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FOCUS



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

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America

Virtue: SUFFERING

The first Christians were familiar and welcomed suffering. They recognized Jesus as that long-awaited "suffering servant" Messiah foretold in Hebrew Scriptures. He was their model in all things, especially in suffering.

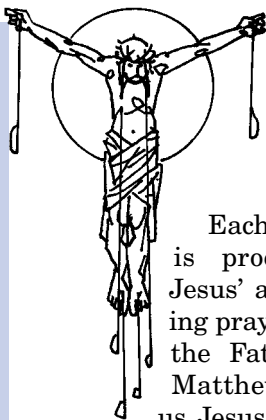
Because of Him, and with Him, Christians through the ages, have embraced suffering as sacrifice and prayer.

"Take courage," He has said. "I have overcome the world."

With that instruction and sure knowledge, then and surely now, miracles happen. For suffering, offered in union with Jesus' own, proves to be a gift as well as a trial. Through patient endurance of suffering, we gain merit for ourselves and others.

So as Lent dawns this Ash Wednesday take the time to look at your personal sufferings straight in the eye. Claim them as an offering to God.

Remember, as you practice this virtue in Lent, you witness to the Easter that is our promise. ■



How to handle suffering of body and soul.

Each year, as the Passion is proclaimed, we hear Jesus' agonized and haunting prayer of supplication to the Father. This year St. Matthew's Passion shows us Jesus falling prostrate in the Garden of Gethsemani.

"My Father," He cries out, "if it is possible, let this cup pass me by." He continues, clearly understanding the Passion to come: "Still, let it be as you would have it, not as I."

Jesus prayed in this way three times, His agony growing deeper each time, for He is alone. Alone, though Peter, James, and John were asked to come along with the rest of the Apostles.

"My heart is nearly broken with sorrow," Jesus confided, asking these three closest disciples to "Remain here and stay awake with me." Yet,

each time, Jesus turned to find all of them, lost in deep sleep.

With deep understanding of human nature, along with typical Middle Eastern irony, Jesus forgives them. As he calls them to attention, he tells them to sleep on, even to “enjoy your rest.” It is the hour, Jesus announces, when the “Son of Man is to be handed over to the power of evil men.”

The scene has to be among the most heart-rending of all the Scriptures. It is a scene that prefigures his final moments of life in this world, His final agony on the Cross.

The fact is clear as a solemn bell in this Gospel of Agony in the Garden. Suffering is not something healthy human beings invite – even to the most perfect of human beings, Jesus the God-Man and Christ.

Yet, suffering is and has been an essential part of the Christian message. For Jesus taught us that we can freely accept the reality of suffering, offering it to God, offering that united suffering for the salvation of all.

Suffering takes many forms: Loss of a loved one... the pain of indifference and rejection... the terrible pain of aloneness (so very different from solitude). Think about the elderly,

now short of living friends and family, moving with every day and every minute toward certain death.

Surely, suffering is many times less dramatic. It may be a pain, a headache which can be offered up. Likewise, the pain of repeated, everyday failure.

In his letter to the faithful, St. Francis spoke of that Agony in the Garden, of Jesus’s acceptance of suffering for the good of all and in union with the will of God. The Lord’s Passion and Death on the Cross was not offered “for himself through whom all things were made, but for *our sins*.” St. Francis adds: “It was intended to leave us an example of how to follow in his footsteps.”

One good way of doing so, Francis instructs, is a commitment to “produce worthy fruits of penance.” His examples: learning to “love our neighbors as ourselves,” as well as humility, charity and almsgiving.

Suffering, Francis teaches us, when understood in the proper spirit, can be something beautiful as well as sacrificial prayer. ■

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Attending the Lord's Supper during Lent



For some of us, the vivid memory of that first concelebrated Mass we attended opened the windows on the process of getting back to our roots in worship. It was the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper, at a time when the Second Vatican Council's revised liturgy began in full measure.

An unforgettable moment of brilliant light, splendid vestments as twilight grew into evening. All the priests of the parish, and any visiting priests as well celebrating together, consecrating the bread and wine that became the Body and Blood of Jesus.

This glorious Triduum Night recalled the Gospel descriptions of the Last Supper in the Upper Room. The Apostles gathered around the Table, as the Lord consecrated that first Holy Eucharist, and commanded those ever after to "do this in memory of me."

Perhaps for the first time, the baptized at Mass on that holy evening truly experienced themselves as participants, rather than observers... in that Breaking of the Bread. Like that Holy Meal in the Upper Room in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago.

Those in the congregation, participating in that celebration,

were strengthened by Word and Sacrament, and as a community, strengthened and inspired by one another.

The Lenten season offers us many opportunities to become aware of our origins. We can listen again to the prayers, participate – listening, praying, singing – in the full celebration. And once again we find ourselves truly a part of the Last Supper.

Not only during the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper, but every time we are privileged to come to Mass.

And we experience, through grace and the help of the Holy Spirit that first shared "meal" in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, that first Holy Thursday continues, just as Jesus commanded, each time we gather around the Table of the Lord. The Mass is a "meal" – a gathering where we are nourished. And we understand that this is mystery indeed, holy ground: being fed by God's Holy Word, and then, with the Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

We remember. We celebrate. We believe. And we go forth, to be a "light to the world," just as the Lord asked of us. ■

THE UNFAILING COURTESY OF ST. FRANCIS

Few people today would consider St. Francis of Assisi, as the patron of say, good manners. But, in fact, he is. For courtesy was an essential discipline of daily life for Francis. Just another example, some would offer, of how St. Francis was ahead of his time in many ways. Take the matter of constitutions for his newly-founded religious order. In those articles, Francis focused not only on the order and its needs, but on the rights of the individual brother.

His unfailing courtesy is evident in St. Francis' Christ-like forgiveness. Yet, he believed in the importance and balance of discipline, individual and communal – the guarantee of correct behavior.

And courtesy for St. Francis carried over to thoughtfulness to all in what some would regard as small matters. Francis, we are told, would not embarrass a host or cook; he ate what was presented at table, receiving his food as a gift from God.

He displayed a courteous demeanor to all about him, nature and animal life included. We know that Francis respected the good sense, intelligence and reasonableness that one finds among nature. And without discrimination. Francis is known to have related to the powerful predators like the wolves as well as to song birds, perched safely above the reach of most people.

The saint's courtesy, of course, was rooted in St. Francis' understanding of all creation somehow reflecting the

holy touch of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

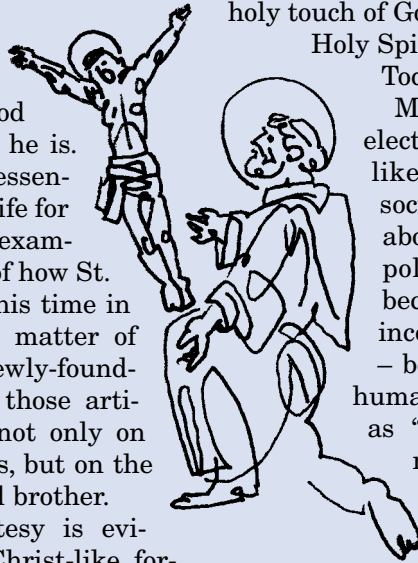
Today we seem different.

Many politicians in this election year, cite issues like the "coarsening of society." They are talking about all of us, not just politicians. The issue becomes bad language – inconsiderate wardrobes – behavior that degrades human beings while touted as "funny" on TV or in magazines.

And how many of us meet with discourtesy every day? On the highways, in the post office or the grocery checkout lines, and even in the parish parking lot after Sunday Mass.

Every day offers hundreds of chances to be courteous like Francis. So, as the Lenten season steps into springtime, bringing us more in contact with others – let us imitate our beloved Francis by practicing simple courtesy. With other people, of course, but also perhaps, with our environment. It is what St. Francis would surely regard as acknowledging the touch of the All-Holy One, manifest in all that God has created. ■

In the sacrament of the altar, the Lord meets us, men and women created in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:27), and becomes our companion along the way.
Pope Benedict XVI



CHURCH AND STATE AND ST. ANTHONY

These days, we often turn on the television news or open the newspaper to find the featured newsmakers are church leaders speaking out against the evils of the day. In so doing, they stand in the long line of popes, cardinals, bishops and archbishops as well as religious leaders who have done likewise. Reading the Catholic press is often the best way to hear what they are saying.

More than anyone else, perhaps St. Anthony of Padua stands out as their worthy patron. He was a master of the art. And he did not hesitate to bring Gospel concerns before the public as well as to leaders. And more often than not, Anthony got the job done.

Like today's Church leaders, Anthony, the celebrated Franciscan scholar and preacher, spoke directly to all who would hear, as well as going "through the hoops," as people say today.

He did not hesitate to address princes, kings, and on a local level, the duke who ran things at home.

Friar Anthony knew how to put out the message in clear language, again, with words so simple that few could misinterpret them. He preached against the evils of the day, especially harm done to the poor. And he addressed the need for all to repent and forgive one another. Yes, even the latter – always the least welcome of any preacher's tasks. The necessities and the how-to's of forgiveness is a message that people of any age often do not want to hear.

One example of St. Anthony's focus – and results achieved: The matter of abuse of the poor. He worked carefully to bring about systemic change, aiming to change laws entirely, rather than rely on the whim of individuals in power.

Anthony started first with the leaders of his adopted town of Padua. And he did not hesitate to plead his cases before the Dukes who held regional power as well.

The result: Anthony is credited with rescuing debtors from debtors' prison with an idea that still has metal. He promoted a kind of bankruptcy law that allowed debtors to surrender what possessions they had left, in exchange for their freedom (and the chance to support their families once again).

While not everyone has Anthony's skills, it is important to remember that as Christians, we all are called on to make a difference – simply by our baptismal call to live as a disciple of Christ. Each of us needs to find the right way to take an active part in reforming society. It is a job that will always be there, in any age.

And we need to recall what Anthony made so clear: True reform begins first, in the heart of the reformer.

It is an appropriate Lenten meditation. Why not bring it to prayer this Lent? ■

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:

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AMERICA, LAND OF SAINTS? IS THAT REALLY THE CASE?

Back in 1989, Pope Benedict, while still a cardinal, clarified some questions about saints. In an Italian magazine interview, he stressed that saints will always be important, emphasizing that there is no such thing as “too many saints.” Canonization, the precise process of officially declaring someone to be a saint, he said, simply represents “a choice for the Church.”

But God is so generous with gifts of grace that we will never know the numbers of saints worldwide. In fact, he said, “There are many more saints than those who can possibly be canonized.”

The United States of America, a very young nation in the eyes of our 2000 plus year-old Church, already holds up a few such sainted men and women as saints worthy of imitation and celebration worldwide.

Among them: St. Elizabeth Bayley Seton, who died in 1821, was canonized in 1975 (as the first native-born American saint). And St. John Neumann, a Bohemian-born Redemptorist priest and Bishop of Philadelphia; he died in 1860 and was canonized in 1977.

Among the latest Americans to be declared saints are:

Mother Katharine Drexel. This Philadelphia-born heiress, born in 1858, died in 1955. She used her fortune to establish schools for Native Americans and African Americans. She had founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in 1891. Her cause was opened in 1964. She was

declared venerable in 1987, beatified in 1988, and canonized on October 1, 2000.

Mother Theodore (Anne Therese) Guerin. Born in 1798, she died in 1856. Originally a member of a French congregation (the Sisters of Providence), Mother Theodore founded the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary of the Woods in 1840. She was canonized on October 15, 2006.

As to the countless “uncanonized” saints, Americans know many of them. Family members “of happy memory” fit this category. As do men and women, laity as well as priests and religious, who clearly love God, and live their lives accordingly. They are often described as “living saints,” in their lifetimes. There are also many more American “causes” pending: people of holiness who may well be counted one day among the canonized. In our own lifetime, we think of Cardinal Cooke and Archbishop Fulton Sheen.

During this Lenten season, why not check Catholic book stores or the parish library, as well as the Internet for more information.

You will find that these men and women are not so different from yourself. Not all saints worked miracles during their lifetime, nor were they “perfect.” The key element: they were willing to work at holiness. As you read about them, you may discover that you are well on the way to holiness yourself, with just a few modifications. Look to the saints. They can tell you how to achieve your goal. ■

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 Friend,

For some mothers and fathers it is difficult to “give up” some pleasure for Lent. They have already placed their children first; they wake up in the morning thinking what to give them for breakfast or whether a new bicycle will bring a smile to a son who didn’t make the team.

When the psychologists speak of “other directed” people the easiest example is the mom and dad who put food on the table, treats in the lunch box, and the future in their minds.

In that, they are so like Christ, who never put Himself first. He thought of his apostles; the women of Jerusalem; “my Father in heaven”; the foreigner; the little children; even the soul of Pilate and his persecutors: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

We often see this portrayed in stories by the soldier who smothers a grenade to save his buddies; by a sailor who jumps in the water so there is more room for the sick and injured in the lifeboat.

In fact it is worth watching TV with this thought in mind; it can make your viewing a thoughtful act. Watch to see who is the thoughtful one, the caring one, the helping one – not always the major character – but a brother, a child, a sister, a wife who is there only to help.

Advertisers know that when they say “you will be helped” or this will “help your sickness” – they’ve caught your attention.

God says that to us every day. “I am the way and the truth and the life” and “If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it.”

So listen hard to His voice and remember His promise. Pray for a better listening ear to His word, every day during this Lent.

God’s blessings on your daily life,

Fr. Robert, OFM

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

LENT BEGINS AT THE INSTITUTO SAN FRANCISCO

Friar Francis tell of Ash Wednesday at Instituto San Francisco

This year the Instituto San Francisco, a school which offers classes from first grade up to graduation in twelfth grade has seen an increase in enrollment of about 300 students. There are now approximately 2500 hard working scholars in the school.

The boys and girls wear uniforms and the Instituto's own buses run all around the city and even further out to get them to class on time. One thing much different from the boys and girls up north – they don't get any snow-days off but sometimes the rain keeps them home.

On Ash Wednesday, last year, the Instituto San Francisco community initiated the season of Lent with Masses and the imposition of ashes as a sign of penance. At 7:30 a.m., a Mass was celebrated (buses came early) with more than 1800 students plus teachers, administrators and other workers from the High School. Friar Peter, O.F.M., celebrated the outdoor Mass and Friar Ramiro, O.F.M. Conv., preached the Gospel.

They heard the reading which reminded them:

“Brothers and sisters. We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us.... Working together, then we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

Five Sisters of the Inmaculada assisted with the imposition of ashes and with the distribution of Holy Communion.

At 10:00 a.m., Friar Ramiro celebrated the Mass for the more that 600 grammar school children plus teachers and other workers, and Friar Peter preached the Gospel. Other Friars assisted with the



RESTORED RITE FOR A CONSECRATED VIRGIN CELEBRATED IN EL SALVADOR

*A promise only to God in special rite celebrated
by Bishop Mojica*



She stood at the altar in a white gown and veil, but she was there for no earthly man. She received a band on her left ring finger as a symbol, much like a wedding band. She was there to join in mystical marriage with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Maria Luisa Meza, a missionary living at the Agape Association of El Salvador founded by Father Flavian, O.F.M., recently joined the Order of Consecrated Virgins. The Consecration of a Virgin is one of the oldest sacramentals in the Church. One of the fruits of the second Vatican Council was the restoration of this profound blessing of the Church on virgins living in the world. Through this sacramental, the virgin, after renewing her promise of perpetual virginity to God, is set aside as a sacred person who belongs only to Christ.

And this vocation reaches back to apostolic times; by oral tradition we are told that St. Matthew himself consecrated the first virgin. Early Christian virgins included Agnes, Agatha, Lucy and Cecilia whose names we often hear in the Scripture readings at Mass.

The consecration existed well before Institutes of Religious Life and their Profession of Vows. However, around the 9th or 10th centuries, the Rite of Consecration fell into disuse for women living in the world, like Maria Luisa, but



imposition of ashes and helped with distribution of Holy Communion, as well as the helpful Sisters of the Inmaculada.

The students also prepared murals and other pictorials hung throughout the school to serve as a reminder for all during these forty days of the real meaning of Lent and Lenten practices.

The students in both the grammar and high schools have begun a collection, to last during the entire season of Lent, of food products to be distributed to a nursing care facility run by the Sisters of the Inmaculada. Some of the students will personally make the one hour long trip to Danli shortly after Easter to deliver the foods and visit with the elderly. Nothing pleases the residents like the visit of young people. ■



continued to be retained for nuns in monasteries. Even then, it was a Rite distinct and separate from the nuns' profession of vows. So after Vatican II, in 1970, the Rite was restored for women living in the world like Maria Luisa.

This sacramental is reserved to the Bishop of the diocese which means he confers it. The consecrated virgin shares intimately in the nature and mission of the Church—she is a living image of the Church's love for her Spouse while sharing in His redemptive mission.

The consecrated virgin living in the world, the Church tells us, is “consecrated to God, mystically espoused to Christ and dedicated to the service of the Church.” The consecrated virgin living in the world is a real, definitive vocation in itself. She is not, a would-be Religious, nor is she preparing to become a Sister or Contemplative Nun. She has found her vocation and she is there. The public ceremony conducted by her bishop is a declaration of her permanent life, as a consecrated woman in the Church.

It was a very special day for Maria Luisa and the Church. ■



65 Friars from our province gathered in Assisi, Italy for a retreat and first ever chapter meeting there last year; most junior 19 year old novice Joseph Powell, most senior Fabian Grifone at 82. Our Provincial Minister, Fr. Robert Campagna, O.F.M. noted the coming 800th celebration of the Friars Minor in 2009. We will be reflecting on the “grace of our origins” in preparation for the anniversary.

Words Worth Noting



It is necessary to pray for priests because they are often forgotten by the living, since Christians often consider that priests do not need prayers.

St. Joseph Moscati

The difference between the reason of man and the instinct of the beast is this, that the beast does but know, but the man knows that he knows.

John Donne

Anger is like a stone thrown into a wasp's nest.

Pope Paul VI

Make yourself an honest man and then you may be sure there is one less rascal in the world.

Thomas Carlyle

Culture is the habit of being pleased with the best and knowing why.

Henry Van Dyke

Seven days is the length of a guest's life.

Burmese Proverb

Death is one moment and life is so many of them.

Tennessee Williams

Knowledge of what is possible, is the beginning of happiness.

George Santayana

The first great gift we can bestow on others is a good example.

Morell

Men are wise in proportion, not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience.

G.B. Shaw

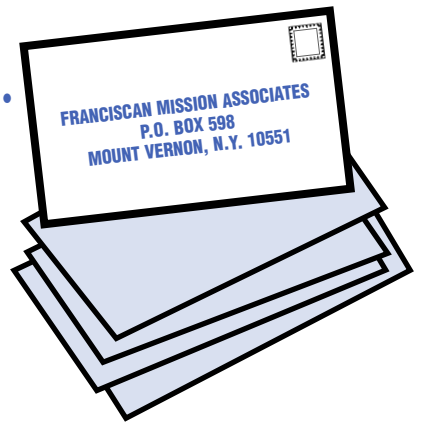
An eye can threaten like a loaded and leveled gun, or it can insult like hissing or kicking; or, in its altered mood, by beams of kindness, it can make the heart dance for joy.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

A hundred men may make an encampment, but it takes a woman to make a home.

Chinese Proverb

Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Fr. Robert,

Enclosed please find my check as a sign of thanksgiving for a favor we recently received from our Lord. My husband was unemployed for a little over 13 months and we prayed so hard for him to find a good job.

I cannot thank our Savior, Our Blessed Lady, St. Joseph and the Saints for this awesome answer to our prayers. Even though life has its ups and downs, Jesus has never let me fall! Also, the Blessed Mother promised that all who recite the rosary will have their prayers answered.

God bless you all. I look forward to reading your newsletter.

Sincerely,
N.P.
New York, NY

Dear Fr. Robert,

Please let me give thanks my thanks to the Holy Spirit, Blessed Mother, St. Ann, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Jude, and all the saints for favors received. Enclosed is my offering. Please remember me and my family in your prayers.

God Bless.
J.M.
Cape Buton

Dear Fr. Robert,

God's blessings to you and to all the mission associates for all the good work that you are doing! Through the years the Franciscan Friars have sent me so many beautiful pamphlets and such wonderful material that has revitalized my faith. I keep you in my prayers. I do not have adequate words to describe my appreciation to your organization for all the times your letters have strengthened and renewed my faith.

I pray our Lord will continue to bless you as he has been so generous to me. Enclosed is a check for St. Anthony's Bread. I wish to say a huge thank you to my beloved friend, St. Jude, who has interceded on my behalf many times! I also thank our most holy Mother Mary, St. Michael, St. Francis, St. Martin de Porres, of course also St. Anthony, St. Joseph, St. Patrick and all the Angels and elect who do our Lord's bidding. Thank you, dear Fr. Robert. God bless you and all the Mission Associates.

Your Friend in Christ,
R.L.S.
Othello, WA

PALM SUNDAY PROCESSION: A LESSON IN HUMILITY

The Passion Sunday “Procession” – The Commemoration of the Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem — usually begins outside the Church, where the palm branches are also blessed.

With the full solemnity of cross, candles, and incense, we gather and think of how wonderful it must have been to be in that throng, saluting and celebrating the Lord.

As the celebrant greets all, he sums up the importance, and yet brevity of Jesus’ Messianic Entry “into his own city.” For that joyful procession will be followed by the Savior’s suffering, death and resurrection.

We are directed to follow Jesus “with a lively faith” – to be “united with him in his suffering on the cross” as well as in the promise of resurrection and new life. The Gospel proclaimed during the Blessing of the Palms gives us St. Matthew’s telling of that first Palm Sunday.

But the real highlight of this Passion Sunday Mass is the proclaiming and reading of the Passion of the Lord – this year St. Matthew’s Gospel. A searing, fact-filled telling that ends in the violent silence of seasoned armed guards fixing a seal on Jesus’ tomb.

Later, as the Mass concludes, we are encouraged to take Blessed Palm

home with us. Not as a souvenir of a festive time. Rather, Blessed Palm is a sacramental, one that will help us remember the important things, especially in our home.

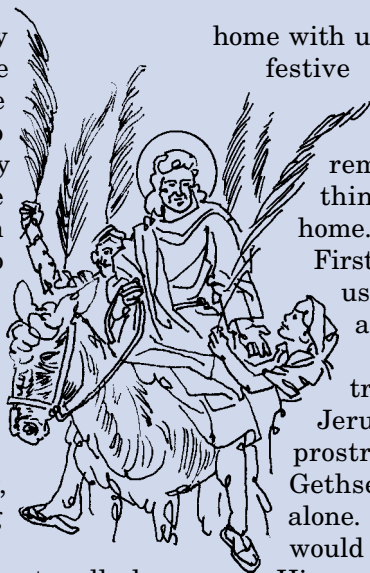
First, Blessed Palm reminds us of how fickle human acclamation can be.

For shortly after that triumphal entry into Jerusalem, we find Jesus prostrate in the Garden of Gethsemani. He is utterly alone. Not even the Apostles would stay awake for vigil with Him.

Secondly, on Palm Sunday, we are charged to renew our commitment to be united with Jesus. To be like Jesus, from the inside out. The sight of Blessed Palm in our home is a reminder. It can remind us to keep that oneness with Christ – regardless of whether the crowds of our own lives applaud us or sneer at us.

And so people keep the tradition of Blessed Palm in their homes. Just touching it, displayed in a vase, for example, brings remembrance, and meditation that touches our own lives. The same for eyeing the Blessed Palm kept near our own front door, or in the sick room of a beloved family member who now moves toward life eternal.

It is in those moments that we realize why we brought Blessed Palm home with us. Another good Lenten meditation. ■



The Way of the Cross – a Year-Round Devotion



Try. Even if it has not been possible for quite a few years. And even if you are a daily Mass goer. Try to make one or more of Way of the Cross congregational

devotions held in your parish this Lenten season.

Why? Let's look at three good reasons:

First of all, this reliving of Christ's Passion — the terror, torture, and attempted dehumanization of the God-Man and Lord of Life — has much to say to all of us. And the more so when we come to pray and witness together in community.

Secondly, the courage of the faithful who followed Jesus is ever amazing, and a model for the faithful Christian. Remarkably, most of them were women to be ready for His burial — St. Veronica, Mary the Mother of Jesus, the Women of Jerusalem.

How often do we need to remind ourselves that we are a part of the crowd? Do we ever muster the courage to stand up for the institutionalized, the imprisoned, those who are condemned by society? Those, who like Jesus may also be innocent victims?

And lastly, where, other than at the Stations, among other believers,

can we confront and pray about a largely ignored issue like forgiveness.

Clearly, the Passion tells us Jesus forgave, not just in words, but fully and freely, those who maligned Him, those who took part in killing Him.

We hear that prayer in St. Luke's Gospel (23:33-34). With the thieves on one side, the soldiers dividing his garments by roll of the dice, no doubt in front of Him, Jesus prayed for them. Even as he must have been suffocating, He cried out those words that most of us always find so hard to say: *Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.*

That prayer is a hard pill to swallow, one that goes against all the hidden darkness of original sin. The blood-tinged darkness that calls out for revenge/hatred, rendered for hurt and violation. That's real justice, we want to say.

Forgiveness is perhaps the most difficult of all Christian prayers. More so in our world where revenge is virtually a sport: from game shows to international politics, and back to office politics.

But... there is the Passion. In the vivid artwork and images of the Stations. With God's point of view. Forgiveness. And the reminder that we are called, commissioned to be like Jesus.

It's hard for us. Always will be, making true forgiveness a work in progress all our lives. That is the lesson we must take away from the Stations,— as we pray them in this holy Lenten season. ■

Recognize and accept God's blessings. (St. Peregrine)

You've heard it said: It isn't always easy to accept God's blessings – because sometimes those blessings come in disguise.

And isn't it true that such observations originate with people who know what they are talking about:

- A young would-be bride who mourns a breakup with a fiancée – only to find that she one day opened her heart and eyes to discover another young man who had been among her acquaintances for some time.

- A honors grad who mourned a “dream job” he lost – only to discover a new career, and a far more satisfying pathway in life.

We have all known people with such “true life” stories: people who discover blessings coming from what had been thought a disaster.

What makes the difference is tuning in to God's point of view, along with asking for His help. Trusting in God's Providence.

St. Peregrine Laziosi, whose life spanned the last half of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th, is a very good example.

A Servite priest, St. Peregrine was a tireless servant of the Lord. Today, people might style him a “workaholic.” He truly never wasted a second of the Lord's gift of time each day – moving into the vacuum of needs not filled by the culture of the times. In addition to being a fine priest and confessor, he became skilled in healthcare arts. Like Mother Teresa of our times, he often personally administered to the poor and the sick.

When his own lingering leg sore proved to be a cancer, doctors asked him to prepare for amputation. Given the times, of course, the outcome would usually be poor indeed. A bad diagnosis, indeed, for anyone, and certainly devastating for Fr. Peregrine.

Turning to God as his only hope, he spent the night before surgery in prayer in the chapel. If nothing else, his medical tragedy gave this good priest the chance to put his full trust in the Lord.

By morning's light, he was cured. The miracle, a witness to all of the power of God, a miracle that sent Peregrine back to his work for God with renewed gusto, and onward to a ripe old age of 85 years. Extraordinary for anyone in his time.

Pray for St. Peregrine's help in your own moments of facing *blessings in disguise*, and for others as well. Pray that all may claim life's challenges as Peregrine did – and then entrust the outcome to God's loving care. Their reward will ultimately be – as it was Peregrine's – eternal life. ■

The Spirit invoked by the celebrant upon the gifts of bread and wine placed on the altar is the same Spirit who gathers the faithful “into one body” and makes of them a spiritual offering pleasing to the Father.

Pope Benedict XVI

FMA Spiritual Exercises Lent-Easter 2008

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
February 6 - March 16	Lenten Masses (40)
March 11 - March 19.....	Passiontide
March 23 - March 31.....	The Risen Christ...in thanksgiving
April 15 - June 10	9 Tuesdays to St. Anthony

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

**Father Robert, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept. 386, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

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 382, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

VOCATIONS

Please pray for the young people at home and in the missions who are ready and eager to dedicate their lives to God and the spiritual welfare of His people.

Often all they really need is the special courage to hear God's call and to answer him. Please join us in daily prayer, for God's grace in providing devoted brothers, sisters, deacons, priests, and religious for Christ's work in today's world.

For further information please write to Fr Robert, O.F.M., at
Franciscan Mission Associates, P.O. Box 598, Dept. 381, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598