendar of saints – his feast day is November 14.



*The “Jesus
the Homeless”
sculpture.*

The homeless Jesus

At a recent prayer evening we were given a reflection on the “Homeless Jesus” which seemed so appropriate in this Year of Mercy. This is the name given to a statue, the photo of which we can see here. This sculpture of Jesus as homeless and sleeping on a park bench is “freaking out” the neighbours of the Parish of Davidson, a wealthy North Carolina suburb.

The creator, a Canadian sculptor and devout catholic, Tim Schmalz, says he understands that his “JESUS THE HOMELESS” is provocative, but says that is what it is meant to do – it is there to challenge people. He says he was inspired to create the statue after seeing a homeless person on a street near a University, and was deeply moved by that homeless person’s plight.

This statue depicts Jesus as a vagrant on a park seat – Jesus is huddled under a blanket with His face and hands obscured – only the crucifixion wounds on His uncovered feet give Him away. The sculptor who has an affinity for street art, created it to remind us that that’s the kind of life that Jesus had. He was, in essence, a homeless person.

The challenge is to see the world in a different way, to live in a way that is relevant, in a way that is concerned for the things that matter in people’s lives. Every day Jesus reached out beyond Himself, crossing lines of division, discrimination and exclusion. Every day He went out of His way to respond to the needs of people. He did everything out of love.

As we gaze at the sculpture of the Homeless Jesus, how can we give witness to this different way of living, with lives that are just and fuelled by love?

It is now common to see people come, sit on the bench, rest their hand on the wounded bronze feet – and pray!

***If it is love that moves the sun
and the other stars, as Dante
once wrote, then Love must
move us as well, if we are to be
at home with one another in the
Cosmos.***

**- Ilia Delio, OSF
The Year of Love**

News from Cunnamulla

A few months back, Sr. Maureen wrote with news from far west Queensland. Here are some extracts from her newsy and interesting letter:

Driving in the south-west is quite an adventure and not just because of the animals. Each time I start on one of my long journeys, I always wonder if I will hit an animal, have a puncture or simply be stranded on a lonely road with no mobile coverage. Recently, I was driving between two outback towns when the car simply stopped.

There was no phone coverage, and the only traffic - the huge triple trailers speeding by!! Finally, I managed to hail a driver who kindly drove me back to the

nearest town to find a car repair service station. After that he drove me home – a journey of 7 hours with all the delays along the way. I finally had my own car back the next day.

Another time as I was driving in the late afternoon, I was on the lookout for the 300 head of cattle I had seen in the morning. They were so thin, it looked as if they were made of leather that stretched across their bones. When there is no rain, there is no grass! However, it makes me think what a country we live in – who knows, but in two weeks or less, it could be teeming with rain.

The Sacred Heart Parish clothing sales are going extremely well. The last sale raised over \$600. A team of creative women set up the old convent and made doughnuts, scones, pikelets and a host of other mouth-watering goodies.

Clothing that can no longer be used is cut up into rags which we sell to the local garages. My favourite times of the day are early morning and late evening. Looking out my bedroom window early in the morning I watch Minnie Mouse, our beautiful dog, running up and down the running track. I always hope that I can catch some of the enthusiasm this dog has for life. In the evening I sit for half-an-hour and watch the sunset, holding in my heart those people who have asked for prayers.

With all these gifts for free, I feel contented and so richly blessed.

- Maureen, mfic



Sr. Maureen sharing a meal with parishioners after Mass.

In conclusion

A special Blessing on each and every one:

May flowers spring up where your feet touch the earth.

May the feet that walked before you bless your every step.

May all your intentions find their way into the heart of God,

And may you remember all the circles of prayer throughout the world.

- Macrina Wiederkehr

Love,
Sr. Liz

