

FMA FOCUS

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

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America

Virtue: HAPPINESS

That first “Catechism” question seems so easy. *Why did God make you?*

The answer: *God made me to know, love and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in Heaven.*

Ah, so it's all about happiness. But what is happiness? As we grow in age and experience we discover a “happiness” that endures beyond the “feel good” sensations touted by our culture. For it is in reaching out to “know” God, to “love” Him and accept His love, to serve God through love of neighbor: it is there that we find our definition – and more. For in fully living our sacramental life, we dwell intimately with Our Lord (e.g., in Baptism, Holy Eucharist) – even in this world. We come to experience God’s “enduring love.” Happiness. A small taste of what awaits us in the life to come. A consoling thought, for the summer season, and always. ■

June Weddings - Special Days

A fact: June is the first choice of most couples and families about to set the wedding date. Just ask pastors. Woe to the priest who can find no June time left on the parish calendar for the couple failing to reserve the wedding date a year or so in advance.



Another fact: A wedding is a family event. Has been from the beginning of recorded time. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, the wedding sealed a covenant between families. A joyful covenant that often stopped a history of violence between those families or whole tribes.

Within the Law of Moses, however, the people of succeeding generations began to see in the wedding covenant a reflection of God’s covenant with His Chosen People. A covenant calling them back again to a graced relationship with their Creator.

We know that the joyous Wedding Feast at Cana, the occasion of the first public miracle performed by Jesus, was

indeed a family affair. St. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus and his first group of disciples were invited, and that Mary his mother, was with them. (John 2: 1-11)

Accepting an invitation to that wedding involved more than today's expectations: a morning, afternoon, or evening event. The Wedding at Cana would have observed the courtesies of its day: a full day and evening and likely another full day. Involved in such a full celebration were courtesies to family members coming from afar, often on foot, to take their place at an historic event for two families.

It is likely that Mary was somehow related to one or both of the families at the Cana wedding, for she displayed great interest and even authority. It was "at a certain point" in the celebration, that the Gospel tells us "the wine ran out." A wedding celebration with nothing left to dine and wine guests would be at best discourtesy, or even the beginning of major family rifts. Yes, even in Cana, a small town, not too far from Nazareth in northern Israel.

So, fully aware of who her Son was, Mary approached Jesus with the simple fact: "They have no more wine." She speaks quietly, and with assurance. Shortly after, we can almost see a slight smile on her face as she instructs the waiters. "Do whatever he tells you."

As they say, the rest is history.

Except that the Church looks to this event as demonstrating that with Jesus, marriage became more than a contract.

For with the vows of bride and groom, marriage was to be a sacrament. That is, a vocation of living with God's presence in this world, in intimate association with Jesus, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The Son of God, indwelling, ready to support the partners. For together they symbolized the enduring Love of God, living their vows, and finding their unique role in building God's Kingdom on earth.

Later in his ministry, Jesus would point out that the Patriarch Moses allowed divorce only because of the hardness of heart some chose to embrace. Yet, such was not the state designed by God for those He called to Marriage – sustaining them with every breath until they came home to God in eternity.

So, the Gospel tells us, "Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana of Galilee. Thus did he reveal his glory, and his disciples believed in him."

A postscript: The little church in Cana today, an Arab town, is a high point of most Christian pilgrimages. Preserved within are water jars, like those Jesus blessed, making the finest wine where once only freshly drawn water had filled them. Small wonder that many pilgrimage couples, marking a special anniversary, seek the privilege of renewing their wedding vows there. ■

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Understanding God's Point of View



Abundance is the hallmark of summertime, the wonderful abundance of God's creation. From the vastness of the star-filled skies at night or the beauty of gardens in full bloom or simply the crystal bell laughter of our children or grandchildren gleefully chasing fireflies in our own backyard.

In the midst of all this splendor, most of us ask that age-old, very human question: How can God even find me in all this – not to mention care for me, watch over me, all the way home to live forever with God, in heaven?

Our faith teaches what the Son of God, Jesus taught: that each of us is an important part of God's creation. For God treasures us as his own, even as members of his "family." Jesus carefully noted that we are called to be holy, like God, reflecting the Divine Life that God invites us to share.

Even the holiest of prophets and patriarchs who lived long before Jesus, would never have dared to imagine the mysteries that Our Lord, the Son of God, taught us.

Especially when the "believing" gets tough – because it is so wonderful – we, like Jesus' holy mother, Mary, need to hold these things in our hearts. We need to hold God's plan, God's ways in our hearts, and live our lives trusting in His Word.

Jesus taught us that God called us into existence out of love, the enduring

love of the Holy One who is love itself. A love that sustains us... a love that is with us, even when we may not be aware of His Presence, or especially welcoming of it. God's love is showered on us always, but never forced on us.

God's love for us is unconditional love.

Something like but far greater than the love that our parents—and yes, those adoring grandparents—bestowed on us.

For God creates us with a freedom to accept Him, to know Him—or not. Like the narrator of a novel who knows the whole story, God knows everything about everything. He knows our past and our future. He knows our innermost thoughts. Yet, he created us with the freedom to choose. A freedom that is ours, even to the last breath we take.

This summer make some time to thank God for his gifts, his life-giving unconditional love. Especially in his holy sacraments and his holy Word. Pray for those friends and even family members who struggle with faith.

Pray that they, with Mary's help, may come to treasure these great mysteries in their hearts. And in God's time, in God's plan, they too may wake up to the reality of living a little bit of heaven right here on earth. ■

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 Robert, O.F.M. at
Franciscan Mission Associates, P.O. Box 598, Dept. 494, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

ST. CLARE: A REMARKABLE WOMAN

On August 11, we celebrate the Feast of St. Clare, often heralded as a co-founder of the Franciscan Order. This extraordinarily beautiful and happy daughter of a wealthy family left her worldly heritage behind to found the Franciscan's Second Order, the Poor Ladies (soon known as the Poor Clares).

And it was a difficult vocation. Clare and other young women who soon followed her in vows, wore coarse woollens, no shoes, never ate meat. For all appearances, living like the poorest of the poor.

It's understandable that Clare's father, a wealthy and well-intentioned man who wanted the best for his children, violently opposed Clare's leaving home for such a life. His attempts to bring her home failed, as did his later efforts to stop a second daughter, Agnes, from joining Clare. (Still later, another sister, Beatrice entered the Poor Clares, as did Clare's mother, Ortolanadi.)

Indeed, Clare, this 12th and 13th century "steel magnolia" of her era, born to the wealthy Offreduccio Family in Assisi, had been "different" from an early age. At just 12 years old and likely inspired by God to a religious vocation, she refused her family's arrangement of a prestigious marriage.

Six years later, attending a Lenten sermon preached by Friar Francis, Clare understood her vocation. Like Francis, she felt called to a vowed life of abandonment to God, rooted in love



of God and others through prayer and poverty.

And so, on Palm Sunday evening in the Year 1212, Clare left her family home forever. In a small chapel, Francis received her vows as a nun. Thus was born the Order of Poor Ladies, the Second Order of Franciscans, the title, the Poor Clares.

Today, they number some 20,000 nuns, including foundations in mission areas of the world.

For 40 of Clare's 59 years on this earth, she served as abbess of her convent. She would outlive her friend and guide, St. Francis by 27 years.

"They say we are too poor," Clare said to the nuns, addressing the public assessment of the day. Too poor, Clare asked, ready with a joyful, prayer-inspired question of her own. "But can a heart which possesses the infinite God be truly poor?"

The last words she spoke on her deathbed expressed that answer in another way: "Lord God, be blessed for having created me."

Vocations in today's world face many obstacles not unlike those in the 13th Century. As we pray to "the Lord of the Harvest" for vocations in our time, ask St. Clare's help. She is a wonderful inspiration for the budding vocations in our own family, parish, or local church.

Pray for the Poor Clares as well, as they too pray for vocations: clergy, vowed religious, deacons, and the dedicated married and single laity who become the Lord's lay ministers. ■

The Shrines of the Summertime

For most Catholics on vacation, finding a nearby parish for Sunday Mass is fairly easy. In this vast USA, well-populated by Catholics since colonial times, we need but ask directions to the nearest Catholic parish.

By the same token, wherever vacation roadways take us, many people are asking directions to local Catholic shrines. Even as to whether or not there are local shrines open to vacationers, shrines within driving distance.

The local pastor may well know that information. And he is likely to know the most traveler-friendly directions as well. Likewise, other church-goers leaving by the same door – people proud of their own local sites believed to be “holy ground.” The shrines may already have a schedule of pilgrimage options, and special events that local faithful often attend.

For shrine visits and pilgrimage journeys are educational, to be sure.

First of all, they enrich our faith life and history, providing pilgrims with an in-person experience, likely to be shared with others.

Shrines also let us travel back in time, to an era when faith was tested by tougher standards than in our time. Children are often moved to silence, with no prompting, and to ask very basic questions... just walking ground where martyrs gave their lives.

Shrines also involve homes where holy persons may have lived. Or where they developed their ministries.

Others simply draw great numbers of people who come to pray for specific reasons. Perhaps they want to present their concerns about health or personal need in a place where others bring similar spiritual issues.

Missionary Franciscans, Jesuits and Dominicans are but some of the great men

and women who brought Catholicism to this New World in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. With the echo of Jesus’ command to evangelize “all nations” ringing in their hearts, they endured hardship and often little cooperation from governments and commercial sponsors of their journey.

Today, some 500 years after those missionaries arrived, and yes, where Catholic laymen like Venerable Pierre Touissant left individual on faith experience wherever they went, there are Catholic shrines in nearly every part of the USA, including Alaska and Hawaii.

Shrines offer an opportunity to bring our intentions to God’s ever inviting arms. For shrines are holy ground indeed. Reminders to us all that “home” is really not in this world. That we are all on pilgrimage, until that day when God calls us home to himself.

Let us not forget a very real advantage for shrine visits today: Whether young or old, it is important to know our roots. And for Catholics in a secular culture (one could say the same, almost anywhere in the world), being nurtured by our spiritual roots is an important investment in our life of faith. ■

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.
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PO Box 598, Dept 492,
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OVERCOMING THE "IMPOSSIBLE" WITH ST. JUDE

For so many of us, St. Jude is an old friend, our "Saint of the Impossible." Someone to whom we turn in prayer. Especially as we seek to deal with so many "impossible" situations in daily life.

Things like the mysteries of illness, the heartbreak of apparent failure, the darkness of ignorance and violence, the seductions of society's attacks on faith (especially when designed to influence our beloved family and friends).

How good it is then, to have a role model like St. Jude. He is a hero who reminds us to do as he did: rise above his own fears, trust in God, and then to abandon himself to God and God's will.

In remembering him, St. Jude shows us how to reach out for God's help, as he did.

Yet, don't we often hear great misunderstandings about our devotion to the saints, like St. Jude? Why do you "pray to them" instead of to God? Why do you need anyone else?

Summer, with all its festivals and celebrations, offers some very good analogies. Take all the joyful, community-wide observances of July 4th in the USA, our own homeland. Why do we keep yearly observance of this event?

Basically, it recalls an heroic effort to overcome an "impossible" situation. And that is the victory by a scattered bundle of colonies over the mightiest nation on earth at that time, England, with its large, disciplined army and navy and a form of government believed to be the only model.

We remember during the Fourth of July that many in our nation had doubts about standing up to England. A band of farmers, merchants with a

rag-tag army inventing its own methods as it progressed: that was madness as many saw it. And likewise, to many educators and thinkers in the Colonies as well.

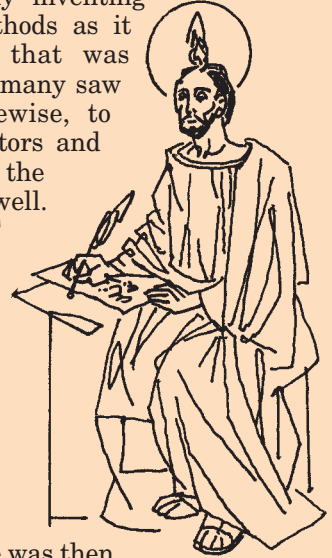
For WHAT would come next, they asked, in the unlikely event of victory? There was no model.

But in looking to heroes, there was then and is now inspiration. Men and women like George Washington, John and Abigail Adams, Ben Franklin, Betsy Ross, Thomas Jefferson. Even the nameless soldiers at Valley Forge.

All were people who wanted and believed that there could be a different kind of life and government for free people.

Our honored saints are such heroes of faith. St. Jude and the other Apostles faced daunting odds in convincing first of all, themselves, and then their colleagues, friends and neighbors. Yes, the Messiah has come, and yes, He is with us still, now and in the future. And yes, he has a mission for each of us, and will sustain us on our journey.

So it is good to pray to St. Jude for courage to face the unknown, the impossible, the future itself, with trust and confidence in God and his fatherly love for all of us. ■



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,

There are times when we just know we've been blessed. And the coming of the summer season always seems to bring that kind of awareness of God's bounty and goodness.

If your children or grandchildren are celebrating a hallmark in their lives, you know the feeling. The graduations (somehow, especially those kindergarten graduations) ... reception of sacraments (Penance, Holy Eucharist, Confirmation) ... success in finding a good job ... engagement for Holy Matrimony ... announcement of a decision to pursue a priestly or religious vocation: All of that seems to "break" this time of year, and all speaks to us of God's grace touching our own lives in deeply personal ways.

If you have not yet had time to look at the wonder and beauty which God, our Loving Father, is showering on your life – make some time to take that spiritual inventory. Then, right from your heart, in your own words, let God hear your thanks, your amazement, your joy. Thank Him for his gifts, so generously lavished on you and yours.

I know I thank God for your prayers and support, indeed for making us a part of your own family. With special thanks for your prayers and help for our Franciscan vocations, here in our own Immaculate Conception Province and in our missions. They could not do what they are doing without you.

May God bless you with joy, peace, safe journeys and true re-creation, this summer and every day.

Gratefully yours,

Fr. Robert, OFM
Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

A BLESSED ANNIVERSARY IN OLANCHO

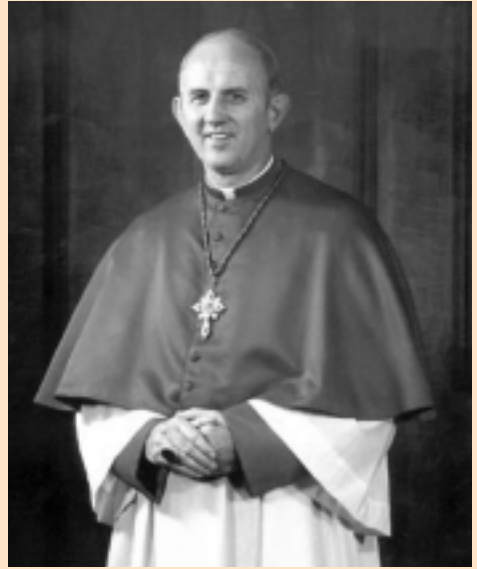
By Fr. Albert, O.F.M.

Fr. Albert, O.F.M. rejoices as Olancho celebrates a quarter century of service

Looking at all the diocese of Olancho has to offer today it is so hard to remember its humble beginnings just twenty-five years ago. It was 1983 when Pope John Paul II came to visit Honduras. During a meeting with local bishops the Pope was told the Diocese of Olancho—with half a million people—had no bishop for the last eight years, only three priests and not a single religious nun. Unbelievable now when you see the dozens of hard working religious there today lovingly carrying out God's work in the schools, clinics, prisons and the University.



But back then it was a different story. The diocese had no leader so in no time at all Fr. Maurus Muldoon O.F.M., a member of the Immaculate Conception Province and then working in the United



States, was called back to Honduras and consecrated Bishop of Olancho.

When Fr. Maurus arrived he found a congregation in ruins—abandoned churches and crumbling parish houses. After eight years without a shepherd most of the flock had wandered away. Monsignor Mauro managed to get





Massachusetts and the spiritual care of half a million souls. Like many Franciscan beginnings, it was really crazy. We had priests running all over the mountains trying to take care of a hundred things at one time. Huge parishes that no one knew where they started and much less where they ended. Long trips on horseback, canoe and four wheel drive jeeps. Of course there were challenges and tragedies.

It was a definitely a time of trials but it was also a beginning filled with love, beauty and hope. Our Heavenly Father was always there



together a handful of priests to start rebuilding the Catholic Church of Olancho. These priests included Fr. Mike Brown, Fr. Milo, and Fr. Virgilio, who later became Bishop of Trujillo, all of whom rest in the hands of the Lord now. Additionally, Fr. Maurus worked with Fr. Nicholas, S.J., who is 83 years old and semi- retired and Fr. Albert, a Maltese, Franciscan who still works in Olancho.

Can you imagine one Bishop and only five priests to cover a territory as big as the state of

tending to his earthly garden, watching and waiting for it to bloom.

After a few years the first three Olanchanos were ordained priests. Four Franciscan nuns came to assist with the pastoral needs of the dioceses. Radio Catolica de Olancho, the first radio station of the Catholic Church in this territory started transmitting 24 hours a day. Hard working religious and members of the community pulled together to create a home for the elderly with the name Hogar de Niño Santa Maria de Los Angeles. Also God's hands help create a clinic in practically every parish, together with a nutritional center. Next came a flourishing youth ministry and a very productive Christian family movement. More than a thousand celebradores de la palabra started proclaiming the word in every village. And in these very last months the Church of Olancho even managed to build a modern state prison at a cost of a million dollars.

Today more than 25 years later Bishop Maurus is 70 years old. Naturally his body is bruised, sun-baked and tires more easily than a quarter of a century ago. But today

he has 22 priests and 40 nuns helping him. And for this he gives thanks to God His Father for being his constant companion. He also gives thanks to you, our benefactors. Simply said without your prayers and without your financial help, these many years of spiritual and social work in Olancho would not have been possible.

We are blessed here in Olancho and continue to thank the Lord for his steady hand. We look forward to our next quarter century filled with hope, faith, love and gratitude for all God has bestowed on us. ■



Words Worth Noting



Joy rises in me, like a summer's morn.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

One's vocabulary needs constant fertilizing or it will die.

Evelyn Waugh

We tend to think things are new because we've just discovered them.

Madeleine L'Engle

If you judge people you have no time to love them.

Mother Theresa

The doors of wisdom are never shut.

Benjamin Franklin

An excuse is worse and more terrible than a lie because an excuse is a lie guarded.

Pope John Paul II

Heaven will be no heaven to me if I do not meet my wife there.

Andrew Jackson

A successful man is one who can lay a foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him.

David Brinkley

Never give an order that cannot be obeyed.

Douglas MacArthur

Love prompts us to forgive our brothers and sisters who wrong us... Love makes us compassionate and caring.

St. Anthony of Padua

Two things the devil fears above all: the fire of charity and the well-trodden path of humility.

St. Anthony of Padua

Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Father,

Enclosed is a check for \$10.00 for St. Anthony's bread and for the poor children of the missions. I wish to publicly thank St. Jude and St. Anthony for receiving special favors through their intercessions. St. Jude and St. Anthony thank you for your help. Please continue to pray for my family and for me.

Gratefully,
G.M.K.
Seekonk, MA

Dear Father Robert,

Please publish my thanks to St. Jude, St. Anne, St. Joseph and especially to the Blessed Mother and her divine Son Jesus Christ our Lord for all the favors I receive all my life. Thank you.

J.P.D.
Fall River, MA

Dear Father,

I wish to publicly thank St. Anthony for the many, many favors granted to me and my entire family. My gratitude is so great; I am unable to express, in words, my humble thanks. May this small donation be of some help in your never ending cause to help those in need.

Sincerely,
B.K.
Farmington Hills, MI

Dear Franciscan Mission Associates,

Thank you for your kind donation of prayer booklets and holy cards. Your generosity is a reminder to us that we are not forgotten and your gift will be put to good use. May the God of all consolation bless you in every way.

In Jesus Our Lord,
S.N.
Greencastle, IN

Dear Fr. Robert,

I am a resident in a nursing home and have all my life depended on St. Anthony to help me with finding big and small losses. My diamond engagement and wedding rings have been mislaid though carelessness many number of times and thanks to St. Anthony they are still in my possession. Please use the enclosed donation in thanksgiving.

Respectfully yours,
W.S.
Riverdale, NY

MARY'S ASSUMPTION – IMAGE AND HOPE

One of the great joys of summer is the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15. Many of us may remember the day, November 1 of 1950, when Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Assumption of Mary as a dogma, a belief held by all the Church.

That proclamation some 58 years ago confirmed one of the oldest devotions concerning Mary, the Mother of God. And that is, at the end of her life on earth, God took Mary, body and soul, to heaven.

Many of us grew up, consoled by teachings of the Church drawn from the Feast Day of the Assumption. In particular, that she was born to the same human life which we all experience.

For although Mary is the most privileged of all human beings, as the sinless Mother of God, she lived a seemingly ordinary life, as most of us do. She took care of her family's needs, as does any mother. She took part in communal religious events (such as pilgrimages to Jerusalem at least once yearly). She grew in wisdom and years, as most of us do. And she experienced the joys of living. But she knew sorrow in full measure, both ordinary sorrows such as widowhood. And the extraordinary and inexplicable, the violent loss of her beloved Son.

Mary's return to heaven, taken up by the hand of God, points to our own destiny at the end of our lives. To the

dignity of human life in God's eyes. And to the holiness to which we are called, people of body and soul.

The "new" *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sums up our belief in yet clearer language:

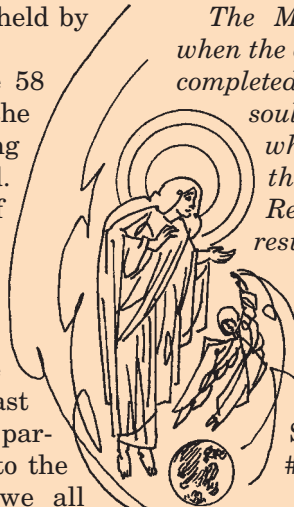
The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body. (Paragraph #974)

That teaching cites the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, published by the Second Vatican Council (LG, #517).

In the Assumption, we see Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as the "image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come." Likewise, the official Church teaching continues, Mary "shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God."

Today, there is a beautiful shrine to Mary in the chapel of the Franciscan Order's Generalate in Rome. It honors Mary as Mediatrix of Grace. It depicts Jesus enthroned in heaven, with his right hand reaching down to Mary. With her left hand, Mary grasps Jesus' hand, and then extends her right hand to those reaching up to her.

We could not be in better hands! ■



The Friends and Fellow Workers of St. Anthony – Then and Now

We think of them, the great Franciscan saints like Anthony of Padua, as luminaries, great solitary shining stars that glowed and sometimes even burnt out in the service of God. And somehow, all by themselves.

Such is not the case for most saints, and surely not for Anthony. For Christian saints are first and foremost people of community, the Body of Christ. And those in vows, like Anthony, lived and died as members of their religious order.

Born in Portugal to a prominent family in the service of the King, Anthony (born Ferdinand de Bulhoes) answered a call to religious life early in his homeland. And while still a young man, he transferred to the Franciscan Order.

Taking the religious name, Anthony, this young man gifted in many languages, spent the rest of his short life (36 years) as a Franciscan Friar, theologian and priest.

Even though Anthony lived nearly 800 years ago, we are privileged to know quite a lot about him. We have his writings, the witness of others gathered in terms of his canonization process (although he was virtually a unanimous acclamation, so great was his holiness and record of miracles). In addition, Anthony's sermons tell us much about this dedicated Friar.

"Actions speak louder than words," he once advised his listeners. "Let your words teach and your actions speak."

A man of action, then, Anthony was credited with many accomplishments. Yet, he would be the first to note that he did little without the help of his fellow friars. He usually traveled with them and needed their help with his ministry. Their help was vital, even though their names are lost to us.

We know that on his final journey, turning home toward Padua and very ill, he was supported by two of his Franciscan brothers. He died just outside of Padua on June 13, in the Year 1231 and was canonized the following year.

During this coming year, and surely those that will follow, you will notice our local church communities will be more involved than ever in the work of evangelization. Preaching the Gospel. Reaching out to the community, as Anthony and Francis did. This time, we need to be and bring the Gospel of Jesus to the millions of unchurched all around us in this nation. A very big job.

It is a ministry that will need each one of us, beginning with our prayers. No one priest, deacon or religious can take on this call of the Church without your help. You can share in this ministry today, just as Anthony's associates did. All you need to do is offer your help to the pastoral team. The Lord will likely surprise you with all the ways your gifts, beginning with prayer, can help this basic ministry of the Church. ■

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 493, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

THE GARDEN PARTY - FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Whether it involves birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, weddings: summer offers time to reconnect with family and friends. Those distant cousins, aunts and uncles—and the closer friends and family who may live well across the country—all people who somehow share our past and our future.

The Church's summer calendar offers us the chance to meet many family and friends of Jesus—hence, people who are also “family” to us.

They were men and women, graced by the presence of the Living God, who moved out of the darkness around them and into the Light of life forever, as Jesus promised.

Common to each Feast Day—pointing to the Easter experience as the year-round central focus for Christians—be it summer, fall, winter, or spring. And what a collection they were! Among them: John the Baptizer, Saints Peter and Paul, Mary Magdalene, Martha (of Bethany), and four other Apostles: James (the Greater), Barnabus, Thomas, and Bartholomew (called Nathaniel in John's Gospel).

Two of the great saints:

John the Baptizer, the Nativity, June 24 (one of the 17 solemnities on the Church calendar). His life and mission are celebrated again on August 29 (John's Martyrdom). The cousin of Jesus, he was the Herald who paved the way for the ministry and teaching of Jesus.

Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles (June 29, again one of the 17 solemnities on the Church calendar); one, the

Apostle Jesus named the head of the Church, and the other, the genius (once Jesus' sworn enemy) whom Jesus personally pursued and converted.

And let's not forget the women:

Mary Magdalene,

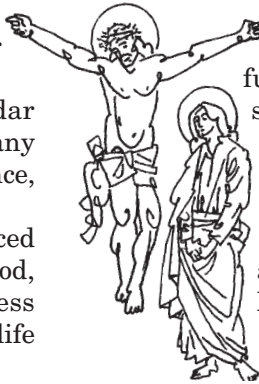
July 22 (not to be confused with Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus); she was faithful and courageous enough to stand at the foot of the Cross; and go alone on Easter Morning, only to find an empty tomb; she became the first

post-Resurrection evangelist “commissioned” by Jesus to announce his Resurrection.

Martha, July 29 (among the first to recognize Jesus as the Messiah); the sister of Lazarus and of Mary in Bethany, she was a diligent hostess who made her home Jesus' home-away-from-home. A true refuge.

You may already know some of these holy people. That being so, select one or two others. Put that daily Mass celebration on your calendar. If possible, look them up in the Gospels. And relax. Listen carefully to the readings, to see what the Church emphasizes about their life and mission. And at Holy Communion, ask the Lord's grace to help you get to know them better.

Your life and mission can not help but benefit. (Then, plan for next year. Make more new friends – now living in eternity.) ■



Solemn Novena Schedule Summer 2009

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 16-24Feast of St. Dymphna (May 15)
- June 19-27 / June 28-July 6Feast of the Sacred Heart
- June 5-13 / June 13-21Feast of St. Anthony (June 13)
- June 22-30.....St. Anthony for a Safe Summer
- July 2-10 / July 11-19St. Francis of Assisi
- July 18-26Feast of St. Anne
- August 2-10 / August 11-19St. Anthony (in Padua)
- August 7-15Assumption of Our Lady
- September 2-10 / September 11-19.....St. Jude Novena

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 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 491, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

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