

FRANCISCAN NETWORK

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Dear Friends,

Apologies for this very late issue of Franciscan Network, but I had a heart attack in late May – was recovering well, when bursitis struck in my left hip, so that has kept me out of circulation for a few months!

Anyhow, things are improving, so it's great to be getting in touch with you all at long last. I want to share with you this article on Francis by Wayne Simsic that I read last week.

He says that we tend to fill our lives with so many responsibilities to jobs, family and community that we have very little spare time.

We stay occupied, and therefore unscheduled time makes us nervous. What would happen if we realized that Christ was whispering to us in the midst of our experiences, our friendships, our work and pleasures and He expected a response?

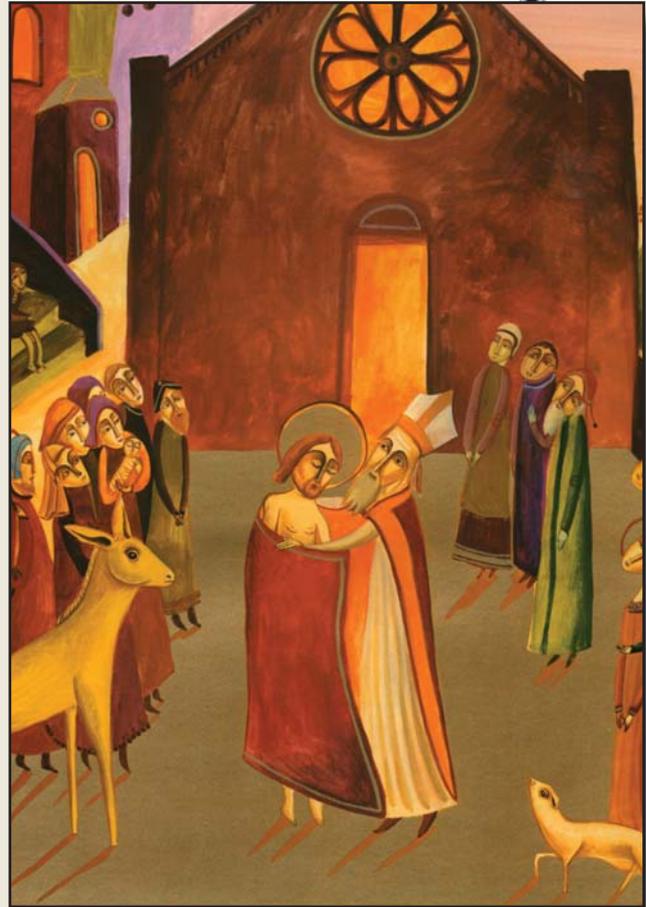
When Francis first heard the inner call, he sensed that he was no longer the same person – he could no longer live in the old way. His response was to retreat to the forests and caves around Assisi so that he could pray and discover God's will.

He began to place alms in the hands of beggars and to wear simple clothes. He rebuilt the crumbling church of San Damiano, and gazing at the crucifix one day, fell to his knees and had a sudden revelation into the heart of the suffering Jesus.

Francis was certainly tempted many times to return to his old life with its security and acceptable bourgeois conventions, but an inner voice encouraged him and gave him the strength to choose the way of love.

People wondered at the change in this popular young man. Francis's father reacted strongly. When Pietro Bernadone discovered that Francis had taken money without permission to rebuild a church, he stormed after his son and drove him into seclusion.

Eventually, in the public square at the centre of town, Francis faced his parents and the Bishop of Assisi. A crowd of curious townspeople assembled and watched the drama unfold.



Francis stripped off his clothes as a sign that he relinquished his past and would dedicate his life to the spirit of poverty. He would no longer be bound to an earthly father, but only to his God.

Francis chose a path of nakedness, of birth into a new and abundant life. He had chosen to be God's fool. His father looked on in disbelief and the townspeople responded with shock and sadness.

Francis left Assisi singing, for his heart was now free and full of joy. He had begun a new life, and jubilation poured out of his heart.

The conversion of Francis may seem a little dramatic to us today, but his response to the call of faith reminds us that the way of Jesus could be called foolish.

We have to let go of our traditional bonds, old securities, certainties and our cultural mindset, and forge a new way of life. This will happen gradually over time with the help

of grace, and soon we will find ourselves embarking on a radically new way of life.

HOW HAVE YOU MADE ROOM FOR GOD TODAY?

San Giustino



THIS well-preserved abbatial church of San Giustino stands a few hundred metres between Farneto and Piccione.

Once, while St. Francis was returning to Gubbio from the Porziuncola, he happened to meet the Benedictine abbot of San Giustino along the road. The abbot asked the saint to remember him in his prayers.

As soon as the group of monks and horsemen had gone into the distance, St. Francis asked his companions to wait for him, as he wished to carry out the promise he had made to the abbot – he stopped and began praying by the roadside.

As Francis prayed, the abbot felt a gentle, inner warmth come over him and recognized this sign as being the saint's prayers.

He turned back to thank Francis, and to show his gratitude, offered St. Francis the grange of Farneto as a dwelling for his friars.

From that moment onwards, Farneto was inhabited by the friars who often hosted the saint, who in turn, was always happy to visit them and enrich them with his paternal love and concern.

Reflection

*Live always in truth,
So that you may die in obedience.
Do not look longingly at life lived outside,
For the Spirit is better.
In love, use discernment,
And all that the Lord gives you.
When weighed down with illness, or wearied:
Bear it all in peace and contentment.*

- St. Francis

St Lawrence of Brindisi

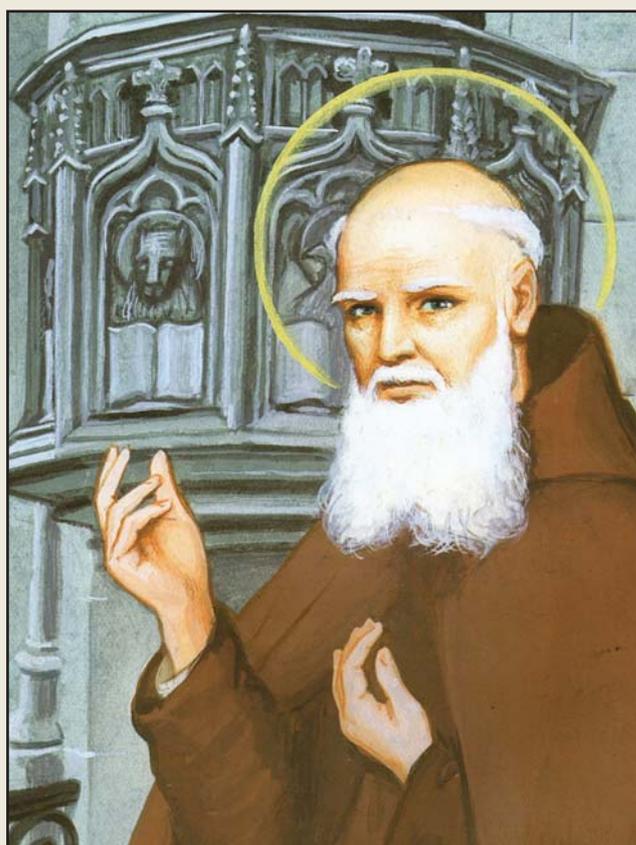
AT a glance, perhaps the most remarkable quality of Lawrence of Brindisi is his outstanding gift of languages.

In addition to a thorough knowledge of his native Italian, he had complete reading and speaking ability in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, German, Spanish, Bohemian and French.

He was born on July 22, 1559 and died 60 years later in 1619. His parents, William and Elizabeth Russo, gave him the name of Julius Caesar – Cesare in Italian.

After the early deaths of his parents, he was educated by his uncle at the College of St. Mark in Venice.

When he was just 16, he entered the



Capuchin Franciscan Order in Venice, and received the name of Lawrence. He completed his studies of theology and philosophy at the University in Padua and was ordained a priest at 23.

With his facility for languages, he was able to study the Bible in its original texts. At the request of Pope Clement VIII, he spent much time preaching to the Jews in Italy.

With his excellent knowledge of Hebrew, the rabbis felt sure he had been a Jew before becoming a Christian!

In 1956, the Capuchins completed a 15-volume edition of his writings. Eleven of these 15 contain his sermons. Lawrence's sensitivity to the needs of people began to surface.

He was made Major Superior of the Franciscan Province of Tuscany. In rapid succession he was promoted by his fellow Capuchins, and was elected Minister General in 1602. In this position, he was responsible for the great expansion of the Order.

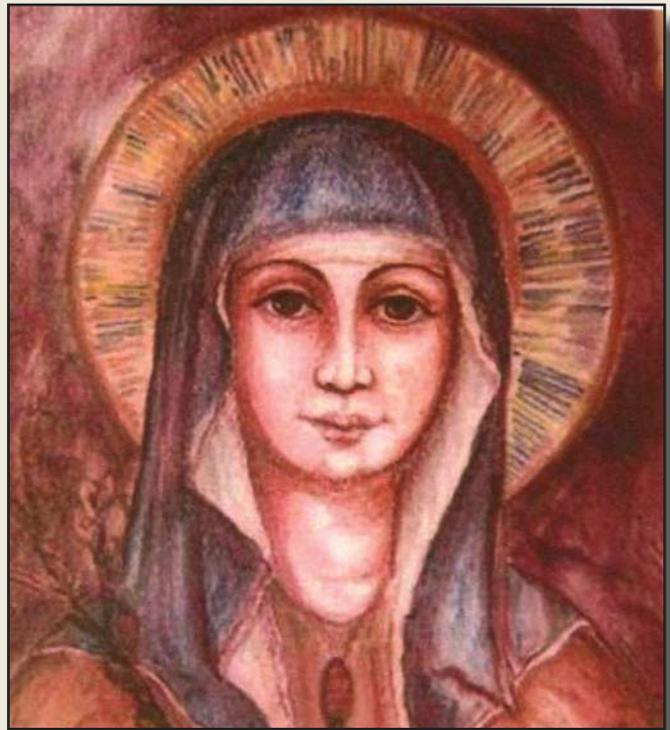
Lawrence was appointed Papal Emissary and Peacemaker – a task that took him to many foreign countries. An effort to achieve peace in his native kingdom of Naples took him on a journey to Lisbon to visit the King of Spain. Here he was struck down with a serious illness and died in Lisbon in 1619. His feast day falls on July 21.

Gazing on Creation

I WAS listening to the song of St. Clare the other day called “Gaze Upon the Lord.” Soon after, I came upon the following from the book *The Wind Blows Where it Chooses* by Kevin Treston. It gave me a deeper meaning into the word “gaze”. I hope it does for you, too.

Kevin writes, “The art of gazing is a focused concentration on some object, icon or person. The mind is relaxed and energy is concentrated on some object such as a flower or tree, an animal, a bird or a sea shell. In Spiritual gazing, we allow ourselves to be immersed in the shape, colour and size of the object.

We marvel at the genius of God's creation exhibited in this orchid, this tree, this animal, the foam of the waves, the wheat fields dancing in the gentle wind, the songs



of the morning birds.

In gazing, we avoid putting words into the experience, just letting the experience enfold us. Just let the object of our gazing whisper its glory to us.

Stand in front of a spreading tree – be still and begin to gaze upon this tree – let your eyes travel slowly along its branches, absorb the colour of the leaves, focus on the trunk, the texture of the bark – then let your gaze descend to the base of the tree, imagining the roots beneath you.

Let that tree be yours for a few quiet moments. How much beauty you have experienced in those precious moments of gazing.”

Now, with St. Clare what a precious moment for us when we GAZE upon the Lord.

*Let us desire nothing else.
Let us wish for nothing else.
Let nothing else please us
And cause us delight
Except our Creator and Redeemer
and Saviour,
The one true God
Who is the fullness of all good.
- St Francis*

Sr Karen Bourke mfiC

IT was with great sadness that we farewelled Karen – however, we remembered the great gift that Karen had with people – she looked others in the eye and made them feel that they were the most important people in the world.

Karen was a very complex person – she was highly intelligent, witty and possessed great skills. Yet she was fragile, and at times anxious. She was independent, but needed the close support of others.

She lived our Franciscan values, and loved each member of our community, but was chaffed by the demands of life in a religious community, and so often operated on a parallel track.

Her success in her various roles is testament to her ability to transcend these limitations and engage so well with others, and succeed despite her own fragility. She was a team player who knew how to embrace the skills of others to achieve her vision. As Principal at Mt. Alvernia she was able to gather a team who complimented her gifts and supported her. She engendered support and affection.

Also significant were her years in Papua New Guinea, where as a formator, her people skills and her skills in spiritual direction enriched the lives of many young religious. Journeying with religious sisters at Xavier Institute in Port Moresby, Karen brought hope and discernment, comfort and laughter.

Significant too, were her years in Laidley as a pastoral presence. She was the perfect example of a pastoral person who journeys with, enriches and enlivens, but does not dominate.

It was during her time at Laidley that it was noticed Karen was not well. When she was elected to the Leadership Team in 1910 she was not in a good space. For a time, depression masked the rapid onset of dementia.



Finally, she was forced to let go of so much independence and return to Kedron. Here, she took up roles at Mt. Alvernia and Delamore Retirement Community.

However, all too soon she needed additional support and was taken to the Dementia Section at the Holy Spirit Home, Carseldine. After just a few months there, Karen deteriorated rapidly, and a week prior to her death, lapsed into unconsciousness. She passed away gently and peacefully.

We had many hopes for Karen – hope that she would continue to weave her magic in ministry for many years to come – hope that she would assume leadership roles in the church and community – hope that her life would be longer and her final years more enriching, but that cruel disease dashed all our hopes.

We hold on to our many memories of Karen and the way that she passed from life as she lived it – gently and peacefully. Rest in peace, dear Karen – we will miss you so much.

Conclusion

*Bless us loving God
With the trust of the newborn
The wonder of a child
The curiosity of a teenager
The competency of the young adult
The devotion of a parent
The integration of middle age
The wisdom of a senior
The acceptance of the dying into the
Mystery of death.*

Much love,
Sr. Liz

