



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

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The Associate Alliance



Questions for Lent

St. Francis loved Lent so much that he observed two more: the period between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday and later the 40 days before the September 29 feast of Saint Michael the Archangel. In a sense, Francis lived Lent year-round. During these times of prayer, Francis explored the three questions below at deeper and deeper levels.

Who Is God for Me? Our first Lenten priority is prayer to purify our ideas and feelings about our God. That means taking a new look at God's self-revelation in Scripture. Christians and Jews have sometimes preferred comfort over truth in dealing with the biblical God.

Lectio divina is a good Lenten practice. The prayerful reading of Scripture predates Jesus, but it took on a new importance after him. In praying this way, Francis of Assisi was simply following Luke's high praise of Jesus' mother: "And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (2:19) and "his mother kept all these things in her heart" (2:51b).

Francis once criticized those friars who wished only to know the words of Scripture and interpret them for others. He continued, "And those people are brought to life by the spirit of the divine letter who do not attribute every letter they know, or wish to know, to the body but, by word and example, return them to the most high Lord God to Whom every good belongs" (Admonition VII). Francis gave his Admonitions to the friars during their meetings in Assisi.

We become different people in the course of honest and persevering prayer. By recognizing our previous blind spots and repenting for them, we move closer to being the people God created us to be.

God's Creatures or Competitors? During his three Lents, Francis drew closer to people through prayerfully realizing how much God loves each person. We sometimes forget this when we encounter one another's sins. The Pharisee praying in the Jerusalem temple recognized the tax collector's sins but not his own (Lk 18:9-12). On the other hand, the tax collector prayed, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner (18:13). Jesus concludes: "I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (18:14).

Righteous indignation can be misplaced. It's all too easy to have a short list of people who truly matter to us and a long list of those who don't. How easily we see many people as competitors instead of recognizing them as women and men created and loved by God! The compassionate deeds of Saint Francis began in prayer and self-denial. Can we become more compassionate people before Easter?

Who Am I Before God? Francis once told his friars, "What a person is before God, that he is and no more" (Admonition XIX). We can rightly add, "and no less." Telling lies about ourselves is no more virtuous than telling lies about other people. In fact, it is even more dangerous. Jesus came so that we might live in the truth, which, like a candle's light, shines in every direction. How we "see" God also determines how we see others and ourselves. Lent would be very dangerous if we allowed it to reinforce a distorted image about God, others and ourselves. Prayer and fasting had apparently made the Pharisee praying in the temple more blind to his own sins.

Honest and persevering prayer will eventually expose all our blind spots, leading us to be more grateful to God and more compassionate toward all God's creatures, including ourselves.

Can this Lent help us live more integrated lives?

Marion first met the Allegany sisters at the Franciscan Center, when she went for the opening of Sabbath House. She was very interested in Franciscan spirituality, as it had always spoken to her heart, so she began to meet with Sr. Elaine Bane, ofc, to be "educated." She was advised to attend Associate meetings to learn even more about Francis. There she began to share with others who were following in his footsteps. She became fascinated with the Allegany family and their commitment to so many ministries. She found them to be very courageous and spiritual, women who moved into places to serve without hesitation - to her they appeared to be very focused on their love of the Lord and their commitment to serve.

Marion has always been involved in Church ministries, focusing mostly on parish programs as well as counseling families who are caught in the web of violence and abuse. Although relatively new to the Tampa Associate community, she was asked last year to become their LAC.



Marion Tarallo

Marion plans to attend Chapter next summer in order to better feel that she is a part of a religious congregation she admires. She feels she has grown so much due to her involvement with them, especially in terms of commitment and service to God's people.



Marion's First Commitment

At this point in her life, Marion feels that Franciscan-Clarian spirituality is truly her spirituality. She feels that a stand for social justice is very needed at this time and the values expressed by the congregation are aligned with hers. She happily goes forward into an unknown future with the sisters and associates. As long as there is even one Allegany sister, she says she will stand with them for the values of Francis and Clare, open to the world's challenges to seek out justice and peace.

Sharing Joy with Children

Claudio Alves de Oliveira



Telling the children the story of Christmas

The true meaning of Christmas is friendship, caring, respect, union, solidarity and faith in the God Child, who comes to be reborn in our hearts. These are what Christmas is about and it is what was shared with the kindergarten class at the Municipal School Dr. Natal.

What a lovely festivity, organized by the Associate Community of Pires do Rio. Participating were Maria Ivonir (Nicina), Iolanda Costa, Ilina Vely Machado, Ana Maria Gonçalves, Neila Cirino, Terezinha Gonçalves, Cidinha Mazon, Lindalva Alexandre, Professora Maristela Lopes Vicente and Claudio Alves de Oliveira.

Besides food and presents, we shared love and prayers ~ the children, held hands and prayed the Our Father. They enjoyed learning from Lindalva and Iolanda, who sang with them outside on the patio, while Neila Cirino brought Aline who told them the story of Jesus' birth - faith and good values were shared through the telling of this story. Cidinha Mazon brought Santa Claus who had presents for every child, while Lindalva brought ribbons for the girls' hair and Iolanda brought lollipops and marshmallows. Maristela brought gifts in lovely bags which she had decorated individually.

The Associates also brought delicious snacks and soft drinks, which added to the festivities. It was a wonderful party celebrating the end of the year. It will be remembered for quite some time by the children.



Christmas joy

Christmas for Wimauma

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Sheila Vincent

A cartload of toys, several bags of jigsaw puzzles, and a handful of hula hoops were delivered to Wimauma Elementary School in time for distribution before Christmas. Cathy Alexander, the school's social worker, said that the toys would be distributed primarily to new students and the lowest income children attending the school. It must be a very difficult task to decide who to include since Cathy said that of the 640 children attending the school, only 10 live slightly above the poverty level.

Inspired to make Wimauma an ongoing project, the Associates are aiming to bring the students school items - pens, pencils, notebooks, rulers, etc. - during the month of February. Since it gets hot by April and summer break is looming, clothes for the children will be donated and distributed at that time. The students are supposed to wear a uniform but none can afford to buy one, so they are allowed to wear blue, gray or light yellow shirts and khaki or navy blue pants.

When the visit to the school was finished, Sr. Jeanne took the Associates to *EnterpRising Latinas*, a beneficiary of Allegany Franciscan Ministries. This location is currently assisting around 200 residents of Wimauma. At this time there are four major projects which they offer: Mujeres Listening, Rising Women's Network, Wimauma Cares, and the Women's Opportunity Center.



Tampa Associates Marion Tarallo, Linda Dees, Sheila Vincent and Sr. Jeanne Williams deliver toys to Cathy Alexander in Wimauma.

If you would like to participate in these activities with monetary donations, school supplies and/or clothing items, please email me at svincent@comcast.net for further information.

Associate Pilgrimage to Assisi

A few responses have been received and it does seem like there is some interest in an Associate Pilgrimage to Assisi. The preliminary suggestions have been as follows:

Date	Where to go	How long should the trip be
Early 2021	Just Assisi	7 days
Spring 2021	Assisi & Rome	7 days

The other question was: is everyone willing to meet in one airport and travel together? Airfare is reduced if we can get a group fare.

Start saving your pennies, maybe this may happen! Suggestions and information from Associates who have already been to Assisi will be very welcome.



End of Year Rituals in Pires do Rio

Claudio Alves de Oliveira

During its last 2019 meeting, the Community celebrated with prayer, reflections on the Gospel, sharing of the Word, and a ritual of renewal and purification. It served as a time for hope - an active hope, worthy of Christians.

The ritual was a concrete and physical one, besides being very emotional. The Associates washed each other's hands while praying for the individual. It was difficult to hold back tears.

After our Novena, we were treated to a delicious lunch and received a Christmas gift! We did not lose sight of the most important thing, the birth of the Baby Jesus. It was a wonderful time to celebrate the God Child, Emanuel, God-is-with-us, the Light, the Source of all creation, who came to live among us.



Praying during the end of their Christmas Novena



Washing each other's hands



Fellowship and sharing good food: true Franciscans!

South Jersey Community

Sandra Klose

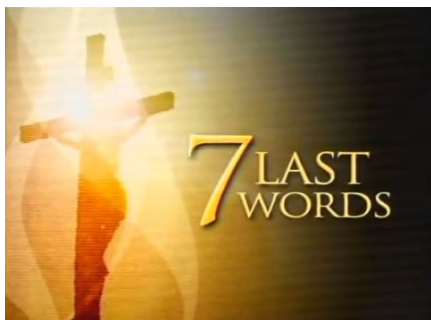


L-R: Jeanette Poole, Edna Suckow, Mary Jacques (holding the computer), Sandi Klose, Carol Ciesielski, Laurreta Chiarini, Maddie Foley, JoMary Pescatore, Robin Roche, Peggy Madison, Pat Simmons, Christine Moll, ... and Kathy Doyle on the computer screen!

Because of a wintery mix of snow, sleet, rain, and dropping temperatures, Kathy Doyle decided not to attempt the nearly 2-hour drive. Shortly after sending her regrets, she received an e-mail message from Chris Moll who suggested using her Zoom account as a way to include her in the meeting. Chris set up the Zoom link and on Saturday morning Kathy 'clicked' into the meeting. Despite an initial technical problem with audio, the issue was resolved and everyone was able to see and hear Kathy and she was able to hear and see them as well.

The gathering lasted for nearly 2 hours. Kathy was able to take part in the faith-sharing and discussions safe in her own home while the snow was falling outside her window.

Most associates have at least one 'device' (phone, computer, etc.), so we really should make a concerted effort to use technology, especially as age and distance become limiting factors. With Face Time, Skype and Zoom, there really is no reason why Associates cannot be connected!



Seven Gospel passages of Jesus' words on the Cross are known as the "seven last words of Christ." You may wish to use these passages for prayer and reflection during Lent.

1. "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34).

Who do I find almost impossible to forgive? How can I overcome this feeling?

2. "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43).

Who is someone who is lonely and/or hurting that I can comfort this week? How can I do it?

3. "Woman, this is your son.... This is your mother" (Jn 19:26-27).

What is something kind I can do for a relative this week? What are ways that I make my family members proud of me?

4. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46)

What is the greatest obstacle to my faith? Write a prayer that asks God for help with this challenge.

5. "I am thirsty" (Jn 28).

What is something righteous that I thirst for? How can I avoid thirsting for what is wrong?

6. "It is fulfilled" (Jn 19:30)

What are major commitments I have made for my life? How can I better follow through on those commitments?

7. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46).

What is the hardest thing in my life to let go of? What are other things that keep me from following the Lord?

Celebrating Sr. Jeanne's 60th Jubilee

A small celebration of our Associate Director's 60th Jubilee was held at St. Elizabeth Convent in Tampa, FL. Congratulations, Jeanne, and thank you for all your years of dedicated service!



A Letter From the Liaison to Leadership for the Associate Advisory Committee

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Pat Klemm, osf

Dear Associates,

Peace be with you.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you a blessed year, filled with the joy of our Franciscan charism. You and your dedication are a gift to me and to the Congregation. I pray for you daily, knowing how God holds each of you in loving hands.

This new year is calling us to newness as we look ahead to changes in leadership, always grateful to Jeannie and Kathy for their dedication and love for the Associate program. I know God's Spirit of love will dwell in us in these transition years and lead us into a vibrant future.

May God grant each of you good health and an ever deepening sense of God's presence in your life. Shalom.

Let Your God Love You

Be silent.
Be still.
Alone.
Empty
Before your God.
Say nothing.
Ask nothing.
Be silent.
Be still.
Let your God look upon you.
That is all.
God knows.
God understands.
God loves you
With an enormous love,
And only wants
To look upon you
With that love.

Quiet.
Still.
Be.
Let your God
Love you.



~ Edwina Gatley

The Associate Alliance is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.
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Please send articles & photos to: svincent@comcast.net ♦ Deadline for next issue: March 25, 2020