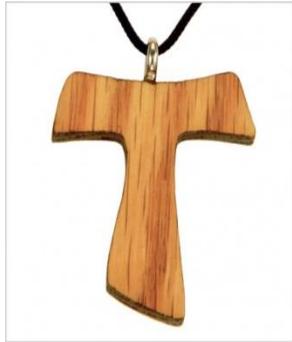


ST.LOUIS FRATERNITY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2022



REFLECTIONS FROM OUR FRATERNITY MINISTER

DO NOT BE AFRAID

We tend to be somewhat fearful in these days of uncertainty of not knowing if you should wear a mask or not wear a mask or even go out of the house for that matter. But we must remember God said several times “Do not be afraid, I am with you always.”

I write this on a Friday after having prayed the rosary and the Sorrowful Mysteries. Seems somehow prophetic. I also received today my regular message from St. Anthony Spiritual Center which addresses this very point. Here is the message:

Recently I welcomed Petey into my home and no, his presence has not stirred any neighborhood gossip. Petey is an old, large, tan and feral cat.

Petey, like my previous pets, is a wonderful spiritual teacher. Being feral for so many years, he is naturally very afraid of everything (especially people). He spends his day under an end table, reluctant to come out of his “safe place” when he can see me (although I faithfully feed him and spend time with him every day). It is fair to say that Petey has significant “trust issues” and it will take him a long time to learn to trust me. Lots of patience and consistency on my part will be needed. Unfortunately, I barely have a nodding acquaintance with patience! Life with Petey will mean plenty of time getting to know patience a little better.

Petey has mirrored my relationship with God. Like Petey under the table, I feel my own fear. There is a hesitancy of moving too close or allowing God to get too close even though God is patiently and consistently saying, “Fear not, I am always with you. I love you.” Why is it so hard to trust this message?

Some days Petey will inch closer when I am laying on the floor talking to him, then the next couple of days he goes deeper under the table. I recognize the pattern because it is a familiar one. I have practiced it many times on my faith journey; open a bit, then pull back. Can I really trust that God loves me in a deep and personal way? It is so hard to accept.

Just as Petey must deal with fear, apprehension, and lack of trust in his relationship with me; I too, must deal with these very same obstacles in my relationship with God.

God’s promise to me, to each of us is, “Fear not, I am always with you. I love you.”

Hopefully, Petey is a faster learner than I am!

-Terri Sersch

Pace e Bene

Deacon John

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

February 8 is the feast day of Lady Jacoba, a widow and special friend of St. Francis. She had provided for him and the friars. When Francis was dying, he decided to send for Lady Jacoba who lived in Rome. He dictated a message telling her that if she wanted to see him before he returned to his homeland (heaven) she should come in haste. And, would she please bring a burial cloth, a cloth for his face, candles, and a sweet pastry he liked. Before the messenger left to travel

to Rome, Lady Jacoba arrived at the door holding the items that Francis had requested. How do we explain this? Extra sensory perception (ESP)? mental telepathy? Or is this story a revelation of the communion of heart of those who love? All believers have God's Love in their souls and therefore are connected by a common heart that is God's Love. When I consider this story, I reflect upon the graced moments when I am thinking of a person and perhaps call or write a letter only to find that the person I was thinking of needed a prayer when I was thinking of them. These are not mere coincidences but God's Love reaching out through us to others. And, likewise we are graced and loved by others in ways that we may not even surmise. Acting upon inspirations thinking of others may lead to God's Love being made manifest for them.

After Francis died, Lady Jacoba chose to stay living in Assisi assisting the friars including support of the building of the Basilica of Saint Francis. She was buried in the lower basilica near the tomb of Francis; a great tribute to a woman devoted to Francis' message of living the Gospel life with great affection.

Sister Ramona Miller, OSF

REFLECTION FROM OUR FORMATION MINISTER

This month I am really thinking about the miracle of the loaves and fishes and how it impacts my Franciscan calling to follow the Gospel. Our rule urges us to go "from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel." (Rule 4) and I think this Gospel

In these days when there again was a great crowd without anything to eat, Jesus summoned the disciples and said, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a great distance." His disciples answered him, "Where can anyone get enough bread to satisfy them here in this deserted place?" Still he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They replied, "Seven." He ordered the crowd to sit down on

the ground. Then, taking the seven loaves he gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to his disciples to distribute, and they distributed them to the crowd. They also had a few fish. He said the blessing over them and ordered them distributed also. They ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over – seven baskets. There were about four thousand people.

In the first place, this Gospel tells us that Jesus can take the little bit we offer him and make a miracle out of it with overflowing results. Our piddly little seven loaves and a couple of fish (Spanish – pescaditos) can feed thousands. It's all we have to offer, but it is enough. The only thing we have to do is hand it over when Jesus asks for it so others can benefit. Moreover, it is an offering made sacred in the hands of our loving Savior, who blesses our offerings, breaks them and distributes them. It is also worth noting that after they produced the fish and bread, Jesus directed them to distribute the food to the big crowd. We give Jesus our meager offerings, he blesses them, and then we have to follow his instructions and distribute the gifts. It strikes me that it was a pretty big job to distribute the food to such a big crowd and also collect the scraps. But what wonderful work it is! The disciples are helping to produce a miracle, doing the Lord's work, and providing a blessing to thousands.

Loving God, please accept our humble offering of bread and fish and make a miracle out of it so that many people may receive a blessing because of us. We come with little to offer, like our Father Francis, but we trust in your goodness to richly take care of us and bless our efforts to serve you in our humble way. We pray in the Name of Jesus. Amen

-Larry Price

SECULAR FRANCISCAN RULE

This month Sister Ramona will lead us in discussing Rule #12 using Lectio Divina format.

Rule #12

“Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.”

FORMATION

Larry will lead us in a discussion of Reflections 21 and 22 from the book Live Like Francis at our February 17 meeting in the O'Day Room at Church of St. John.

*There are no birthdays to celebrate this month in the St. Louis Fraternity.

Jerry Onkels, one of our inactive members (due to health concerns) made his Profession as a Secular Franciscan on February 7, 1965. Maryanne will bring a card for all of us to sign at our next meeting to let him know we are thinking of him.

St. Margaret of Cortona

Born in 1247 in Laviano (in the province of Tuscany, Italy)

Feast Day: February 21

Died in February of 1297

Canonized in 1728 by Pope Benedict XIII

Points to Ponder:

- lost her Mom at age 7
- lived a life of sin and scandal for 9 years followed by a life of rigorous prayer, mortification and humiliation after finding her accomplice in illicit behavior murdered
- father and step-mother refused to allow her to return home after her conversion

- Received the habit of the Third Order in 1277 after living the life of a penitent on her own and pleading to enter the order for many years
- God allowed many miracles of healing to happen through her (even during her lifetime).
- her body is preserved and incorruptible in the Franciscan Church at Cortona and the area around her burial site is said to “emit a pleasant perfume.”

(Excerpt from Franciscan Book of Saints, ed. By Marian Habig, ofm)