

# FMA

# FOCUS



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Franciscan Mission Associates  
Mt. Vernon, N.Y. 10551

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America



## Virtue: Charity

St. Paul teaches us that Charity/Love is the greatest of the three theological virtues.

St. John the Evangelist, in his Gospel and Epistles, digs yet deeper. "God is love," he tells us. And while no human has seen God, we come to know Him in Jesus, "filled with enduring love."

As we step through February's wintry days, watching and waiting for the dawn of Lent/Easter, we can prepare by asking God to stoke those embers of Charity in our lives, and for the grace to live Charity, as Jesus did.

The better, all year-round, to step into the footprints of Charity, ever illuminating the Central Mystery of our faith: Christ has died. Christ is Risen. Christ will come again.

[For references, see 1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 John 4:16; St. John's Gospel, 1:14]. ■

## The Practice of Charity in all its forms: for Rich and Poor

In the popular understanding of the word, charity, we mean giving – gifts or money – to the poor and marginalized in our society. And that is a very good thing. But not the sum total of this great virtue – as the Bible, in both Hebrew and Christian texts, makes clear.

Charity is linked to the great love and compassion of the Creator for His human family. That deep and abiding Love which brought us into existence and sustains us, even to every breath we take. Even to numbering the hairs on our heads, as Jesus tells us. (Matthew 10:30) Charity, rooted in Divine Love – our God who IS love – is a theological virtue. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that the theological virtues are "infused by God into the souls of the faithful to



make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life.” (Catechism, #1813)

The Catechism’s definition of Charity/Love is very much like the one most of us recited by heart in grade school:

“Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.”

We are reminded that Jesus, in his life, death, and resurrection, made charity the “new” commandment. “... Love one another as I have loved you,” Jesus taught (John 15:19).

For the Christian, Charity has no boundaries. It cannot be confined to family or friends, for example. Rather, we are to love as Jesus did, even our enemies (Matthew 5: 43-48).

In that, Jesus is showing us just how high God’s gift of Charity lifts the bar for human nature. “In a word, you must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

God’s infused gift of Charity shows no partiality. Whether we are rich or poor, we have obligations and challenges in living up to the standards God gives us.

St. Francis, in his letter “Written to all the Faithful,” speaks clearly about

the price of Jesus’ life of Charity. It speaks as well to the privileges and obligations God’s gift of Charity/Love bestows on us.

“The Father willed that his blessed and glorious Son ...should through his own blood offer himself as a sacrificial victim on the altar of the cross... It was intended to leave us an example of how to follow in his footsteps.”

“...Let us produce worthy fruits of penance. Let us also love our neighbors as ourselves. Let us have charity and humility.”

“Let us give alms because these cleanse our souls from the stains of sin.”

“Men lose all the material things they leave behind them in this world, but they carry with them the reward of their charity and the alms they give.”

“From these they will receive from the Lord the reward and recompense they deserve.”

“We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh. Rather we must be simple, humble and pure.”

“The spirit of the Lord will rest on all who live in this way and persevere in it to the end... They will be the Father’s children who do his work. They are the spouses, brothers and mothers of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” ■



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# Valentines and charity

Take a bow. Go ahead.

While many a person is parted from his or her money this Valentine's Day, you won't fall into that category. Why not? Because you're too busy.

Living your Faith is a matter of trying to keep in step with real Love.

Seeking to deepen your love of God, family, neighbor, and the

wonderful world our Creator has given us. And so all the ways of "living" Charity/Love, blend into everyday practice for you.

Chances are, you don't even know or celebrate just how good you really are.

Quick examples: Two people in an upstate New York parish, women who have quietly added a new "courtesy" to their list of volunteer jobs.

These retired women have long served at a multitude of volunteer-powered ministries – from food pantry and thrift shop, to Eucharistic ministry, to staffing a monthly rotation of volunteers (men and women) who keep their 100-plus year old church, spotless and sparkling.

Recently, these women didn't blink before committing to what they call simple courtesy on behalf of two parishioners in crisis: a woman named Mary, who is dealing with cancer some two years now and her husband, George. Just about the time Mary's illness set in, George began experiencing memory loss and other signs of dementia onset.

Though his illness progresses, it is clear to George and his family that his clearest moments are those at Mass. With that in mind, his two friends stepped up, assuring George of a ride to

and from Mass. There, he flourishes in the ritual prayers and rubrics of the Mass (including the Greeting of Peace following the "Our Father.") "Thank you," he says to another parishioner asking how he will get home. "I am waiting for my friend to warm up her car." At Mass, he is free, for a little while, from his devastating disease.

To make that possible, these volunteers have even planned their own family vacations for different times, so "George" could be sure of getting to Mass.

"He would do it for either of us," these volunteers say – should anyone dare to ask. They are surprised, even offended, when others suggest their actions define "profound charity... God's love for us, in action."

(And of course, these volunteers keep in touch with George's wife, often taking her to appointments, keeping her in touch with parish ministries, etc.).

As some tell it, these ladies bring the same profound commitment to George and Mary, as say, the parish school children bring to Valentine's Day preparation. With full attention, and no small amount of anxiety, the children diligently work at crafting "Valentines" for their Mom and Dad and others they love.

They aim for nothing short of perfection itself.

And even if unspoken, they begin to learn the truth about charity: such "love-in-action" ultimately stems from, and points back to God – the Holy One who is Love itself. ■

Visit us on the web  
[franciscanmissionassoc.org](http://franciscanmissionassoc.org)

# SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND

**W**hat's that? You can't hop a plane to the Holy Land for that once-in-a-lifetime Lent and Easter Pilgrimage this year?

Look again! With the Church as your guide, you can indeed make such a holy pilgrimage, even from home. Just follow these steps:

- Pick up your itinerary (this article); it comes, courtesy of the Holy Season's Liturgy, and your Bible.
- Make a commitment of time and place for your Pilgrimage (even for 10 or 15 minutes a day).
- Be generous. Let prayer bring along those special people whose intentions you remember daily. That act of charity will enrich the journey for all.
- Then, lavish your time and love on the Lord – Who is Love itself.
- And you are ready for take off!

*The rough map of the Holy Land, printed with this article, can get you started (feel free to connect the dots between pilgrimage sites as you “visit” each one).*



And so, begin. Go to...

1) **Nazareth in Galilee.** Read *Matthew 2: 19-23*. St. Joseph leads the Holy Family out of Egypt, probably taking the coastal route, heading far north of King Herod's treacherous court. There, Jesus grows up safely in the small, mixed - population (Jews and some Gentiles) village of Nazareth.

2) The **Desert**, outside Jerusalem, hugging the Jordan, perhaps near Qumran. Read *Matthew 4: 1-11*, proclaimed on the First Sunday of Lent.

3) **Capernaum**, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Read *Matthew 4: 12-16*. With news of John the Baptizer's arrest, Jesus retreats to Galilee, leaving Nazareth permanently, for Capernaum.

4) **Caesarea Philippi.** Read *Mark 8: 27-38*. Moving to this region, following the second Miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves, Jesus began teaching his Apostles about the doctrine of the Cross and the Pascal Events to come.

5) **Mount Tabor.** Read *Matthew 17: 1-9*. The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent (in all three Cycles) looks to the Lord's *Transfiguration*: a miracle to strengthen the Apostles for the coming events Jesus had foretold.

6) **Shechem** in Samaria. Read *John 4: 5-42*, the Gospel for the Third Sunday of Lent. To the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus reveals himself as the long-promised Messiah, ready to fulfill the Father's mission.

7) **Jerusalem.** (Check out the **Mount of Olives**, a favorite all-night prayer site for Jesus, and the **Pool of Siloam**). The Gospel for Lent's Fourth Sunday: *John 9: 1-41*. Jesus' Sabbath-day cure of the Man Born Blind makes him "a wanted man." [See *John 10: 39-42*, as Jesus eludes arrest by going back across the Jordan].

8) **Bethany.** Read *John 11: 1-45*. Gospel for Lent's Fifth Sunday (see also *John 11: 46-54*). When Jesus raises Lazarus from his tomb, his fate is sealed. At an extraordinary meeting of the Sanhedrin, the high priest Caiaphas would prophesy: "...it is better for you to have one man die..." [Jesus had already slipped away to **Ephraim**, 12 miles north of Jerusalem].

9) **Jerusalem.** (Note the *Garden of Gethsemani*, *Golgotha*, the *Holy Sepulcher*). Read *Matthew, Chapter 26, verse 14, all the way through Chapter 27, verse 66*. The Gospel for Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion.

10) **Jerusalem.** Easter Vigil Gospel: *Matthew 28: 1-10*. The two Mary's are greeted by Jesus as they depart the empty Tomb. "Do not be afraid," he counsels; tell the Disciples ("...my brothers") to go to **Galilee** "and there they will see me."

11) **Jerusalem.** Easter Sunday Morning Gospel: *John 20: 1-9* (Mary of Magdala at the tomb, "while it was still dark...") And the afternoon Mass: *Luke 24: 13-35* (the Road to **Emmaus**).

12) **Galilee.** Read *Matthew 28: 16-20* (commissioning of the Apostles). And *John 21* (The Risen Lord's third post-Resurrection appearance to the Apostles -who find Jesus calling from the sea shore, with a hearty breakfast awaiting them). ■

# THE FAMILY OF ST. CLARE

Exactly 800 years ago, on Palm Sunday of the year 1211, excitement crackled through the air in Assisi's Cathedral. As the Bishop blessed and distributed the palm, he noted that Clare had none. She was the eldest child of Favarone, son of the powerful Offreduccio clan, and his pious and beautiful wife, Ortolana. But today, Clare remained in her seat, engrossed in prayer. The whole village seemed to know that this fun-loving, and gifted girl had increasingly expressed her faith in acts of charity to the many poor people now flocking into the cities.

And so, when the Bishop stepped over to Clare and handed her a newly blessed palm, most onlookers suspected this beautiful young woman might be moving on to new pathways.

And it was toward evening of that same Palm Sunday, that such 'holy gossip' proved correct. For Clare left her home forever, setting off for a pre-arranged meeting with close friends, and then, with St. Francis and his companions.

Shortly after, in the little church of Porziuncola, Friar Francis consecrated Clare to God's service. Historians believe this happened with prior knowledge and approval of the bishop.

Thus began the Franciscan Second Order.

Known as the Poor Clares, these women became a powerhouse of prayer for their brothers in faith, the Franciscan Friars; and likewise, for their neighbors, fellow citizens, and yes



– their own families and clans. Be it noted that Clare's new way of life was not for the faint of heart.

Just one example:

In the year 1240, Mother Clare would be credited with saving the Spoleto Valley and Assisi – indeed, the monastery itself. A full military assault of Saracens engulfed the city. These Middle Eastern soldiers, given the politics of the time, were employed by none other than Christian Emperor Frederick II in his quest to solidify power. The Saracen invasion took them to the Monastery door.

At the urging of her terrified Sisters, Clare, who was ill, left her sick bed. Preceded by a Eucharistic Procession, she stopped on the Cloister side of that door. There, she led her Sisters in profound prayer, counseling them to "Just trust Christ."

Shortly thereafter, the assault ended. The Saracens withdrew. It was over.

Another footnote to Mother Clare's heroic and faith-filled action: Clearly, she had never abandoned either her family, or the world by answering God's call to a new way of life. Rather, the Poor Clares welcomed a wider family perimeter: a new spiritual family that soon began to flourish. Today that family is worldwide – and likely to be celebrating Holy Week and Easter Mysteries for centuries yet to come.

This year, pray for St. Clare's powerful intercession, for our world – still so fractured with war and violence. ■

# Director's Letter

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

FRANCISCAN FRIARS/P.O. BOX 598/MOUNT VERNON, N.Y. 10551-0598

TEL. AREA CODE: 914 664-5604



Dear Friends,

February is often considered a bleak month. In many places the temperatures plummet, the ground freezes and bare trees dot the landscape. It is against this backdrop that we begin the Lenten season. As Christians, it is our privilege, and our joy, to look beyond the grim surface of the time and find the magnificence.

As you rush to your car, or out to pick up children after school, take a minute and you will see that bare trees are beautiful in their humility and silence. Pope Benedict XVI has called Easter the salvation of humanity, "...a new creation, like a graft that can regenerate the whole plant." The sacrament of penance is our way to strip the outer layers of sin away to reveal a soul ready to share in the glory of the resurrection.

During these next few weeks take some time to pray and ask God to show you the beauty in things you might be looking past. It's no easy task but know you are never alone: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20).

God Bless you during the Lenten Season,

*Fr. Robert, OFM*

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

# VISITING THE SICK IN HONDURAS

*Fr. Angelo, O.F.M.*

**T**hanks be to God, I work as a Franciscan Missionary, in Honduras, a parish known as the “Immaculate Conception.” This parish is about 125 km away from the Capital City, Tegucigalpa. Usually it takes about four hours to reach it. It has six main villages, with about 75 villages with a population of about 18,000.

One recent morning I woke up very happy, knowing that I would visit some sick people of the parish, in a remote village. So after saying some prayers in my private chapel, I got the car ready. The trip was a simple one. One hour by car to reach the main town and another hour on horseback. With me was a sister from the parish.

Since we are in winter and it is raining heavily, I was afraid of encountering some big landslides which are frequent and usually can close the road. Even though I did see a landslide, luckily, the car could reach the main town of Mercedes de Oriente. Naturally, the earth streets are full of holes, water, dirt and mud, which is normal in winter.

Once we reached the other main town, the catechist was waiting for us with horses. We mounted the horses and about an hour later, we reached a village called, “Guacamayas.” There we visited two sick people.

I love these people, because even though they are poor, they always have a smile on their faces and a lot of sense of humor. They are loving and happy people. They are very hospitable and know how to win your heart with their sincerity which you could feel.

We entered the house (the sister, the catechists, and myself) and there were two men: Pedro Gomez Amaya and Juan Fernandez Ruiz. Both of them received us with a huge welcome and one of them said: “This is a miracle to see the priest and the





*Father Angelo, O.F.M. at a home visit.*

sister here.” He said this because it is not that easy to reach these people who live so far away from the parish house. After chatting a little, I administered them the last rites because only God knows when we could see them again. We also gave them a present and with this they really felt happy.

We give them a bag of food every month. Sometimes we send medicine and clothes. Naturally, the parish gives about 45 bags of food each month and this help is possible and could be carried out with the help of the Franciscan Missions. Because of them and the benefactors, we can evangelize and make acts of mercy which will be a witness to Christ’s presence on earth.

So, I urge all of you to keep supporting us through the Franciscan Missions, knowing that so much good could be done to help relieve the suffering of the poor and improve evangelization. It is worthwhile to remember also, that the Good Lord, will give us a hundredfold in return of what we do for others. Thank you all and God bless you. ■

## **YOUTH IN MOYUTA FOLLOW THEIR PASSIONS DURING EASTER WEEK**

*Fr. Roberto, O.F.M.*

**A**sh Wednesday arrives in Moyuta, Juticapa, Guatemala and opens the Lenten season. This arrival awakens and energizes the parish youth group. The enthusiasm grows as they propose to re-enact the journey of Christ on the cross. To begin the process, the group has several meetings with a lot of interesting ideas; they seek support from their parish priest who offers his guidance and unconditional support.

The group begins its research and rewriting, a completely collaborative effort. When the script is complete the parts are doled out making sure each member of the youth group has a part to play. The script is given to each actor to study and a rehearsal schedule is proposed for the following week.

On the day of the beginning rehearsal each member of the Parish Youth Group





arrives early. The members make their own costumes including helmets made from plastic footballs with feathers and red wool ornaments covering their chests. Once the costumes are made the actors begin to memorize their lines.

On Holy Friday at nine in the morning the presentation of the play takes place with all the formalities and responsibilities. The residents of the village admire the presentation and are extremely interested in the story how it is showcased, they participate with devotion. The entire presentation was a success all accomplished due to God's glory.

While many of the Moyuta youth are participating in this production, another group is following its own passion as it readies for Easter. These young people inspired by their love of Christ, participate in

a ritual that takes place with love and devotion during the morning of Holy Friday and goes on until late afternoon. A week before the event the group prepares wood dust mixed with water and then adds a bounty of colors. The result of this process is called a "carpet." This carpet is done in each community or street block where all families will work together.

The "carpet" is filled with cardboard molds made of flowers, letters and pictures. Early in the morning the community washes the street and using chalk they mark a line for the objects. Once the streets are marked, a layer of wood dust is placed and then the flowers and letters are made with the water and color. It is a beautiful testament to our Lord and it is another way for the youth to come together during these holy days. ■

# Words Worth Noting



*The Bible tells us to love our neighbors and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people.*

G.K. Chesterton

*If people look only to their own interests, our world will certainly fall apart.*

Pope Benedict XVI

*You have freedom when you are easy in your harness.*

Robert Frost

*A man can no more diminish God's glory by refusing to worship Him than a lunatic can put out the sun by scribbling the word, 'darkness' on the walls of his cell.*

C. S. Lewis

*Blessed is he who expects no gratitude, for he shall not be disappointed.*

William Bennett

*The most exhausting thing in life, I have discovered, is being insincere.*

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

*Conscience warns us as a friend before it punishes us as a judge.*

King Stanislas I of Poland

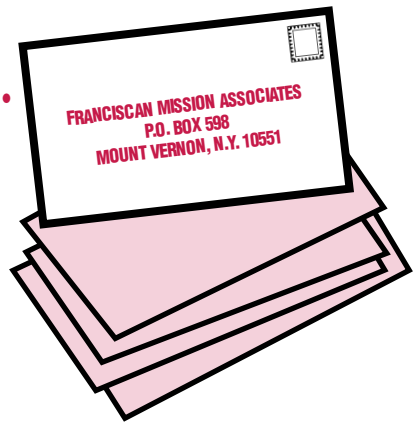
*One can go a long way after one is tired.*

French proverb

*There is always a moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.*

Graham Greene

# Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Father Robert,

On behalf of my brethren in Christ and the Chaplaincy of this facility please accept our most heartfelt appreciate for your donation to our library. This material will provide guidance and inspiration to those who make use of the resources provided. These items will be put immediately into service for all. We will look forward to your continued support of the ministry of the forsaken and outcasts of society. May the Lord continue to watch over, abundantly bless and protect all of you and your Franciscan Mission families.

O.C.L.  
Draper, UT

Dear Father Robert,

I prayed to Our Lady of Lourdes to intercede for me and ask her beloved son, Jesus, to help a relative of mine sell his house and get the price he needed and let the act of the sale go smoothly. I am so grateful to Our Lady of Lourdes for answering my prayers. Don't ever get discouraged if your prayers are not answered immediately, as she hears you and your prayers will be answered in due time. Thank you again, Our Lady of Lourdes and Jesus.

S.D.  
River Ridge, LA

Dear Father,

My thanks to St. Jude for all he has done for me in the past as well as lately. I prayed the Novena for nine days for my business to pick up. It has been terrible since 9/11/01. Things are getting better. Please accept this small monetary gift and keep me in your prayers.

Sincerely,  
P.M.  
Sedalia, MO

Dear Father Robert,

I've just completed your June issue of FOCUS. How valuable it is to my spiritual life. As a cursillista, evangelization is a real commitment... so your articles fit like a glove. Thank you and I shall pray with you.

In Christ,  
A.S.  
Jacksonville Beach, FL

# CANCER, MIRACLES AND ST. PEREGRINE

Our holiest season is soon upon us: Easter time.

For Fifty Days we celebrate the great miracle of the Resurrection. And we revisit the Mysteries revealed to us by Our Lord, Jesus the Christ: Redeemer and Savior, the Son of God, the Risen Lord who promised to be with us – indeed, even to the end of time.

These Fifty Days mature into the Feast of Pentecost. The birth of the Church – commissioned and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Another day of miracles, beginning with the Apostles. For from that day, they became different men. Before that day they were once fearful, shocked and traumatized graduates of the Lord's Three-Year Training Program in Ministry – an education so lovingly and patiently showered upon them – hiding, fearful and powerless, behind locked doors. But empowered by the Holy Spirit, fear or no fear, they set about preaching the Gospel. Like their Resurrected and Risen Master, they did not hesitate to call on God for miracles. Hence, we, their descendants thousands of years removed, find ourselves empowered to be people of miracles as well. So it is not surprising that St. Peregrine, a 14th Century Servite priest, himself acclaimed as a miracle worker, would not be shy about asking for a miraculous cure, when he needed one.

Born 34 years after St. Francis of Assisi died, Fr. Peregrine ministered in an era that was slowly inching toward the Renaissance. Yet, it was still engulfed in the constant warfare, poverty, disease, ignorance and violence that shadowed the centuries preceding him.

(Many of us might observe that some 800 years later, we find the world still plagued by the same recurring powers of darkness).

We know that Fr. Peregrine's religious superiors insisted he seek medical help for a persistent, painful foot and leg condition. Obediently, he did so.

But when he heard the diagnosis of cancer, with amputation as the only remedy, this holy priest passed a night in prayer and devotion before the Blessed Sacrament. Surely he sought God's mercy and help, while surrendering his life to God's holy will.

He emerged, the next morning, completely cured. So much so, that Fr. Peregrine immediately resumed his work as priest, confessor, preacher, and chaplain (often serving as a nurse as well) to God's holy poor. It would be his relentless mission for some 40 more years after his cure.

Today, people seek this saint's prayerful intercession as the patron of those dealing with cancer, as well as for help in dealing with other cancerous evils that destroy human life: violence, terror, hatred.

St. Peregrine found the strength to persevere by looking to the Good News of the Risen Lord, who promised to be with us always. Good medicine, indeed, then, and for our times as well. ■

## REMEMBRANCE

**You can continue to carry on your own good work for the missions and the people they serve by remembering them in your will. To do so, simply make a bequest of whatever you wish to: FRANCISCAN MISSION ASSOCIATES, Mount Vernon, NY 10551. If you wish additional information about how to do this, please feel free to contact:**

**Father Robert, O.F.M.  
Franciscan Mission Associates  
PO Box 598, Dept 3102,  
Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

# THE SIGN OF THE CROSS - DEFEAT INTO VICTORY

A lesser man than St. Paul could have had trouble explaining why the Cross is central to the liturgy and worship of the Church, why the Way of the Cross is every Christian's guide in faith and pilgrimage, on earth and all the way home to God in eternal life.

St. Paul was nothing if not direct. "The message of the cross is complete absurdity," he said, "to those who are headed for ruin, but to us – who are experiencing salvation – it is the power of God." He boasted: "We preach Christ crucified." The reason: Jesus' Cross, by his sacrificial death on the Cross, was the instrument of salvation for the human family throughout the world.

Hence, the Cross became a sign of victory over even the most shameful, horrifying, torturous, and purposefully dehumanizing death, crucifixion.

Then and today, Jesus' Cross calls each one of us to personal conversion and renewal. We must take up our own cross in life. Turning away from sin to walk in Jesus' "Way."

The Church's liturgy and worship – which is Jesus' work and prayer – help us enter the Way of the Cross and stay on course.

The first prayer most of us are taught, The Sign of the Cross, begins with the words: "In the name of the Father..."

This brief prayer brings us face to face with the mystery Jesus taught us: that God is Three Persons in One God. The Trinity.

The Sign of the Cross, every time we pray, is a renewal of our baptism.

And hence, the Church has long advised us to use holy water whenever we pray this prayer, just as we look for holy water and bless ourselves when we enter church for Mass. (Some Catholic homes still keep holy water available at the main entrance).

And yes. The Cross is a symbol that finds itself claimed by local cultures worldwide. From the type of Cross that sits atop Eastern or Western Rite structures... to the cross hanging from a chain, and worn as a sign of the Christian Faith.

The latter is a preferred 'gift' to boys or girls at First Communion or Confirmation time. Ditto, for those adults who are received into full life in the Church during the Easter Vigil. Pray for them this Easter, as you renew your own baptismal vows. But when the Wood of the Cross is held up for us to venerate, remember and pray for those Catholics and other Christians who cannot do so. For those old evils – wars, hatred, racism and violence – are still on the prowl. ■

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## ST. ANTHONY'S BREAD

Offerings in honor of St. Anthony, either in petition for a favor sought, or in thanksgiving for a favor received, are used to assist the poor. Thus, they have received the name, St. Anthony's Bread. Such offerings are also used to help educate priests and religious.

Father Robert will gladly send you a leaflet explaining the origin and purpose of this devout practice, now centuries old. Please write:

**St. Anthony's Bread, Franciscan Mission Associates  
PO Box 598, Dept 3103, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

# CARING FOR SOCIETY'S OUTCASTS

With the exception of perhaps an angel or two, missioned to our world for 14 centuries, there is nobody alive today who actually witnessed the heroic life of St. Dymphna, that seventh century teenager was martyred around the year 650 AD. It would take another 600 years (the 13th Century) before devout Christians would discover her burial place in Gheel, near present day Amsterdam.

Yet, many people today speak to the witness of this extraordinary princess-refugee. Though but a traumatized teen, one who would suffer martyrdom in less than a decade, Dymphna, along with her companions, reached out with love, prayer, and caring to the so called 'outcasts' in her own time. In them, she saw the Lord Jesus, suffering with society's sick, abandoned and homeless people.

Today, people speak of miracles attributed to Dymphna's intercession, especially on behalf of people dealing with mental illness, disfigurements, neuromuscular or brain disabilities, as well as addictions.

On the other hand, there are few people who would not remember Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Tiny of stature, and in later years, frail with the usual limitations of age, Mother Teresa was always "news" wherever television and media coverage located her or her works.

Beatified in 2003, Mother Teresa died in 1997, in Calcutta, India. She was 87 years old. The Indian Government, "out of respect and homage," gave their most famous citizen (born in Yugoslavia of

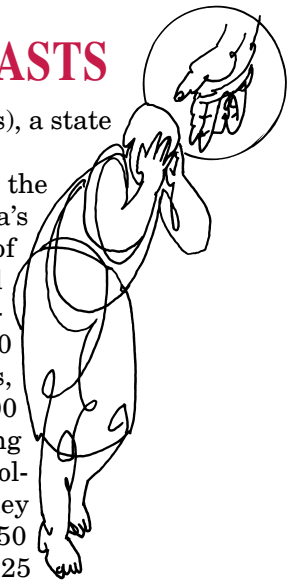
Albanian parents), a state funeral.

At that point, the Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, founded in 1950, numbered some 4,500 professed Sisters, as well as 500 Brothers. Along with dedicated volunteers, they worked from 550 convents in 125 nations. Their mission: serving the poorest of the poor, the helpless and the dying.

Mother Teresa had declared the world's greatest evil to be "lack of love and charity." She further defined evil as the "terrible indifference" toward "one's neighbor... assaulted by exploitation, corruption, poverty and disease."

It is hard to imagine these two great women **not** meeting in heaven, each one, God's agent of Charity. They remind us that in striving to love and serve God's children in this world, we come to know God – Love Incarnate, the Holy One, Jesus: our Brother and Lord – yesterday, today and tomorrow.

These saintly women, St. Dymphna and Blessed Mother Teresa, are role models for our prayer. You can count on them when dealing with those impossible 'cases' that come to all of us. And let your prayers begin with the challenges of love and peace not yet realized within our own families. ■



# FMA Spiritual Exercises Lent-Easter 2011

For the petitions and special intentions of all our benefactors, Franciscan Mission Associates will conduct this series of spiritual exercises during the Lenten and Easter season.

You are cordially invited to join us in prayer for your own needs and petitions, for those of our Franciscan missionary friars and their people, and for all who cooperate by prayer and sacrifice for the spread of the faith.

During the Lenten-Easter Season these Novenas of Masses have been arranged:

February 2-10 / February 11-19 .....Our Lady of Lourdes  
March 9 - April 17 .....Lenten Masses (40)  
April 12 - April 20 .....Feast of Easter  
April 24 - May 2 .....In Thanksgiving for the Risen Christ  
April 12-June 7 .....9 Tuesdays to St. Anthony

Holy Mass is offered each day for all Franciscan Mission Associates benefactors and the special intentions they request. Kindly forward your petitions for the Novenas scheduled to:

**Father Robert, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates  
PO Box 598, Dept. 3101, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

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## *Join us on Pilgrimage to the Shrines of Italy*

*We will pray at the Shrines sacred to our faith  
and other shrines with a Franciscan Spiritual Director.*

**SPRING - MAY 2012**

Papua • Vence • Assisi • Florence • Rome  
Vatican City • and more

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Dear Father, Please send information on Pilgrimage to the Shrines of Italy

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Pilgrimage Office, Dept. F, P.O. Box 598, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598  
Tel: 914-664-5604 or 914-664-1747**