



Issue no. 8 – February 2021

Message from our Regional Minister

MAY GOD GIVE YOU ALL HIS BLESSINGS AND GREAT PEACE OF HEART AND MIND.

February is a month that reminds all to ring out songs, poems, stories, actions of LOVE.

Starting February is Lent. Lent is one Season to express Love for Jesus as we set more time apart for Him. During February, we want to be Vessels of Love for family members, for fraternity family members, for Church family members, for neighbor family members.

The Question: Do I have enough Love to go around? What is Love?

Let us see what God tells us about His Love (Agape) from the Word of God:

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud or haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notices when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him always stand your ground in defending him.

(1 Corinthians 13:4)

Here is an exercise for you....in the above, wherever it says Love, put in your own name and then reread.

When I did this exercise, I turned to God and with all my heart asked Him to fill me with His Love... a flaming Fire of Love...a Love that transforms me and esteems others.

A Candidate recently in formation study on How to Love People (chapter 21 of Franciscan Journey) said: If Secular Franciscans would talk to one another (and to others) as if they were talking to Jesus, how different the world would be. This statement is worth pondering in our hearts. Guided by the OFS Rules #5 “seek to encounter the active and living person of Christ in their brothers and sisters” and Rule 13 “accept all people as if gift of

the Lord and an image of Christ”. This Candidate, unknowingly, invites us all to be rekindled in our hearts with Divine Love.

Mother Theresa: “Some people come into our lives as Blessings, some people come into our lives as Lessons.” Either way is a perfect opportunity for Secular Franciscans to be Instruments of Love. Let Jesus love others through us.

HAPPY FEBRUARY...MUCH LOVE....

Linda Adams, ofs

Message from Director of Youth

Calling all Secular Franciscans in our 25 OLOTA Fraternities to remind the parishes and schools that the entry forms are out for the Franciscan Fine Arts and Poster Contest. This year's theme is “Fratelli Tutti” which is all about the love and fraternity we have for each other as children of God!

If you have had an opportunity to present a prize and/or a certificate of merit or have seen the amazing artwork and narratives and poems the students share with us with joy in their hearts, you will know how important it is that we encourage the students and their parents and teachers to be involved in the Fine Arts and Poster Contest during covid-19!

It is a tangible way we can be connected with the youngsters and the youth during this fragile time in the spirit of Francis and Clare.

*Peace and all good,
Catherine McNiff, ofs*

P.S. Don't forget to check out the Franciscan Youth Web Page on the OLOTA Web Site. It is written especially for the young and the young at heart! This time there is a short

story in the Kid's Corner Section about some of our Franciscan friends who live at Mount Saint Francis, Cochrane, Alberta, So, have a coffee, put your feet up, sit back and relax and read the article, you will be glad you did!

Message from Director of JPIC

Encouraged by the Holy Spirit, I would like to invite you to join us in the program called "Lenten Reflection on Care of Creation – Care of Earth Family" based on *Laudato Si*. The program includes materials provided by Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) and videos, music and books from other websites.

So far, we have had two events on Feb. 19 and 23 attended by nine and eleven people, respectively. We praised God, read scripture, and prayed. Then, we had discussions on *Laudato Si*, how to care for our common home, and *Fratelli Tutti*. Together, we discerned and re-discovered ways to change our lifestyles to promote sustainability. Please see the schedule below for the upcoming events.

Let us pray for each other that the Holy Spirit will ignite our hearts so that we can be bold when we speak His message of love. We also pray for the grace to act with compassion especially to our neighbours who are suffering during the pandemic. As we remember Jesus' message: "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt. 25:40), we offer our Lenten penance for the end of discrimination, forced migration, and any injustice that strips human dignity.

GOD LOVES YOU!!! Have a wonderful Lenten Season!

Peace and joy,
Lourdes von Burg, ofs



Lenten Reflection on "Care of Creation – Care of Earth Family" at 6pm BC / 7pm AB/ 8pm MB on Tuesdays Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Join us at ZOOM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85847099632?pwd=TDNVL1p1UUZEcEptbFd5ei9ZYUxSdz09>

Meeting ID: 858 4709 9632

Passcode: 549378

Or, call any of the following numbers from any phone and enter the meeting ID and passcode.

AB: 587 328 1099 BC: 778 907 2071

MB: 204 272 7920

When using telephone, press *6 to mute/unmute and press *9 to raise hand.

March 5, 2021 at 7pm BC / 8pm AB / 9pm MB

First Friday: Vespers and Crown Rosary

Join us at ZOOM:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86486098310?pwd=R1VOZ3EybWMraG1PPTYxb1p1WllvQT09>

Meeting ID: 864 8609 8310

Passcode: 741246

Or, call any of the following numbers from any phone and enter the meeting ID and passcode.

AB: 587 328 1099 BC: 778 907 2071

MB: 204 272 7920

When using telephone, press *6 to mute/unmute and press *9 to raise hand.

Franciscan Saints and Feast in March – Month of St. Joseph

1. Bl. Jean Kearney
2. [St. Agnes de Prague](#)
3. [Bl. Innocent of Berzo](#)
4. Bl. Martyrs of Gondar (Ethiopia)
5. [St. John-Joseph of the Cross](#)
6. [St. Colette de Corbie](#)
7. [Bl. Christopher of Milan](#)
8. St. Jean de Dieu
9. [St. Frances of Rome](#)
10. [St. Catherine of Bologne](#)
11. [Bl. John Baptist Righi of Fabriano](#)
12. Bl. Louis Orione
13. [Bl. Agnellus of Pisa](#)
14. [St. Catherine of Genoa](#)
15. [Bl. Louis of Casoria](#)
16. [Bl. Torello of Poppi](#)
17. [Bl. Mark of Montegallo](#)
18. [St. Salvator of Horta](#)
19. Saint Joseph
20. [Bl. Hippolyte Galentini](#)
21. Bl. Amedee IX de Savoie
22. [St. Benvenute of Osimo](#)
23. [Bl. Jeremy Lambertenghi](#)
24. Bl. Catherine de Suede
25. Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
26. [Bl. Didacus Joseph of Cadiz](#)
27. Bl. Joseph-Sebastien Pelczar
28. [St. John of Capistrano](#)
29. [Bl. Jane Mary of Maille](#)
30. [St. Peter Regalado](#)
31. St. Leonard Murialdo

"Reading the lives of the saints is a great means to preserve piety" – St. Philip Neri

As you see above, every day in March is a day to celebrate a saint or a feast! What a joy that we have many Franciscan saints from whom we can ask to intercede for us and we can learn to become one. See if you can identify the seven saintly characteristics (listed below) when you read their lives.

Seven Characteristics of Saints:
(from franciscanmedia.org)

- 1) They are filled with the love of God.
- 2) They love other human beings.
- 3) They are risk-takers.
- 4) They are humble.
- 5) They are people of prayer.
- 6) They are not perfect.
- 7) They are people of their times.

Recent Correspondence from CIOFS

This year marks 800 years of *Memoriale Propositi* or the first Rule of the Order of Penitents, or Third Order. Local fraternities are encouraged to celebrate the event within their fraternities. Here is the formation material proposed by CIOFS:

[Letter from Tibor Kauser, ofs](#)
[Formation Material Part 1](#)

Also, there is a note from CIOFS regarding [fraternity election during the pandemic](#).

Finally, there is a [formation material from the Family Commission](#).

Message from Our Regional Spiritual Assistant

Heroic Obedience of St. Joseph reflected in St. Francis of Assisi

Obedience in the Bible: Obedience means a complete trust and surrender to God and His will. It is to hear His word and act upon it. When one goes against it, one commits sin. "I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn from the way that I am commanding you today, to follow other gods that you have not known" (Deut 11:26-28). Adam and Eve were called to be obedient to God, to enjoy God's blessings and everything in the Garden of Eden, but instead, they chose to obey evil. Through their disobedience, sin and death came into the world. Likewise, Israel, as the chosen people of God, was called to obedience to the covenant God had established with them. "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (Jer 7:23). However, Israel failed to obey and keep the covenant. Thus, their disobedience led to slavery in Egypt. Moses, who delivered the people from slavery in Egypt and to whom God entrusted His laws and yet, he was not allowed to enter the promised land because of disobedience. "Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this

OLOTA ZOOM Account Booking

If your fraternity would like to book a ZOOM meeting using OLOTA Account (free), please check the schedule [here](#) before making any ZOOM booking. The link is also available at www.olota.org (close to the top).

For more info, booking, and getting familiar with ZOOM please contact Lanny Hui at 778-999-7097 or lanny.hui@gmail.com



assembly into the land that I have given them” (Num 20:12). He wavered in his faith, and failed to trust God fully. On the other hand, the obedience of Jesus (New Adam and New Moses), even to the point of death on a cross, brought about the redemption and salvation of humanity. Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14:15).

Obedience of St. Joseph: St. Joseph, a saint whose voice we never hear in scripture, a saint who heard an angel only in his dreams, is a saint of action who teaches a lot about obedience to God. The Gospels do not have any record of any word being spoken by him, but only tell of his acts. His obedience to God’s word was carried out through his actions. He acted with conviction and totally surrendered himself to God’s will. We learn from St. Joseph that we can trust, even when we are afraid. His dreams in scripture lead us to a greater appreciation of his perfect obedience to the will of God. In each of his dreams, he was directed to do something and, in each case, he did not move until he received a word from God. He did not act based on impulse or emotions but rather, waited patiently upon God.

Obedience to be a husband and a father: When Joseph found out about the pregnancy of Mary, he resolved to leave Mary quietly and not put her to public disgrace. A number of the early Church Fathers pointed out that Joseph did not decide to divorce Mary quietly because he suspected her of adultery or because he was perplexed by her sudden and humanly inexplicable pregnancy. Rather, knowing that Mary was pregnant “by the power of the Holy Spirit,” Joseph was convinced that he was unworthy to be so close to the work of God and decided in his humility to step aside. Pope John Paul II explained, “Even though he decided to draw back so as not to interfere in the plan of God which was coming to pass in Mary, Joseph obeyed the explicit command of the angel and took Mary into his house, while respecting the fact that she belonged exclusively to God” (Redemptoris Custos, 20). As he was grappling within himself about Mary’s pregnancy, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:20-21). Joseph did not question nor ask for explanations but followed the word of the angel of God. No doubt his soul was distressed, not knowing entirely what was going on, but he did not act hastily and rashly. So “when Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son and he named him Jesus” (Mt 1:24-25). If he had exposed Mary in public, she could have been put to trial and possibly stoned to death. Joseph, being a just man, could never condone that. It is ultimately his humility and faith in God that gives him the wisdom to accept and follow the angel’s order. He obeyed the Lord and did not put Mary away when found with child as a virgin. He took her as his wife - what a man of integrity and character.

In a similar act of obedience, when St. Francis of Assisi heard the voice in a dream in Spoleto, “Francis, whom do you want to serve, the Master or the servant?” He answered “Master”. Francis did not ask for clarification but simply obeyed that voice and from that moment on, his conversion began. His life took on a new direction, guided by his constant wish to know that to which God was calling him. Prayer and silent contemplation in the Umbrian countryside led him to embrace lepers and outcasts as brothers and sisters, those whom in the past he had always found disgusting and repulsive. He did not entirely know what God was leading him to, nor what his obedience to God’s word will unveil. Later as we know, he totally embraced the poor Christ and made himself poor to serve the Master all his life.

Obedience to protect the child: Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt to save the life of the child (Mt 2:13-18). The Son of the Almighty God faces a death threat from Herod, a cruel and cowardly king. Imagine when Joseph received this message from the angel, what went through his mind? One would surely wonder as Joseph might have - What! The Son of God has to flee to save His life? Why can’t a powerful God save His own Son? Indeed, the Son of God was not spared of the pains of being human. Joseph, as a parent, must surely have had some of these worries and concerns racing through his mind - a journey of around 450 miles, through

the wilderness, danger of bandits on the road, a strange and foreign land, a new language, finding work and not knowing how long they will have to sojourn there, etc. One cannot ignore the hardships that obedience brought to Joseph. But “Joseph set himself to protect with a mighty love and a daily solicitude his spouse and the Divine Infant; regularly by his work he earned what was necessary for the one and the other for nourishment and clothing; he guarded from death the Child threatened by a monarch’s jealousy and found for Him a refuge; in the miseries of the journey and in the bitterness of exile he was ever the companion, the assistance, and the upholder of the Virgin and Jesus” (Pope Leo XIII-Quamquam Pluries, 3). If he would have delayed and said, I need to organize everything needed for travel and settlement in Egypt and then make the journey, the results could have been very different. This was his total and complete act of faith and obedience to the will of God. Likewise, St. Francis of Assisi, in his obedience to the Gospel of Christ, in the year 1219, in the midst of the Fifth Crusade, crossed enemy lines to gain an audience with the Sultan of Egypt, al-Malik al-Kamil. His desire was to speak peacefully with Muslim people about Christianity, even if it means dying as a martyr. After an initial attempt by Francis and the Sultan to convert the other, both quickly realized that the other already knew and loved God. We know the end result of that encounter; reconciliation and peace, a true friendship between a saint and a sultan, and a peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims was established. Francis made this journey into the unknown with total faith and trust in God, who called him to serve the Master. With faith as the shield and love as the sword, Francis pierced the heart of the Sultan. Francis had committed to serve the Master and he remained obedient to that ‘yes’ even when it led him to dangerous and unknown territory.

Obedience to return to Israel: While in Egypt, Joseph was told in a dream to return to Israel (Mt 2:19-21). The threat of life was over as Herod had died. But again, Joseph waited to be directed by God. He was not moved by favourable conditions but waited in dependence upon God. He was again warned in a dream about Archelaus’ (son of Herod) reign over Judea, so he took the Holy Family to make a new home in Nazareth (Mt 2:22-23). A big responsibility for safeguarding, supporting, caring for the son of the Most High and Mother of God continued in normal and daily circumstances of life in Nazareth. This was not just prudence but his subjection to the Lord and obedience in faith. “Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust. His patient silence was the prelude to concrete expressions of trust. Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice” (Pope Francis-Patris Corde,7).

Later in his life, St. Francis of Assisi withdrew increasingly from external affairs of the Order. He was called to “great things - to renew”, with a spirit of obedience, the Church, which at that time was dealing with divisions and heresies. Francis remained with the church and defended her teachings. Even in unfavorable conditions, Francis continued to live his vocation and was obedient to God who called him to “rebuild His Church.”

Obedience to its perfection till the end: We are all born into this world with a specific purpose, a vocation from God that only we can do to the fullest. “Joseph fully accepted his vocation, to which he was faithful until death. His worldly mission was to be the head of the Holy Family” (Pope Pius IX). Obedience is an essential part of the Christian faith. And spirit of obedience is as important as the act of obedience; we obey because we love God. Disobedience is caused by rebellion and distrust of God. To be disobedient is to yield to self-will instead of surrendering to God and desiring His will in all things. Joseph was led by God at each step, moving in dependence and obedience. Joseph responded to God out of love by immediately doing what was asked of him. He fulfilled his life’s mission, his vocation. Likewise, St. Francis of Assisi loved God and lived the life of obedience unto the Lord. Until his last breath he heard, trusted and surrendered to God’s word and will, no wonder he is called the “Second Christ.”

Fr. Manoj Xalxo, OFM