

# FMA

# FOCUS



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

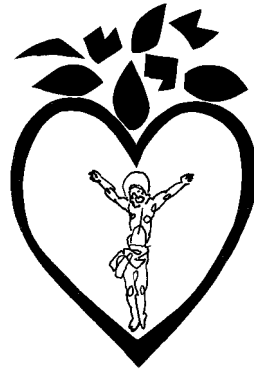
Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America

## Virtue: CHARITY

Charity is a tough virtue. For charity as taught and practiced by Jesus, prunes and pulls and draws a person to holiness. Charity is all about love, lived to the maximum, as God loves. It calls to move beyond the familiar, embracing all men and women, even strangers. And ultimately teaches us to love and yearn for God.

One of today's popular hymns sums it up in one line: *"Where Charity and Love Prevail..."* we sing, *"there God is ever found."*

So, let no one tell us that we are incapable of such perfect love. For we know that Jesus, God living in our midst, shared his very life with us, and continues to do so. Surely, he will share the grace of this highest virtue with us – if we but ask for it. ■



Love those  
who show  
no love?  
A Christian  
obligation?

In the Hebrew Scriptures, we see God tenderly dealing with his people, indeed caring for them like a Good Shepherd. He established boundaries, like the Ten Commandments. Yet, he challenged the Hebrews to move beyond their own comfort zones. To learn to be more like God.

Through Moses, he counseled the Jews to choose life. The alternative: sliding back into the pagan culture of death all around them. And so the Hebrew, surely in the ideal world, set up norms for sharing the harvest, for hospitality, caring for widows and orphans, for sheltering the aliens among them, etc..

Jesus in his teaching would recall those older norms. It was the hardness of their hearts, Jesus said, that had allowed the Jews to accept divorce—a choice that was often harmful to the couple and society as well.

Jesus explicitly challenged people to use their free will, and move closer to holiness. In all matters, most especially in matters of love. That would mean extending love and concern beyond one's natural family, to all men and women... even enemies. For even pagans love their own; Jesus reminded his shocked and astounded listeners.

More, however is expected of God's chosen ones. For they were called to be holy, even as the Father is holy.

For many, this teaching about "hard love" or truly, "tough love" wasn't a message that went over well. Not then. Not now. For who wants to hear that love means more than just feeling good.

The complete story of the Crucifixion is again a hard reading. Or simply hard to take, because — we know the drill. We know what it asks of us.

There is the Lord, suffering the very worst that life can deliver in terms of suffering, torture, brutality, ritually configured public death. And

yet with his last breath, Jesus asks the Father to forgive even his killers. It is that love which is so terrifying. So powerful. So seemingly impossible.

Jesus taught us, however, that God's grace will always help us to achieve even such impossible goals.

This summer, while more leisure is available, take some time. Go through those passages of the Gospels which call you to hard choices in charity. Take a look at the people close to home, those we know as family or fellow workers; and those we like to keep at a distance. People we feel ought to be left behind — because dealing with them is just too scarring of our hearts, pride, and sense of selfhood.

Then apply Jesus' teaching on loving all. Stretching out to love all men and women, even those that are, at best, a thorn in the side. Then, select just one of those people. Beginning with prayer for that person. It's the best of all beginnings as we go forward, to a deeper life of faith and holiness. ■

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



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## Charity and Love of God — Paramount! (St. Francis)

It was the Year of Our Lord, 1223, Christian Europe was... well, in a mess. A mess not unlike the state of crisis which people observe today.

The economy was in a state of flux. Wars were epidemic. Deadly diseases spread like wildfire. Education was a distant hope for most. And human life-span was short by any definition.

It was in this milieu that St. Francis of Assisi had begun to experience health issues himself. But he traveled and consulted for all the meetings necessary for completion of the Rule that would give his Order official status in the Church for the growing and respected religious order he had founded. Without it, accepted officially by the Church, the Friars could not fully do the work that Jesus demanded of them.

And so Francis worked with his friars, as well as with their Cardinal Protector, bishops and officials of all kinds. What caused the most trouble for approval of the document was its stipulation that friars were to live like Jesus. As radically as Jesus had lived. Loving all Christians, all men and women, indeed, even enemies. With a love that would never be realized until the friars were consumed with love of God, Himself. And yes, there should be no secure home in this world, for pilgrim man's true home was God, in eternity.

For the exploding 13th Century, this was a radical message – just as it will continue to be in any age.

So, there were consultations. Much travel. More haggling. Gathering it all in his heart, an exhausted Francis retreated to his rustic hermitage in Fonte Colombo, near Rieti, Italy. It was there that, after fasting and praying for 40 days, Francis wrote down the Rule for his growing order. He gave it this inscription:

*Whoever wants to show how much  
he loves God*

*must do his will,  
keep his commandments  
or observe a special rule.*

*Whoever does this will receive  
God's love abundantly.*

In process since the Year 1221, the completed text of the Rule was published as an 8-page document of 12 chapters cut down from an original 24 pages with 27 chapters. The final Rule cited just 11 quotations from the Bible. In the end, Francis cut over 90 biblical passages that he had found personally helpful.

But nowhere did St. Francis edit or modify what so many, including Church officials of the time, considered “extreme” interpretations of charity and Gospel poverty. He did not budge on these because Francis knew that the only way to love God is totally, completely, without reservation. And those norms for Gospel living would be central to that goal.

It is a message that still rings true today. ■

# TRINITY SUNDAY: FEAST OF THE GREATEST MYSTERY.

This year, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity fell on May 18, the Sunday immediately following Pentecost. The latter feast relates to the Jewish Pentecost festival.

But there is no parallel feast of the Holy Trinity, of course, in the history of the Jewish tradition.

The mystery of the Trinity has been and remains the most difficult of all Gospel teachings. To the Jews, it represented heresy. And some six centuries later, the mere word would scandalize the emerging Islamic Faith.

In fact, most Christians would know nothing about the Mystery of the Holy Trinity – had it not been revealed to us by God. Specifically, coming to us via Jesus, God’s Son.

And who – even in fictional exploration – could suggest such a thing: The nature of God as Holy Trinity... The co-existing unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God. Three persons in one divine nature, never “created” but coexisting. The origin of all life, and ultimately Light and Love itself.

The Gospel for Trinity Sunday this year offers the very direct words of Jesus to one of his students, a wealthy man of Jerusalem, Nicodemus. “Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,” Jesus explained, “that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life.” (John 3: 16-18)



In St. John’s Gospel, Chapters 13-17, Jesus teaches the Disciples (and us) about the Holy Spirit. He speaks of the promised coming of God as Holy Spirit. “I will send him to you,” he tells the Apostles. And “being the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth... he will have received from me what he will announce to you.” Jesus adds, “All that the Father

has belongs to me.” (John 16: 7-15).

In trying to speak to the reality of Trinity, Christians have assigned different gifts or qualities to each person of the Trinity:

- God, the Father/Creator (origin).
- Jesus, only begotten Son/Savior, God’s Holy Word (knowledge).
- The Holy Spirit, God’s Love/Wisdom (Pentecost).

And although even the most brilliant theologians can never hope to understand the reality and mystery, they are smart enough to know that personal understanding is not the issue. With the help of God’s grace, we can believe. And we can experience the Trinity in our lives.

And so the Trinity is summed up in the most simple of all Christian prayers, The Sign of the Cross. “In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The Doctrine of the Trinity is a truth so complex, that we simply live with it every day. ■

# Recreation? Why it was recommended by Vatican II

We have been living now some 45 years with the work of the Second Vatican Council. That historic assembly of the world's bishops, convened initially by Pope John XXIII in October of 1962, brought three thousand Church Fathers to Rome. There they met in four major sessions, concluding on December 8, 1965.

Acting with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and under the presidency of the Pope – first Pope John XXIII and, following his death, Pope Paul VI – the bishops prayed together and pondered the life and mission of the Church in a rapidly changing world. They looked in particular at faith, morals, worship and discipline. In effect – how the Church was responding to Jesus' command to bring about the Kingdom of God, and how the Church could continue to go about that sacred mission.

The Church has nothing to do with a collection of static buildings. Rather the Church is the living Body of Christ in the World. A body made up of the people of God, people who are baptized into the very Body of Christ.

And when Fathers speak of the Body of Christ, they reference the living, resurrected Jesus, Son of God, Word of God. Jesus who keeps his promise to be with us always, even to the end of times.

The work of this historic Council, drawing on the input from Bishops worldwide, produced 16 documents. Among the remarkable surprises for many people is the emphasis the Council Fathers placed on the need for recreation and renewal, especially when they spoke to living as a community of God's people.

This teaching surely references the wisdom of the sabbath in biblical

teaching. The sabbath, along with designated feast days, ordered respite from the grind of life. The better to rest, to find time to pray, to remember our relationship with God. And to emerge from that sabbath experience as richer, more truly human men and women.

It is good to remember these teachings as so many of us plan summer vacations, leaving behind our "work" and the general grind of daily life, at least for a little while.

Like the sabbath of old, a good vacation renews and re-creates the energy and enthusiasm healthy people bring to daily living. Perhaps the better, smarter word then, is *re-creation* or recreation. That is, to be re-created.

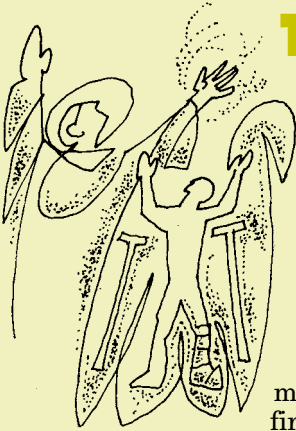
Ask God to help you make the best of vacation time. That you may indeed be "re-created" by the experience. Not only in the important sense of physical and mental renewal, but to grow and refresh spiritually as well. The better to resume your role in bringing about the Lord's Kingdom, in this world and the next. ■

## 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 483,  
Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

# WHY DID GOD WORK MIRACLES THROUGH ST. ANTHONY?



Did you ever wonder why God worked miracles through St. Anthony of Padua? And indeed, why God works miracles in the first place?

Let's take the second question first. Surely God will bring about miracles because of his great love for us. The work of Our Lord gives testimony to that fact.

But we know that God had also produced miracles to get people's attention. Remember Moses, the reluctant go-between for God's work of freeing the Hebrews from Egypt? The Lord's compassion, and yes, admiration for Moses, his beloved Patriarch, enabled an extraordinary relationship:

- Moses many times bargained with God, like an attorney seeking the best settlement in a court of law. And he lived to tell about it.

- And Moses, was the only prophet who could speak face to face with God, like one person with another. Again, Moses lives to tell about it.

Moreover, he performed miracles as God had promised.

Such a relationship with God, who showed his favor in miracles, was the inspiration Moses' people needed.

In all likelihood, God works miracles for both reasons, even to the present day. Today's evangelists refer to extraordinary events like miracles as a pre-evangelization experience. It

gets peoples' attention, bringing them to inquire about God, about faith, about a life of relationship with God. Miracles open doors.

Anthony was himself something of a reluctant miracle worker. Originally, he wanted to be a missionary, but in God's will, became a missionary of a different sort.

His family named him Ferdinand. But in taking vows as a Franciscan, he took the name of Anthony. That choice honored the great hermit, monk and abbot of the Fourth Century, St. Anthony of Egypt, the founder of Christian monasticism. This hero, born well-to-do like Ferdinand, led a life of extreme poverty, manual labor, and solitude. But he too was blessed by God as a vehicle for God's miracles on earth.

And both men chose to grow to their full humanity by seeking God and striving to do God's will. Each became truly holy during his pilgrimage on earth.

Now, both are gone from this world. Does God see their potential in you, or me? Undoubtedly yes, because God calls each of us, especially those baptized into the life of Jesus, to a life of holiness. It is, in fact, the ordinary way, as God sees things.

For our part, we may not work miracles, as Anthony did. But we are charged by God with being a miracle. And we accomplish that charge by living a life of Christian principles. In that way, like Anthony of Padua and Anthony of Egypt, we draw others to Christ Jesus, Our Lord. We are in effect, evangelizers, missionaries, just by living an open Christian life. ■

# 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,

“June is bustin’ out all over” is the way the song goes. It’s a catchy tune, but my mother didn’t raise a tenor - just an altar boy who sang, quietly so as not to spoil the song.

Then, when I became a priest, the Church assumed that I could sing, lead song at Mass, sing the prayers so everyone would join in.

Well, I’m sure my family thought I sang beautifully, but as a matter-of-fact I thought it was awful.

But it didn’t matter what I thought. Priests sing. I was a priest (by the grace of God and a couple of generous professors at the seminary) so I sang too.

Did you know the Church which has provisions for almost everything, has provisions for that as well. Priests don’t sing “notes.” They sing higher or lower depending on what it says in the Missal.

The pitches are marked with a thick straight line and we go up or down whenever that line does. So everybody can sing.

A simple solution to anybody cursed with tone deafness.

In fact, I once saw a choir director bring a whole church together in song by moving his hand up and down where we were supposed to sing. The congregation didn’t know we could sing together like that until the director showed us.

Now why am I telling you this?

Because I want you to remember that God’s grace is enough for you to do anything He asks. You’ve probably heard that before. But now, every time you hear a priest sing at Mass... you’ll know that God’s grace had given him the power and voice to do that for His honor and glory.

If you are in difficulty and feel overwhelmed, ask God to help you - to teach you the words to ask for help - to open your heart to His words of comfort - to learn to lean on God and his Saints and the Church. He will be ready to welcome you to His kingdom when you live by His way.

God’s blessings on your daily life.

Gratefully your,

*Fr. Robert, OFM*

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

# God's Love from AGAPE

Dear Franciscan Mission Associate:

Soon we will receive the *Gran Quijote* award which will be given to us on the 28th of January by the Mayor. Then the Chamber of Commerce will honor us with their highest honor, the Golden Palm. This will be very big since it takes place in a hotel, meal and all with hundreds of people. Must cost them a fortune.

Our country continues to be a little violent and many have gone to the USA because of that situation. The only way they will return is to make sure that we have jobs for them and give them a country where we can walk the streets without worrying that we will be shot.

In January we will begin our 30th anniversary of AGAPE. I began this project with a soup kitchen giving all the poor beggars of our town, three meals a day. After 30 years we still have this project and even improved it. Today these people have their own nurse, who has the authority to make sure that they are cared for with clothes, shoes etc. We even extended this help to the local hospital (many mothers remain with their children and have no time to buy food) and also help some 300 communities with food and other necessities.

We are now ready to begin a few more projects. Two before the end of the year and another two in January. Please keep us in your prayers and be assured of ours.

Take care now and love to all. Many thanks for being our friend.

Fr. Flavian O.F.M.  
AGAPE  
Sonsonate, El Salvador



## Social Programs

### SOUP KITCHEN

Since 1978, we feed senior citizens who live in the streets of Sonsonate. We serve breakfast, lunch and dinner 365 days a year.

### HOME FOR THE AGED

We provide a secure and comfortable home for poor men and women seniors. They receive medical treatment, food, homes, clothes and the special care of old age.

### NUTRITIONAL HOSPITAL

For severely malnourished children under the age of 5 who remain in the hospital an average of 3 months. Special medicine, nutrition and round-the-clock care until they recover. And while here we conduct a health program for their parents.

### RURAL HEALTH PROGRAM

More than 23,000 folks get preventive health care in the rural areas in the Eastern and Western parts of the country. We train and supervise the health providers who are aided by midwives, volunteers and the community.

### ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND HOLY CROSS HEALTH CLINICS

General health services to patients of all ages in the city and rural areas of the country.

### DENTAL CLINIC

There would be many a hungry soul without teeth if they did not come to our Dental Clinic where the fillings and other services only hurt a little.

### VISUAL HEALTH REGIONAL CENTER

Sponsored by Christian Blind Mission this prevents and cures visual problem. We have a surgery room and full-time ophthalmologists who treat cataracts and perform cornea transplants.

### GOD'S RESCUE

We serve children age 7-15 to prevent the increasing development of problems like vandalism, drug addiction, gangs, intra-family violence, child abuse, prostitution — offering instead counseling, health assistance and healthy recreation.

### HIV/AIDS INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM

Agape developed an awareness and preventive educational program with the technical staff and volunteers who participate in our various social-assistance programs, in order to reduce the spread of the virus.

### LETS LEARN TOGETHER

An early childhood stimulation program for children under five.



## Education Projects

### ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI SCHOOL

Offers an integral Kindergarten through 12 Grade education program.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL

We offer free vocational training to men and women from poor backgrounds who wish to learn a trade.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAM

Sponsored by the *Fundacion Gloria de Kriete* this is for 9th graders who learn English, computer skills and values. A similar program is offered in Sonsonate with sponsorships.

## TECHNOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

With the agreement of the Ministry of Education, we manage the technological school of Sonsonate and Chalatenango. We provide technical training in Computer Engineering, Computer Maintenance, Marketing, Continuous Education and more.

## ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM

In coordination with the Ministry of Education we offer a literacy program for adults living throughout the country. Since 2000 we have taught 15,000 each year.

## Mass Media

### AGAPE RADIO 90.1 FM (WEST)

This radio station broadcasts lively Latin American music for the youth and radio shows geared to convey a positive message. It covers the western region of El Salvador. You can listen on the internet : <[www.agaperadio.com.sv](http://www.agaperadio.com.sv)>

### AGAPE RADIO 96.51 FM (EAST)

This radio station broadcasts lively Latin American music for the youth and radio shows geared to convey a positive message. It covers the eastern region of El Salvador.

### RADIO LIGHT 97.7 FM

First Catholic radio station in El Salvador. This covers the whole country and has 24-hour religious programming. You can hear this on: <[www.radioluzfm.com](http://www.radioluzfm.com)>

### AGAPE TV CHANNEL 8

This TV station with a VHF frequency may be viewed anywhere in El Salvador. It is on the internet at: <[www.agapetv8.com](http://www.agapetv8.com)>. It broadcasts programs with values that contribute to education, culture and evangelization on 24-hours.

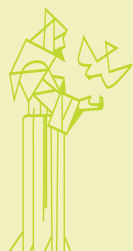
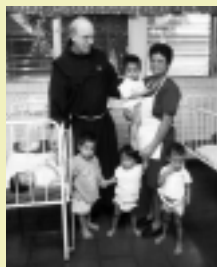
***There is also a Prayer Phone, A Divine Providence Sanctuary with three chapels  
One devoted to the Holy Trinity;  
One devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe;  
One dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi.  
Thousands of pilgrims visit this national shrine each year.***

### HOME OF PRAYER AND EVANGELIZATION

For prayer groups, Bible and doctrinal courses. We organize retreats for Agape's employees and the numerous volunteers who serve in various evangelization ministries.

There is also a hotel, a restaurant, a retreat and convention center.

**These are just some of the project that Fr. Flavian has founded and they have flourished because of the prayers and good works and donations of thousands of Franciscan Mission Associates through the year.**



# Words Worth Noting



*If God has forgiven you your past, you have no right to continue clinging to it.*

*Alex Rebello*

*If we say we want no dogma in religion is to assert a dogma.*

*Fulton J. Sheen*

*Boys are beyond the range of anybody's sure understanding, at least when they are between the ages of 18 months and 90 years.*

*James Thurber*

*A friendship founded on business is better than a business founded in friendship.*

*John D. Rockefeller*

*Fate. There is no fate. Between the thought and the success God is the only agent.*

*Edward Bulwer-Lytton*

*Hearing Mass is the ceremony I most favor during my travels. Church is the only place where someone speaks to me ... and I do not have to answer back.*

*Charles de Gaulle*

*When you become senile, you won't know it.*

*Bill Cosby*

*Architecture starts when you carefully put two bricks together. There it begins.*

*Ludwig Mies van der Rohe*

*The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum ... is a war between architecture and painting in which both come out badly maimed.*

*John Canaday*

*Drawing is the honesty of the art. There is no possibility of cheating. It is either good or bad.*

*Salvador Dali*

*There is no way on earth of making a person worthy of love, except by loving them.*

*Thomas Merton*

# Our Readers gladly write...



Dearest Father,

Thank you so very much for your and the Franciscan Community's faithful prayers. My son, Jeff, recently had four liver biopsies and three - stomach ones. Yesterday, their results came in and showed no malignancies and liver normal.

He was originally presumed to have advanced leukemia!! My praise, thanksgiving and worship are beyond all words. Special appreciation to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Our Blessed Mother and indeed, St. Anthony, St. Joseph and St. Michael. I ask your continued prayers for my family - very serious needs but God is greater.

By grace,  
J. R.  
Lanai City, HI

Dear Father Robert,

I was touched by your concern and prayers and enrollment for the healing of my cancer. Not only that, but you wanted to be informed about my continued health. The latest report I can give you is that my last mammogram, a few weeks ago, showed all clear. But I have more tests coming up.

Thank you again, so much, and I promise to keep you informed of any new developments. Your prayers helped!

Thanks and God bless you,  
Love,  
R. B.

Dear Fr. Robert:

Greetings, love and thanks for your little package containing the finger rosary which arrived this morning. I do so appreciate the gift and the Masses and prayers offered for my intentions. Also, the candles lit at the various shrines while on Pilgrimage in Italy. I am convinced that prayer changes things. Yes, I do remember to pray for you and all the Friars and the good work you do. God's blessings be upon you each day!

In Jesus and Mary,  
F. F.  
New York, NY

Dear Fr. Robert,

I am thanking St. Jude, St. Rita, the Blessed Mother, St. Dymphna, St. Monica, St. Claire, Padre Pio and St. Theresa for all my prayers that were answered for my health and special requests asked for my family and their prayers answered.

Thank you and God bless.  
C. H.  
Plano, TX

# IMAGINE COMING EARLY TO MASS ON SUNDAY



June can loom as a very busy time of the year. The long summer recess brings its own challenges to families. And many events schedule years ahead for

June dates. Weddings, graduations, anniversaries, ordinations.

And there is planning - and most challenging still - coordinating vacations. With many members working in separate fields, including teenagers who like to work and save for college with the help of summer jobs: finding a time slot for a family vacation may require a negotiator's skill.

Yet the lazy summer soon takes over, coming to our rescue. Everything slows down to a much more leisurely pace. There will be time for early morning walks, or family walks after supper (often a cook-out) in the evening. Time to sunbathe or relax with a good book or magazine in the hammock or on the deck.

As Catholic Christians, we need to block out some of that time to make sure we re-create our spiritual life in summer as well. Surely that will mean locating the nearest Catholic church in whatever place we choose for vacation. And many people find that on vacation, they can actually get back to daily Mass.

There are also other ways that allow us to grow in our spiritual lives, to come a little closer to God and letting ourselves be loved by God. One such plan is easy: Plan to come 10

minutes early for Sunday Mass - whether you are away on vacation, or in your home parish.

You can spend that time, those few minutes, in quiet meditation. And/or - use those extra minutes to read and reflect on the readings and Gospel that you will hear proclaimed that Sunday.

Take the time to read even just one of the Readings, very slowly and carefully, knowing that you are in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. What better time to ask for enlightenment, for a deeper understanding of how God will speak to you through those readings, on that particular Sunday.

Then, when the lector proclaims the readings, when the deacon or pastor proclaims the Gospel - try to set aside the texts. And listen. Listen with your heart. Let God's Word flow over you and transform you.

You will find then, that you are truly ready for the privilege of meeting the Lord, in His living and very holy Word. You will find, the Lord is speaking to you in your own tongue. And that for the first time, in a long time, you are hearing that Word so much better. ■

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**We who have always lived with the Christian concept of God, and have grown accustomed to it, have almost ceased to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with this God.**

**Pope Benedict XVI**

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# THE WIND AND THE WAVES: A SUMMER MEDITATION

Even if the vacation or getaway is just a weekend long, the benefits of time by the water somehow melt away all the pressures of everyday concerns and stress. Whether lake-side or on the seashore, the water offers nature's best therapy. Just sitting on the shore, the vacationer experiences sounds and rhythms that life's stresses so destroy.

- The summer breeze gently whispering over the lake, depositing a tiny refreshing spray of water against the shore.

- The sound and sight of wind-blown waves crashing onto the shore - superceding all other sounds and events around it.

- The laughter of carefree children jumping and squealing into chilly waves, and jumping like daylight fireflies, quickly back again to the solace of giant sand castles.

- The sight of older couples sitting quietly in beach chairs, sunhat and sunglasses in place, perhaps gently snoozing into a lifetime of waterside memories - and the hope of a great dinner to come on the outdoor terrace of a nearby restaurant.

- And yes, the gentle rustle of leaves, rolling sideways and then somehow upward, as if in prayer, complementing the blue of the sky and bouncing off reflected sunlight, courtesy of puffy overhead clouds being blown by.

In moments of blessed leisure such as these, one finds the perfect moment to recall Someone who loved the water as well as the mountain-

tops. The Gospels tells us that Jesus also went to the water, especially the Sea of Galilee, when troubled or in need of solitude.

We also know that Jesus spent much of his first year of public ministry on and around the Sea of Galilee. It was where fishermen tied up their boats that the Lord called Peter, Andrew, James and John to discipleship. And by those shores, he called people, God's ordinary people, to repentance and to the life full of grace.

So it is no stretch of the imagination to bring yourself, while at the shore, into the presence of Jesus, in meditation. See Jesus in a boat, out a bit from shore, preaching, drawing more and more people with his words, his wit, and his hard to escape love for all God's children. Hear his words, penetrating your heart, inviting you to repent. Hear his call to you, to follow him as God wills it. Hear his strong, resonant voice calming the waves of trouble and holding out the promise of everlasting life.

Recall that these same words are spoken to you today - even though you find them in the words of scripture, or in the homily, or in the pages of a book.

When you hear the crash of the waves, when you feel the refreshing breeze, fresh off the water, remember that Christ some 2,000 years ago came to similar shores; and is again with you, on your shore. Asking you to come and follow him. ■

## Love for those less fortunate than ourselves. (St. Dymphna)

The Church's saints number in the thousands. And each one in some way demonstrates a particular aspect of God's love and mercy.

St. Dymphna is a case in point. For some 1400 years, people have called on Dymphna to pray for them or others, particularly for those with mental, emotional, or physical disabilities. For she and her life serve as a reminder that we can't write off anyone as beyond God's love and mercy.

This seventh century Celtic princess discovered her unique ministry when she found refuge in what is today part of Belgium. She and the small band of Christians who accompanied her, a chaplain and a few staff members, found disabled people living as outcasts. People feared them. They worried that such maladies might be contagious.

Some of these suffering people were likely competent mentally and emotionally, yet, feared and despised because of speech or hearing defects, brain damage, or perhaps living with the aftermath of stroke or seizures.

Instead of turning away, even looking for more fitting quarters in nearby villages and towns, this young woman began to minister to the disabled.

In her, they found acceptance, patience, and yes, love for them as children of God.

Her message was a simple one: no human being is beyond God's love. It was a message, rooted in the love and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Of course, Dymphna and her companions were tracked down by their tormentors, and martyred. And, as often the case with the blood of martyrs, Dymphna's work found fertile ground for growth. Miracles and cures followed prayers in her honor, and calling on her witness to God's love.

In our day, should we not ask ourselves where we stand as Christians? Do we tend to avoid people with special challenges in behavior or physical appearance?

And secondly, what can we do to assist the disabled to live the 21st century "full life" (including communion with God)?

- For example, why not support one of the summer camps for disabled children and teens established in many parts of our nation?

- Or, think about giving our time to the very elderly whose lives can be turned upside down by strokes, physical or mental frailties?

Few of us will ever be like Dymphna. Yet, we can follow her example. We can love and listen to God. It is a tried and true method to discover and accept God's will for us. And perhaps for those we love. ■

### CELEBRATIONS FOR ST. DYPHNA

In a little town in New York the friends of Mt. Alvernia Retreat Center in Wappingers Falls, NY mark a special Day for St. Dymphna with a special Mass on May 15th at 7:00 p.m. This is the 9th year. After Mass, the anointing of the sick is celebrated. Anybody suffering from a physical, mental, emotional or other illness may come forward. The Mass is in honor of St. Dymphna on her feast day. Father Michael, superior, says "Everybody knows someone who is emotionally struggling. The healing can let people know someone cares about them. Mental illness needs to be treated like any other illness - treatment should not be put off." Come, join them!

# Solemn Novena Schedule Summer 2008

All year round Franciscan Mission Associates conducts a regular schedule of spiritual and devotional exercises in which all benefactors are invited to take part. During the summer months the Solemn Novena schedule is:

May 22-June 30.....	The Sacred Heart of Jesus
June 2-10 / June 11-19.....	Holy Spirit Novena
June 5-13 / June 13-21.....	In Honor of St. Anthony
June 21-29.....	St. Anthony for a Safe Summer
July 18-26.....	In Honor of St. Anne
August 2-10 / August 11-19.....	St. Anthony of Padua
August 7-15.....	Assumption of Our Lady
September 2-10 / September 11-10.....	In Honor of St. Monica

All Franciscan Mission Associates, sponsors, and benefactors are asked to join in prayer for the intentions and petitions of those taking part in the exercises. Please pray also for peace, for our Franciscan missionaries, for the people they serve, for an increase in vocations and for all our associates. Holy Mass is offered each day for all benefactors and for the intentions they request. Kindly forward your petitions for the Novenas scheduled to:

**Father Robert, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates  
PO Box 598, Dept 486, 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 482, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Father Robert includes a special remembrance for all Franciscan Mission Associates on their birthday if he knows when it is. To be remembered at his Mass on your birthday please send him the filled in form below at any time.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

My Birthday is: Month and Day \_\_\_\_\_

My address is \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Fr. Robert, O.F.M., Dept. 484,  
Franciscan Mission Associates, PO Box 598, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**