

FMA FOCUS

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

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America



Virtue: Awe

There is an ancient Russian Easter salutation, still reverberating today wherever Russian Christians are found. The greeting: “Christ is **risen!**” The response, spoken with thunderous conviction and faith: “Christ is **truly risen!**”

With just seven words, this mighty prayer confesses two realizations:

First, we were created, called to life by God out of his enduring love; yet, our first parents turned away from God, trying to be “Gods” themselves, hence, our attraction to the “dark side” (sin) – versus living in and with God.

And second God is God! Eternal, merciful, and forgiving. Still and always, he calls us to be his children; indeed, heirs to eternal life.

During this Lent and Easter season, ask for the grace to know ourselves as we are, and to live our belief in the Risen Lord every day of our lives. For **Christ is Truly Risen!** ■

Learning to accept our nature as God's people



“*Turn away from sin,*” the priest intones, while signing our forehead with ashes, “*and be faithful to the gospel.*” (from the Gospel of Mark 1:15)

Or: “*Remember, man, you are dust,*” he says, placing the cross of ashes on the forehead, “*and to dust you will return.*” These sacred words come directly from the first book of the Bible (Genesis 3:19). And they are likely to be the Lenten prayer most familiar to our grandparents.

Ash Wednesday’s ritual of the Blessing and Giving of Ashes is the first of many in the holy seasons of Lent and Easter Time – outward signs like candle light, palm branches, the whiff of incense, the chiming of bells, the holy hymns of choir, congregation and musical instruments, the solemn, hope-filled Readings of Holy

Scripture, the plentiful opportunities to partake of the Holy Sacraments which bring us into the Sacred Presence of the Living God.

The Entrance Antiphon on Ash Wednesday says it all, quoting the Book of Wisdom: *Lord, you are merciful to all, and hate nothing you have created. You overlook the sins of men to bring them to repentance. You are the Lord Our God.*

To this season – blocked on the Church Calendar into 12 weeks or three months – we must bring our willingness to look at who we are.

That is something we cannot do without reviewing in humility and awe anything we believe we know about God.

The aim is knowing ourselves for who and what we are: a people created by God, called to life out of nothing, sustained by God's enduring love... cherished by God with every breath we take... loved completely, tenderly, and mercifully. Even when we sin, when we fail to be all he created and calls us to be. For as the Bible demonstrates, we are people capable of saying "No" to God.

Yet, we know that with God's help, we can be empowered to say "Yes." Yes, to the Lord's call to do our part in building God's Kingdom, even in this world. And, then when our work is completed in this life, we can hope to move into eternal life with God, Our Father.

Making those positive choices, we discover once again that with God's help: we can sharpen our listening skills, make a commitment to prayer and discernment, decide to live as a child of God, seeking his mercy and forgiveness whenever we fail.

The Mass for Ash Wednesday gives us excerpts from Psalm 51, often called a "Miserere." It is the Responsorial Psalm between the First and Second Readings. While filled with acknowledgment of our easy leaning towards sin, it speaks to the hope and dignity we enjoy as God's children. This ancient and beautiful Psalm is an ideal daily prayer for our Lenten and Easter season. (**Psalm 51: 3-4; 12-13, 14, 17**)
Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness...

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me...

Create a clean heart for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me.

Cast me not out from your presence, and your holy spirit take not from me.

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me...

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. ■



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Please address all correspondence to Father Primo, O.F.M., at P.O. Box 598, Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10551. Please send changes of address six weeks in advance; if possible include your mailing label, and give both old and new address.



Spend Lent (Easter Time too) with the Scriptures

Many of us these days make time in Lent and the Easter Season to attend on the presence Living God. That is to say, **setting** aside time to read and pray with the Bible.

Two good options for such seasonal reading:

- **The Gospel of Mark.** This year, the second in the Church's recurring three-year Cycle (Year B) – features St. Mark's Gospel. Likely the first of the Four Gospels to be published (around the Year 70 AD, in Rome), it is also the shortest. The fast-paced, nearly breathless spiccato style makes for absorbing reading. The theme is Jesus, Son of God, the promised Messiah, sent to redeem God's people via serving them and offering his life.

- **The Book of Joel.** The collection of this prophet's teaching was likely written 400 years before the birth of Jesus. The first reading for Ash Wednesday is taken from the Prophet Joel (2:12-18). "Rend your hearts, not your garments and return to the Lord, your God," says Joel. "For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment." St. Peter, after the First Pentecost, quotes Joel's prophecy of God's outpouring of the spirit on humanity. [This book is just four chapters long.]

- **The Acts of the Apostles** is a perfect choice for Biblical Reading and prayer for Easter Time... those six weeks marching with us from Easter to Pentecost. St. Luke is the author of this New Testament Book that will transport you into the daily life and struggle of the early Church. It is rich in human experience – and characters. No holds barred, either. You already know some of the people:

- Deacon and first martyr, Stephen.
- The fanatical Pharisee, Saul – whom the Risen Jesus called to be: "Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles."

- Saints Peter, James, John, and many others.

- The miracles, the mistakes, imprisonments, persecutions – and Angels, galore – become "characters" as well. It is perfect post-Easter reading, recalling the commission Jesus holds out to the Baptized... Bringing the Gospel to the whole world.

Of note: Today, one can purchase a paperback, live-in, mark-up *Catholic Bible* at a reasonable price. Then, feel free to make notes in the margins... highlight passages, mark chapters for later reference. You won't be destroying a family heirloom in the process. Rather, you're inviting the Holy Spirit to feel at home.

Making time for God's Holy Word is a practice in spiritual growth that becomes your rendezvous with Jesus, the Lord – our Brother, Savior, and best friend, always. Jesus, the Living God who invites us to share the life of grace, and ultimately, eternal life. ■

UNITY IS MARY'S GOAL – AS IT IS HER SON'S



Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is a profound and powerful presence in the moments of crisis befalling her Son, Jesus:

- Mary is one of the very few with courage enough to stand at the foot of his Cross on Calvary.

- Classic art works show us images of Mary as the Pieta Madonna, cradling the body of her Son, removed from the Cross and being prepared for the Tomb.

- Tradition has long told of Mary, trying to reach out and comfort her tortured Son as he carries his cross through the narrow, stone streets of Jerusalem, and out to Calvary.

- Finally, we find Our Lady keeping vigil with the Apostles, Disciples, and the faithful followers. Together they await the coming of the Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost Sunday. From these early times in the Christian era, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is hailed as Mother of the Church.

Under this title, we can surely pray for Our Lady's intercession on behalf of Christian Unity. For it is a cause close to her Son's heart, and was so, even on the night before he died.

St. John's Gospel tells us that the Lord prayed for his Apostles and "for those who will believe in me through their word." He prays for Unity among believers, "... so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (John 17: 20-21)

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that Mary, as ever, points

to the Person and Mission of Jesus. Her "salutary influence on men," the Council Fathers emphasized, "flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it [the merits of Christ]."

Remember to pray in this holy season for Mary's motherly help in this cause so dear to her Son. Pray especially on Holy Thursday for that Unity which Jesus prophesied and prayed for, on that first Holy Thursday Night in Jerusalem, some 2000 years ago.

A good prayer for Christian Unity: the first two stanzas of Our Lady's Magnificat:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;

Behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.

(Luke 1: 46-50)



**Visit us on the web
franciscanmissionassoc.org**

The Cross: God's hand, raised in blessing all.

The Cross of Christ was the major influence on the apostolate and life of St. Francis of Assisi.

† Beginning with the San Damiano Cross. At a crossroad in his life, Francis stopped in a deteriorating chapel at **San Damiano**, in the Year 1206. There, he abandoned himself to God's grace. He knelt before the large wooden Icon Cross, still hanging from the wall. In the center, the figure of a regal Christ Crucified, bordered by smaller icons above, below and to the sides of the Crucified.

While praying, Francis heard a question, followed by a command to "repair" the Church.

"Yes, Lord. I will do it most willingly," he replied. And soon Francis and his fledgling Order would set about repairing God's Holy Church, not just that little chapel.

† The second cross was not a sculpture or a painting. It was **The Stigmata**. Some 18 years after San Damiano, Francis, still the spiritual inspiration for the Friars Minor, was now 42 years old, and in frail health. He was again at a crossroad, aware that his days were numbered. Along with trusted confreres, Francis returned to Mount La Verna, a place where he could find the solitude and peace. There, on mountain's rugged, slopes, he sought "the judgment of God" on issues of concern. He prayed:

**May the power of your love, O Lord,
fiery and sweet as honey,
wean my heart from all that is under
heaven,
so that I may die for love of your love
– you who were so good as to die
for love of my love.**

He asked two graces of "My Lord Jesus Christ"...

1) To experience "*that pain which You, dear Jesus, sustained in the hour of Your*

most bitter Passion."

2) And for the privilege of knowing in some small way, the love of such depth that Jesus could "... *willingly*" give his own life for sinners.

And so it was on La Verna, in the late afternoon of September 14, 1224, that Francis received the Stigmata – the five wounds of the crucified Lord.

Francis had received the answer to his request for a share in the suffering of the Passion. And if possible, an understanding of God's love for the people he created.

He expressed his joy and happiness for God's extraordinary goodness in many ways. Including composing *The Canticle of the Creatures*.

The last strophe, composed just months before his death, began by welcoming "...*our Sister Physical Death*" – as the gateway to Life Eternal.

For Francis, the Cross of Christ, in whatever form, could never be an image of darkness. For it pointed to the Resurrection, to Easter: to Divine Love from which came the gifts of Hope, Enduring Love, Salvation, and Eternal Life for God's People. ■

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:

Fr. Primo, O.F.M.

Franciscan Mission Associates

PO Box 598, Dept 3122,
Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

CONFESSION CHANGED HER LIFE: ST. CATHERINE OF GENOA

St. Catherine of Genoa, who lived from 1447 to 1510, famously came to self-knowledge through the Sacrament of Reconciliation – Confession.

The youngest of five children born to a noble family whose ancestry included two popes, Catherine was described as “holy,” even as child. Married at 16 years old to a young nobleman, Julian Adorno, she would spend the next 10 years of her life dealing with that difficult marriage.

For Julian continued to be more playboy than husband, a violent and irresponsible man who squandered away the couple’s considerable fortune.

One of her sisters, a nun, alarmed by Catherine’s growing despair, advised her to see the convent chaplain for Confession. And in that holy sacrament, Catherine experienced a mystical realization of God’s love and concern for her. She also saw herself as she truly was: a young woman going through the motions, in terms of her faith.

Catherine returned home with a more positive outlook – celebrating and thanking God for all the good in life, rather than bemoaning youthful dreams turned sour. Her prayerful and cheerful new attitude also turned Julian’s life around. He sought forgiveness, returned to the Church, and began studying the Franciscan way. Soon, he took vows as a Franciscan Tertiary (Third Order).

Husband and wife then devoted themselves to the care of the sick and



the poor, residing in the Pammetone Hospital where Catherine became director in 1490. Shortly after, a great plague marched across Western Europe, killing thousands in its wake. Catherine was among the victims, barely surviving, and weakened permanently.

Following her husband’s death in 1497, this woman of the Gospel devoted herself to care of the sick and dying. At the same time, with the help of a gifted spiritual director, Catherine’s spiritual life flowered into deeper mysticism. Two books, produced with the help of her confessor, became spiritual classics: *Dialogue Between the Soul and the Body*, and *Treatise on Purgatory*.

Saint Catherine died in the city of her birth, Genoa, in 1510. She was canonized in 1737.

As opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation are scheduled in your parish this Lent, remember what St. Catherine learned about the grace of that holy sacrament. Catherine found new life as a Christian adult by bringing herself before the Lord in Confession, and standing responsible for her own choices/decisions/failures. Accepting the Lord’s grace was her ticket out of her culture’s tolerance of perpetual adolescence... a blind eye to domestic violence... and the perils of diving into a vacuous social life as an escape from troubles.

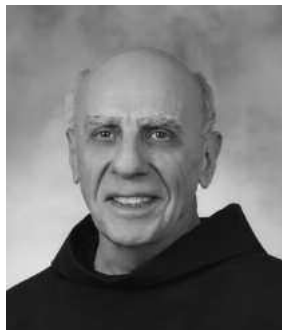
Ask St. Catherine’s help and God’s grace in dealing with the ‘escapes’ of our own culture. ■

Director's Letter

Fr. Primo, O.F.M.

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

TEL. AREA CODE: 914 664-5604



Dear Friends,

Children understand that Lent is a time of sacrifice, sorrow and waiting patiently for the Lord. So many of them work hard to give up something important, chocolate, donuts or a special television show. How is it that some adults breeze through the Lenten season without even attempting a sacrifice, even a small one, that would show the Lord, who gave us everything, how grateful they are. Perhaps with the pace of the world and the riches that are part of so much of it, those who do without even the basics, those for whom even fresh fruit is a luxury, are forgotten.

Lent is the perfect time to strive to see those hidden in our midst. Those we overlook, at times, because we are too busy or too guilt-ridden to make an effort. In his address on a previous year's Palm Sunday Pope Benedict said, "Without sacrifice, there can be no fulfilling life." Our missionaries will tell you this is true. They sacrifice but it is a blessed life, one filled with God's love and the love of so many with whom we share our passion. This year let us all heed the words of Pope Benedict and work to lead a just life, filled with sacrifice, love and joy in the beauty and glory of God.

Thinking of you all during this Holy Lenten Season,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Primo, O.F.M." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Fr. Primo, O.F.M.



BEGINNING HOLY WEEK FOCUSED ON THE EUCHARIST AND MARY

Fr. Roberto, O.F.M.

Holy Thursday and Good Friday are busy days in Guatemala for missionaries like loving spiritual family and myself. First on Holy Thursday there is only work for the Lord. The entire community, adults, teens and kids dedicate this day to the preparations for the Church, as it gets ready to host the Pascal events. One group creates a program for teens that work with the priests to get the altar ready. The group chooses a theme the preparations calling it: “the Acclamation: I am your way your truth and your life”. This great community feeling motivates the youth of this village who sometimes have a difficult time seeing the good in society and humanity because of all the bad in the world. The message is well received and all feel God’s guidance and love. After a beautiful Holy Thursday comes a blessed Good Friday. In this the women in a small village come center stage. On a hillside there is a village in El



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF VALLEY OF THE ANGELS ORPHANAGE

Fr. Michael, O.F.M.



Barrial Jutiapa that is trying to cherish the memory of the triuo pascal (the passion of Christ, his death and his resurrection) in their traditions. This group focuses on Mary and how she witnessed her only son dying on the cross for our sins. To center on Mary, women and girls process through the town thinking about the pain of our Virgin Mother. The girls and women sing and pray while feeling the virgin's pain during the procession. They are so full of emotions that at times they cry as Mary surely did watching her son's death and placement in his burial tomb. The songs are emotional and special and get to the most deep places in the heart where you can feel the pain that leads us to pray mother of God pray for us. Our whole community prays and moves closer to the Lord during the Easter season. Please pray for us as we move into this Holy time. ■



For more than twenty years a beautiful pocket of countryside in Guatemala has been the home to dozens of orphaned and abandoned children. The Valley of the Angels orphanage, the dream come true for our beloved Fr. Rocco, who began a home for 26 orphaned children. Following Fr. Rocco's footsteps today, Fr. Michael and two Carmelite sisters of St. Joseph help to house, feed and educate more than 200 children. Each day is like a gift to those who work with the children. And no day is typical.

A day at the mission begins very early, at 5:30 a.m. when the children wake up and thank God in prayer. They then make their bed, wash up and eat breakfast.

After brushing their teeth, class begins promptly at 8 a.m. for nine grades, where they study math, reading, English, computers and music.

The children then gather in the salon to attend daily Mass at noon. After lunch they brush their teeth before having recreation. This free time until dinner at 4 p.m. includes doing homework and studying morals. After dinner the children recited the rosary in groups, either in the Church or around the property. Before going to bed at 8 p.m., they have free time which includes chores, the older girls wash clothes. They also are involved in making different arts and crafts.

On Saturday the children attend lessons on the readings of the Holy Mass, watch some select television programs, play various sports (soccer, basketball, volleyball and soccer) and pray the Angelus at noon. After dinner they recite the rosary, either near the Church or

walking around. At 7p.m. the children gather together in the large hall to watch a special movie usually an animated feature with a religious theme. Sunday is cleaning day followed by the Adoration and then the Eucharist. This is rightly the highlight of the week as it is always a wondrous celebration beginning with all the children filing into our beautiful Church with their hands folded behind their backs. The angelic voices of the girl's choir fill the Church as several older girls serve at the altar. Guests commonly comment on how attentive the children are during Mass. The afternoon again includes free time for recreation, followed by the recitation of the rosary. Then it's some television and bed. God is good to us at the Valley of the Angels. And we know he is working to insure our 200 children are loved and given the spiritual strength to grow and become successful adults. ■



Words Worth Noting



Ideals are like stars – We never reach them but we chart our course by them.

Carl Schurz

Aim at Heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at Earth and you will get nothing.

C.S. Lewis

When there is a lack of honor in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned.

Herbert Hoover

Perseverance is not one long race; it is many short races one after another.

Walter Elliot

Human beings must be known to be loved but divine things must be loved to be known.

Blaise Pascal

The happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy, has a name and a face: Jesus of Nazareth.

Pope Benedict XVI

To change and to improve are two different things.

German Proverb

A child develops individuality long before he develops taste.

Erma Bombeck

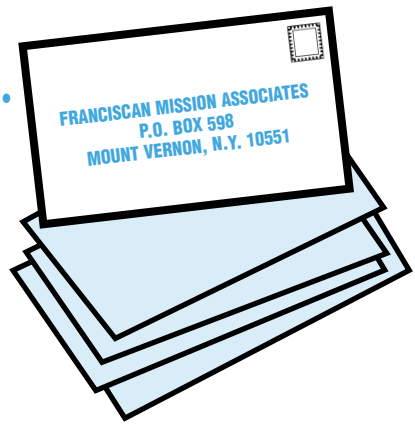
Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.

Robert Frost

The short words are the best, and the old words are the best of all.

Winston Churchill

Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Father,

I would like to publicly thank Blessed Mother Mary which I promised to have published “a prayer to the Blessed Virgin” for several health issues for myself and family for granting me special favors. Please enclose mine in your next FMA Focus newsletter. I want to thank the Franciscan Friars and St. Anthony for special favors granted.

H.D.S.
Wilbraham, MA

Dear Father,

It is said that God has two dwellings: one in Heaven, the other in a grateful heart. Gratitude is the memory of the heart. Receive, then, my heartfelt gratitude for the small book about St. Anthony you have given me. I do love to read it. Now my knowledge about St. Anthony is broadened and my horizon of thinking on his life is widened. A million thanks Father for giving me this free book. Rest assured of my prayers for you and your community. May God who can never be out done in generosity reward you with countless blessings here, and the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision in the hereafter. I remain yours gratefully in the Triune God.

Sister M.B.D.D., O.P.
Oxnard, CA

Dear Father,

Thank you for praying for me and my intentions. Whenever I receive a letter from you I feel that I belong to the holy family. I am so happy to help you and your sheep. Please remember that I pray for Franciscan brothers and their missions whenever you get tired.

Best,
E.C.
Fairfax, VA

Father,

On behalf of Deacon Hoover and the Catholic Community here at SCI Houtzdale I wanted to thank you for your recent shipment of calendars and pamphlets. We genuinely appreciate your gift and thank you for this kindness. We also appreciate the encouragement your gift gives us. Once again, we thank you and God bless you all.

Gratefully,
K.A.S.
Houtzdale, PA

Of “Easter Finery” and those “new clothes”

“Isn’t this just like home, down South?” Commenting to her husband on the unusually warm, humid Easter Sunday Morning “up North here,” the young woman waved the parish Easter Bulletin like a fan, while keeping a hat in place with her other hand. Among some 50 other families spilling out of the front doors, she made her way down the steep stone steps leading to the sidewalk below. A sidewalk bordering the busiest four-lane highway in the city.

“Surely is like home,” her husband replied, loosening his tie, all the while keeping tabs on their two children, joyously skipping and giant-stepping their way down the same stone steps.

On the other side of the street, people at the bus stop stared across that road, known to locals as “Cross it at your own peril.” Was that burnt red building with two bell towers still the century-old Catholic church they saw every week...or had it morphed into some kind of impressionist painting? Albeit, in perpetual motion.

All, dots of color and brightness, people of all ages, all ethnic origins, all greeting one another, joyously celebrating – “Happy Easter!”

The clothing once known as “Easter Finery” on this day now included ethnic clothing proudly worn by new immigrants – Catholic, one and all.

Some of the cars whizzing by slowed a little to take in the scene.

And if onlookers could lip-read, they saw ushers and greeters, at last closing

the doors and commenting: “This Easter Mass: now, was **that** an evangelizing moment, or WHAT?”

As for clothing “finery” – fashion had less to do with it than theology.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the garments of his entombment “wrappings” were left behind – just as Peter and John discovered as they bent down slightly to step inside. Even the face cover cloth used in Jewish burials was “rolled up in a place by itself.”

It was then that John would say, “he saw and believed” what Jesus had foretold. Namely, that the Lord “had to rise from the dead.” (John 20: 6-10)

And so a new day had dawned on the human family and the whole world.

Candidates baptized in the Easter Vigil receive white garments and/or a white candle – symbols of their rebirth into new life in the Lord.

Babies baptized on Easter Sunday morning likewise receive a white garment and white candle, treasured mementoes of the day they too became “new” people.

Also symbols of the same miracle: those new or first-time-handed-down suits, dresses, coats, hats, shoes. All, a salute to God’s Good News.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Christ is Risen! Christ is truly Risen!



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, priests, and religious for Christ’s work in today’s world.

For further information please write Fr. Primo, O.F.M.

Franciscan Mission Associates, P.O. Box 598, Dept. 3124, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

EVANGELIZATION: HOW YOU CAN TAKE PART

The close of St. Mark's Gospel speaks to the job the Resurrected Lord assigns to the Apostles and Disciples – and to the Baptized.

He said to them, “Go to the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved ...”

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God.

But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs. (Mark 16:15-16, 19-20)

Such is the framework for the evangelization work of the Church today.

And there is no text better than *The Acts of the Apostles* to show how it's done. In this fast-paced, action-packed New Testament Book of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit is the main character.

Following Pentecost, the Apostles, led by Peter, began their mission, starting in Jerusalem. “Those who accepted his message were baptized,” we are told, “and about 3,000 persons were added that day.”

Soon, Christians living as a community formed the heart of the ministry, empowered by prayer and “the breaking of the bread.”

“Every day,” we read, “the Lord, added to their number those who were being saved.”

While our communities today seldom see thousands of people seeking baptism, all in one day, every parish is concerned with evangelizing. Most will

develop a plan for evangelization. A plan that begins with every parishioner examining his or her time, talent, and skills, while seeking God's help for direction.

Here are some practical approaches.

•*Pray.* Like those first Christians we meet in “The Acts” – pray daily for this vital work of Church.

•*Invite* the powerful prayer of our homebound friends and family. They may want to begin with prayer for missionaries, at home and abroad.

•*Live* your faith with joy. It's contagious as in this recent account.

“Good morning,” a weary looking woman said, approaching a pew where one or two people always made time to “meet and greet.”

“I just want to say hello, and introduce myself,” she began. “And I wonder if we could talk some time? Because you seem to have joy. Real joy. And I could use some.”

Her look of exhaustion bespoke the despair beginning to erode her life. This woman, an out of work chemist, found support, encouragement, and new sisters and brothers in faith – stemming from that short conversation. Because of it, she became a regular churchgoer once again. And with networking tips from concerned parishioners, she was on her way to employment in a related profession.

Like the remarkable people whose stories we find in *The Acts*, this chemist and her friends illustrate how joyful Christian living can equal ‘evangelization’ – even touching people never suspected of needing it. ■

ST. PEREGRINE: THE STRENGTH OF PRAYER

Surely St. Peregrine is among those who took to heart the traditional Catholic definition of prayer: the lifting up of the mind and heart to God.

This dynamic Servite priest depended on the power of prayer; in fact, he likely kept prayer on autopilot.

His life stretched 82 years over the turbulent epoch of the late 13th and early 14th Centuries. Life's ups and downs were legion: with plagues, wars and the dehumanization of God's poor and sick... to name a few.

Rather than waste time in fear and hand wringing, Fr. Peregrine turned over his concerns to the mercy and will of God.

And so when he was diagnosed with a deadly disease believed to be cancer, he did what comes naturally. For Fr. Peregrine Laziosi, that would be spending the night, prostrate in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, bringing his distress before God... and surrendering the whole picture to God's will.

With his miraculous cure, evident the next morning to one and all, this tireless priest resumed his service to God's people.

An ascetic, famous for his preaching, his holy life, and service as confessor, Fr. Peregrine gave special attention to the sick and dying, especially the poor who had so little opportunity to bounce back from illness. In fact, he spent time taking care of them: dressing sores, applying

bandages and helping with any available medications. At the same time, the compassionate chaplain would hear their confessions and offer his blessing.

It is quite likely that this holy priest, who counted sitting for any length of time both sinful and wasteful, never had time to dream of becoming the Patron Saint of those suffering from cancer.

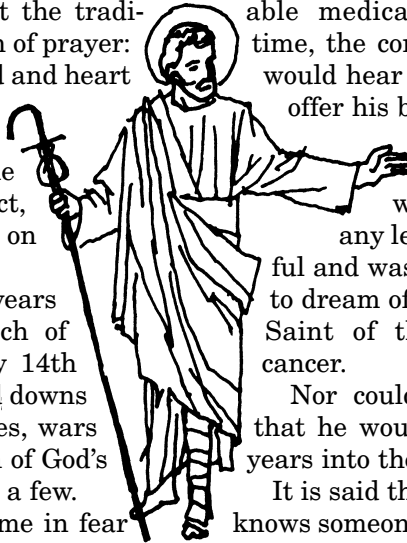
Nor could he have suspected that he would be so popular 700 years into the future.

It is said that every family today knows someone dealing with cancer.

Yet, we know that modern medicine works tirelessly battling this disease. At the helm: doctors, nurses, hospital-based community care-giving programs, nursing homes, and a growing hospice care movement – and those remarkable support agencies, often administered and staffed by cancer survivors.

For many patients, the medication, education, and lifestyle changes now available bring about remission of their cancers. And many of them, Catholic and non-Catholic, pray for St. Peregrine's intercession.

In the season of Lent and Easter, pray for those struggling with cancer (whether as patients or caregivers). And pray as well for the professionals, the medical teams, the scientist/researchers, and support groups. Let them know they are not alone or unappreciated in their efforts to eradicate this killer disease. ■



FMA Spiritual Exercises Lent-Easter 2012

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 2-19.....Our Lady of Lourdes
February 22 - April 1Lenten Masses (40)
March 27 - April 4Feast of Easter
April 8 - April 16In Thanksgiving for the Risen Christ
April 17-June 129 Tuesdays to St. Anthony

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

Father Primo, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept. 3121, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

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 8-17, 2012

Padua • Venice • Assisi • Florence • Rome
Vatican City • and more

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