

The Way of St. Francis

ST. ANTHONY'S
Hope Served Daily

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Tenderloin Technology Lab

Prayer, Fraternity, Joy, Service

The Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara are members of a Roman Catholic religious order, from a diversity of backgrounds and cultures, dedicated to serving the poor and promoting justice, peace, care of creation, and reconciliation in the joyful and prophetic spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

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★ ★ ★



Joseph Le is a staffer at the Tenderloin Tech Center, a program of St. Anthony's Foundation in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco. He's carrying a portable phone-charging station for those without electricity—story on p. 14.

Photo by Dick Tandy, OFM

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dear friends

Peace & all good!

It's been a long 15 or so months, but at last—at least in our part of the world—we are emerging from the pandemic. COVID-19 has taught us some difficult lessons.

Perhaps the first is that nature is bigger than we are. Out of nowhere this thing seemed to crop up from the natural world and brought the world completely to a halt. Franciscans since the time of Francis have proclaimed the unity of all creation. The pandemic is a strong reminder: Nature is more obstinate than humanity. We have no time to spare in confronting the ways in which we cause damage to creation, whether through fossil fuel consumption, ravaging the earth for minerals, pollution of air and water, and more.

A second lesson the pandemic has made all too clear: The poor suffer disproportionately when hardship comes to our society. During the past months there have been unbelievable gains in wealth by the richest one percent. The professional class, though deeply inconvenienced, had the luxury of keeping their jobs and working from home. The working poor had no choice but to expose themselves to viral risk, and many thousands suffered or even died from that. Those at the bottom were all the more desperate as they were forced out to the street for even the most basic relief, such as food. This is our social order. It is an offense to the Gospel.

There are more lessons, of course, far too many for this space. In this issue of *The Way of St. Francis*, we are highlighting a few ways that the Franciscans are trying to point to a better path. We thank you deeply for supporting that.

God bless,
Fr. David Gaa, OFM
Minister Provincial, Province of St. Barbara



Photo: ©www.peterjordanphoto.com

calendar



Photo: Bradley Tuel, OFM

JULY

***Spirituality & Conscious
Aging: Finding Meaning &
Purpose in Our Retirement
Years***

July 23–24, 2021

**San Damiano Retreat
Danville, California**

Jim Briggs

As you think about your retirement years and move into this next chapter of your life, this retreat will explore the benefits and joys as well as the challenges and concerns ahead. How do we live this stage of our life well and see aging as a blessing? The combination of retirement and growing older provides an opportunity to live life differently and more contemplatively, moving from “doing” to “being.” Discover how we can share our Spirit-given gifts, talents, and experiences and give continued meaning and purpose to our lives.

More information:

sandamiano.org
925.837.9141

***Zoom Online: Monthly
Sisters in Spirit Series***

July 27–Mother Teresa

August 31–Angels

September 28–St. Marianne Cope

October 26–St. Agnes of Assisi

(All from 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)

**Facilitated by Jan Stegner, MTS,
MMC**

San Damiano will be offering a monthly series for women. We will look at these women scripturally, historically, and spiritually and find our similarities and/or differences. No Bibles or books required, simply your presence and your thoughts and experiences. We will have time to take a break and time for discussion and sharing too.

More information:

sandamiano.org
925.837.9141

Men’s Serenity Retreat

July 23–25, 2021

Serra Retreat

Malibu, California

Father John Reid

Men’s 12-step recovery retreat

More information:

Retreat coordinator Bob Revel:
robrev@sbcglobal.net
serraretreat.com
310.456.6631

AUGUST

Annual Summer Retreat

August 15–20, 2021

**Mission San Luis Rey Retreat
Oceanside, California**

Connect in person with a welcoming retreat community

for nourishing days of engaging spirit, mind, heart, and body in the setting of beautiful Mission San Luis Rey. Join us for quality conversations and activities balanced with personal time for renewing. Opportunities for spiritual enrichment abound!

More information:

sanluisrey.org
760.757.3651

SEPTEMBER

***Living Compassion in the
Real World***

September 25, 2021

(Virtual and in person options)

**Mission San Luis Rey Retreat
Oceanside, California**

Sister Mary Dean Pfahler

Compassion is essential to human relationships. It calls us to treat all others—in the family, workplace, and beyond—as we wish to be treated ourselves. Inspired by Joyce Rupp’s book *Boundless Compassion: Creating a Way of Life*, this one-day retreat invites participants to tend to the suffering within and around us and commit to easing it. Boundless Compassion facilitator Sister Mary Dean Pfahler will use presentations, small group discussions, personal reflection time, and guided prayer to offer insight

continued on page 29

along the way

Christ Among Us

By Dan Lackie, OFM

My earliest lessons in Catholicism I learned as a boy seated next to my mother at Mass. The rhythm of the music and the voices all around us were a big sound to my little ears, a vessel we were riding in. Christ was present; his Body carried us.

Reading between the lines of his *Testament*, I hear St. Francis describing how the Lord was present to him, carried and provided for him: “The Lord gave me some brothers,” he writes, and later: “The Lord revealed a greeting to me that we should say: ‘May the Lord give you peace.’”

In the background is John’s Gospel with Jesus present to his disciples on the evening after the resurrection. “Peace be with you,” he says and shows them his wounds. He reaches out to Thomas. This peace of Christ does not remove the problems from without, but is meant to infuse a deep trust within.

This same combination of peace, presence, and trust became real at the



Photo: John Feister

end of Francis’ life as he prayed on the mountaintop of La Verna. There, as he considers the stresses between him and the very brothers the Lord had given him, the wounds of Christ begin to appear in his hands. Here was the presence of the Lord, felt intensely, bodily.

My own Franciscan life has roots in the sense of the real presence of the Lord I felt at Mass as a boy. Now, decades later, I serve God’s people as pastor. Here in Santa Barbara the wounds of colonization are real to us, as are current accounts of violence and injustice throughout our nation.

In the midst, as we proclaim at Eucharist, the Lord not only gives himself but has given us one another: “As once for his disciples, so now for us, he opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread.” ♦

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Father Dan Lackie, OFM, is pastor of St. Barbara Parish, Old Mission Santa Barbara.



Photo: Santuario della Verna (Chiusi), CC BY-SA 3.0

(Left) St. Francis visited the beautiful woods of Mount La Verna for rest, prayer, and solitude. Here he received the wounds of Christ.

donor profile

Melissa Transou's Grateful Spirit

By Joe Ledbetter

Like so many others, Melissa Transou serendipitously stumbled upon the Franciscans. At the time, she couldn't tell you the difference between a friar and a monk. Thanks to popular references in books or movies, she knew they are guys who wear brown robes, and that St. Francis is patron saint of animals. That's about it. But, that all changed in 2020.

Melissa has been active in her faith her entire life. She was born and raised Catholic in New Jersey and has two children with her husband. While her husband's job required the family to move around regularly, they eventually landed in Michigan. Their son attended Catholic school from kindergarten through high school. They decided to homeschool their daughter starting at 2nd grade using a Catholic homeschool program. Melissa quit her job and dedicated herself to teaching their daughter through her high school graduation.

With a daughter off to college, Melissa and her husband found themselves with the freedom to relocate. He landed a job with Alameda County in the California Bay Area. They were excited; it was the farthest west either of them had ever lived. So they packed up and headed toward the Pacific.

Melissa had been out of the workforce for many years, since the time she began homeschooling her daughter. She had early experience working as an administrative assistant in a real estate developer's office and also volunteered at her church's office. So she began her



Photo courtesy of Melissa Transou

Melissa Transou pitches in to help.

job search looking for some sort of office support position.

Sifting through job posting after job posting, she came across a listing that piqued her curiosity: assistant to the Provincial at the Province of Saint Barbara. She looked at sbfranciscans.org and learned a little bit about the Franciscans. Between her background in office work and her familiarity with the Church, she felt it was worth pursuing.

After a few interviews, Melissa was hired in February 2020 as assistant to Minister Provincial Father David Gaa. She hit the ground running. There was much to learn about Franciscanism, the friars themselves, the relationship of the Province with the diocese, with Franciscans elsewhere, the Vatican, and so on. California's COVID-19 shelter-in-place order was announced just as she was beginning to find a rhythm with her new role.

"I was worried that was it for my new job," Melissa says. "I was the newest hire so I would have understood if I had to be let go." But thankfully that didn't happen. Along with the rest of the staff, she adjusted to working remotely, providing support to Father David and

continued on page 29

snapshot





The Sun Dance Celebration marks the passage of a young girl to womanhood.

This is a moment from the days-long ceremony for Apache Cheryl Rae Cheney, niece of Friar Phillip Polk, at Eagle Creek, on the San Carlos Apache reservation. The ritual blends easily with Catholicism—a good example of cultural identity within the Church.

Photo by Bradley Tuel, OFM

common ground

Racism From the Inside Out

BY SAM NASADA, OFM

“Oh, your English is so good.”

My face used to beam whenever I heard somebody say that to me. I took it as a sign that I was sounding more like an American, a goal that I had been trying to achieve ever since I came to this country in 1997. Or perhaps it was earlier than that. I had always been fascinated by American TV shows and movies. I remember how my brother and I were crazy about the TV show *CHiPs*. I thought those two budding California Highway Patrol officers on motorcycles on the show were the personification

of coolness. My mom got us *CHiP*'s uniforms. I always looked for new police set toys in the store. I wanted to look like them, talk like them, and fight bad guys like they did.

It wasn't until recently that I was able to see a deeper layer to a seemingly innocent compliment about how good my English was. There has been an ongoing perception in the United States that someone who is of an Asian origin is a foreigner. I admit that since I'm a first-generation immigrant, I sort of fit that label. But I know that Asians who



The mass relocation of United States citizens of Japanese ancestry is a shameful, racist, part of American history. People lost shops, homes, human dignity.



Photo: Octavio Duran, OPA

Friar Sam Nasada, author of the accompanying article, is not afraid to stand up for justice. Here he joins protestors in solidarity with families of those who died trying to cross the US-Mexico border.

were born in this country sometimes still get asked, “Where are you *really* from?” It is as if Asians are seen as “perpetual foreigners” in this country.

The other phenomenon that is a very common experience for Asian Americans is what is called the “model minority.” This is a notion that all Asians are smart, hard-working, law-abiding, and docile. It is true that part of this narrative is pushed by some Asian American families, who teach their children to never “rock the boat” as long as they have a successful career and their family can live comfortably enough.

Unfortunately, as we have learned recently, leading a quiet, comfortable life does not make us immune from racially motivated attacks. Perceiving Asians as meek foreigners makes us easy targets to blame when something bad happens.

This pattern has repeated itself throughout our nation’s history. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act out of fear that the Chinese were taking jobs from American citizens. In 1931, a group of white men attacked Filipino farmworkers in Watsonville out of fear that they were taking white

women as wives. In 1942, Japanese Americans were interned in camps out of fear that they would collaborate with America’s enemy during World War II. And now it’s happening again, with anti-Asian bigotry surfacing around COVID-19. The pandemic started in China, after all (as if that has anything to do with Asian people as a whole). This fact

A comfortable life does not make us immune from racially motivated attacks. Perceiving Asians as meek foreigners makes us easy targets.

was the fuel for inflammatory rhetoric from the country’s leadership. As a result, the US has seen anti-Asian hate crimes double in the past year.

I find these facts of US history similar to the Chinese-Indonesian experience in my home country. For a long time, we were given a special code on our national identity card that singled us out



Persecution

Calligraphy by Franklin Fong, OFM

as ethnic Chinese. When I first applied for my Indonesian passport, there was a law that required me to submit a special letter proving my father's citizenship. This law only applied to Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent. Whenever the economy tanked, Chinese-Indonesians were usually first to blame and their businesses were prime targets for looting. In 1997, anti-Chinese riots disintegrated into widespread sexual attacks against Chinese-Indonesian women. Up to this day, the Indonesian government still refuses to acknowledge the full extent of this atrocity.

There is an even more harmful consequence of the model-minority myth in America. Ellen D. Wu, a history profes-

Our nation has been wrought with racial tensions these past few years. However it would be a mistake to resolve the racism issue by sweeping everything under the rug.

sor at Indiana University, in her op-ed for the *Los Angeles Times* gave some examples of how this idea was used to contrast Chinese with African Americans. In the 1960s, many in US politics, academia, and media upheld Chinese-

American culture as a model for African Americans to follow, one that integrated more peaceably into predominantly white America. That highlighting the Asians' docility was a way to "counter the demands of civil-rights and black-power activists for substantive change."

During my still-limited time ministering as priest, I have had some people express that they were tired of hearing about racism. Some of you reading this article may sympathize with that feeling. I completely understand that our nation has been wrought with racial tensions these past few years. However, it would be a mistake to resolve the racism issue by sweeping everything under the rug and pretending everything is fine and dandy. In that spirit I offer a few suggestions for moving forward in the accompanying box on the opposite page.

I gave up my dream to be a motorcycle-riding cop on the highways of California like in that '80s TV show a long time ago. Instead, I now share the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the '60s: that one day all God's children—black, white, Jew, Gentile, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islanders—will be able to join hands together as true brothers and sisters. ♦

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Father Sam Nasada, OFM, is associate pastor at Old Mission San Luis Rey.

A Way Forward

How might we go about addressing this problem that is so prevalent in our country? Could there be a uniquely Franciscan approach that we could offer to our fellow Americans?

1. **Start with Francis.** The most obvious direction can be found in the spirituality of St. Francis himself. He called all God's creation brothers and sisters. Pope Francis even used this idea as the title of his most recent apostolic letter "*Fratelli Tutti*" ("All Brothers and Sisters"). He wrote in that letter, "In his simple and direct way, St. Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives."

2. **Embrace minority.** In his talk at St. Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, in September 2016, Father Dan Horan, OFM, elaborated further this Franciscan approach. One principle that St. Francis took seriously in his life was "minority." In Francis' context, "minority" is a direct opposite to the way of life of the rich and powerful in Assisi at the time. This group of people, called *maiores* in Latin, looked down at the poor of the city, the *minores*. That is why when Francis formed his group of brothers, he called them Friars Minor, meaning "lesser brothers."

Those who come from the position of minority do not look down at others and do not seek to dominate, manipulate, or coerce others. They don't see someone else or a group of people as somehow less than themselves.

3. **Root out racism from within.** Some of you might think that none of this has anything to do with you. Perhaps you have friends who are people of color. Maybe you are always nice and courteous to them and never said anything racist. The truth is nobody likes being called racist. Nobody likes being seen as having privilege either. Yet that doesn't mean that we shouldn't always examine the biases and prejudices that can affect our interactions with others. It is not enough to just be non-racist. We must strive to be *anti-racist*. —Sam Nasada, OFM

on the cover



Tenderloin Technology Lab

BY JOE LEDBETTER

When one thinks of serving the poor, often the mind turns toward the basic necessities: food, shelter, medicine, clothing. At first glance, technology might seem like a luxury for someone experiencing homelessness or poverty, but access to technology may very well be the thing that houses them or helps

secure employment. The Franciscans in downtown San Francisco are showcasing one way to open up access to technology for people experiencing poverty.

San Francisco has undeniably been the epicenter of the tech industry since the Dot Com boom of the late 1990s. The downtown area (the Financial & South



St. Anthony's Foundation serves those experiencing poverty in the Tenderloin District. Bringing the technology resources to pandemic-safe streets "serves hope."

Photo: Dick Tandy, OFM

of Market Districts) is home to startups, established tech companies, and venture capital firms. But then, you pivot across Market Street toward the Tenderloin, where homeless and low income populations are concentrated more than any other part of the city. It is a literal geographical representation of the gap between the poor and technology. Bridging this gap is the inspiration for the Tenderloin Technology Lab at St. Anthony's.

"There are all these tech innovations happening in the city, but there's this population that we're trying to serve who are unfamiliar and don't have the ability to use or benefit from it," says Amanda Brown, manager of the Tenderloin Technology Lab. "The development

of the Tech Lab was essential, especially when the trend toward requirements of online job applications and well-put-together resumes increased."

The Tech Lab was established in 2008 in partnership with SF Network Ministries to provide technology training and digital access to marginalized and vulnerable populations. Located on the 3rd floor of St. Anthony's building, the Tech Lab is a state-of-the-art technology training center. It consists of three rooms with 34 drop-in computer stations, a Wi-Fi lounge for those with their own devices, a classroom for training (basic, intermediate, and advanced classes), and a front desk staffed with knowledgeable volunteers.



Photo: Dick Tandy, OFM

The idea is to provide technology training and digital access to marginalized and vulnerable populations. During the pandemic that called for even more creativity.

There's free printing, copying, and faxing. Volunteers help guests with resumes and provide repair services for computers and other devices. Guests can even charge their devices in a locker with a user-set pin number without fear of theft while taking advantage of St. Anthony's other services. Those charging-lockers were generously donated by Craig Newmark of Craigslist, the national online ad service.

The Tech Lab serves a diverse range

Gerry credits much of his ability to rebuild his business to the Tech Lab's support. He gratefully says, "The more I used the Tech Lab, the more it did for me."

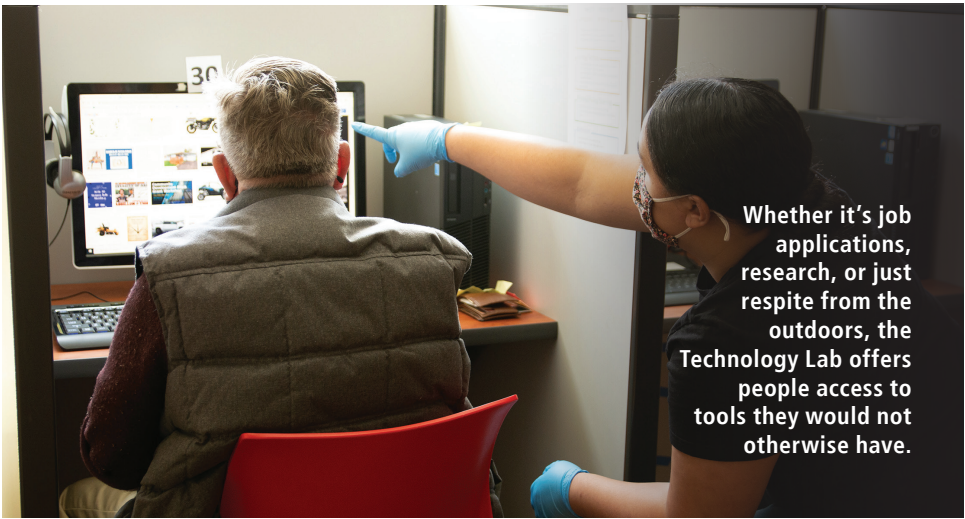
of populations and needs. There is a healthy mix of guests who are experiencing homelessness and those who are low-income, young and old. Some come to get help accessing LinkSF, a website designed in collaboration with ZenDesk to connect those in need with services that can help them. Others come in to get help with their resumes and to

search for job opportunities.

There are students who use the drop-in computer lab to complete schoolwork. Some guests come in to get help creating an email or social media account to reconnect with family and friends. Volunteers also help guests print and prepare documents for court hearings or other legal matters. "For a lot of guests, the Lab is simply a place to spread out and relax," says Amanda. The Lab provides a safe place of respite for those living on the streets. Something as simple as being able to watch a movie on a free streaming website, play computer games (CandyCrush is a hit), or read the news can provide as much dignity as a hot meal.

Some guests, like Gerry, have been using the Lab for years. Gerry lost his business during the Great Recession of 2008. Circumstances led him to St. Anthony's Dining Room for hot meals and a place to rest. He eventually discovered the Tech Lab and began taking advantage of its offerings.

Gerry credits much of his ability to rebuild his business to the Tech Lab's support. The staff even helped him acquire the industry-specific software used in creating his business' products. "The more I used the Tech Lab, the more it



Whether it's job applications, research, or just respite from the outdoors, the Technology Lab offers people access to tools they would not otherwise have.

Photo: Dick Tandy, OFM

did for me. It helped me build my company's website and print the business documents that I needed. When I could afford to buy an old desktop system that needed some fixing up, the staff members were able to help me with it," he proclaims.

Being an advocate for digital access and equity has led to several important partnerships in the past year. The US Census Bureau teamed up with the Tech Lab to connect with segments of the population that are difficult to reach due to lack of access and unstable living situations. This was paramount not only for the Census count that influences funding for critical programs, but it also provided on-site recruitment for much-needed temporary job opportunities.

The Tech Lab has also worked with St. Anthony's Advocacy team to register people to vote, which helped more and more of the community participate in the political process.

Of course, the Tech Lab had to shift its operating model in March 2020, when COVID-19 triggered a statewide shelter-in-place. The drop-in computer lab was closed, and all classes were canceled. "We thought it was going to be a short period of time," Amanda recalls. "But when we realized the shutdown was

going to last longer, we knew we had to do something to serve our guests."

St. Anthony's collaborated with community partners and the City of San Francisco to establish a block closure, effectively closing the street in front of St. Anthony's during business hours. Tents, tables, and chairs were set up with Chromebook computers (donated by Dolby Laboratories), along with charging stations. "There was so much confusion about the pandemic. For a lot of people, the outdoor computer drop-in sessions were the only way to get information," says Amanda. Now, a year-plus later, there is a long-term benefit: "We've been able to serve in a hybrid model of indoor and outdoor services for the last five months."

The impact of the Tech Lab is wide-ranging and cannot be overstated. The staff and volunteers work wonders helping guests navigate challenges and identifying opportunities. They help people learn, grow, and connect with the world in ways that might otherwise be impossible. ❖

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Joe Ledbetter is Director of Development for the Saint Barbara Province (OFM).

The Poverty of Franciscans

BY MURRAY BODO, OFM

We Franciscans cherish our chosen lifestyle of poverty, but what about those who did not choose poverty? Those poverties are not the same, but indeed they are linked. Let me explain.

The question of poverty has plagued me most of my life, especially when I see the enormous gap between the rich and the poor and how devastating and debilitating it is to be poor in our world. Shouldn't we be working to eradicate abject poverty? Trying to lift people out of the helplessness and despair of being too poor to survive with dignity? Stand-

ing against this dark world of human selfishness?

At some point along my Franciscan path, I began to realize that when Francis and Clare spoke of poverty, they were not talking about poverty as we see it around us. Francis, Clare, and their followers had nothing but compassion for the poor and downtrodden.

When they spoke of poverty as a virtue, as a way of imitating Christ, Francis and Clare were talking about God, the poor God. The poverty of Francis and Clare is the cross of Christ. The cross is

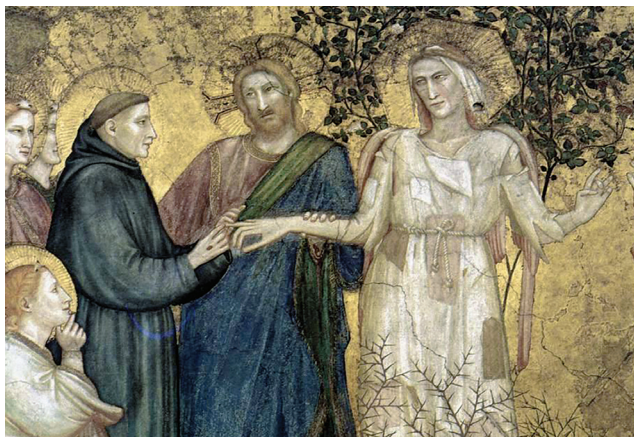


Photo: Giotto di Bondone, Public domain

Poet St. Francis spoke of his love for Lady Poverty, words for the sweetness he found in Jesus' call. His descent into poverty was an ascent into richness.





Photo: Provincial Archives

Habit, cowl, cord, Tau Cross, emptiness before God's altar—all of these symbolize the spirit of poverty that marks Franciscans, and impels them to be in solidarity with the poor.

the poverty of God, and the poverty of God is the love of God who emptied himself of power as we know it, to show how much he loves us. He identifies with our powerlessness when he dies on the cross.

Therefore, to identify and emulate the poverty of Christ on the cross is to identify with God's love as a way of embracing not only God, but all of God's creation, which Christ redeems and sanctifies on the cross. In the powerlessness of the cross is revealed the power of love and what love is capable of.

Francis and Clare, in embracing the poverty of God, are lovers, not austere ascetics who take some kind of joy in hating riches and honors and the good things of life. They are living on a wholly different level of life. They are living in and showing us God's love. They are saying by living simply and in voluntary Gospel poverty, "This is how much God loves you. God became poor like this so that you might know God's love. This voluntary poverty is the portal into God. It will show you riches you never imagined. It will show you God."

God is love. God is known by the way

God revealed to us the mystery of love, namely, by descending into the powerlessness of poverty. It becomes the Franciscan way of ascending to another kind of richness, the richness of sacrificial love that empties itself for others, as God did for us. Poverty is the richness

Francis and Clare are saying by voluntary Gospel poverty, "This is how much God loves you. God became poor so you might know God's love."

that true love brings. It is the freedom that human riches and power can never bring us. It is a freedom that brings joy, a joy that is not giddiness, but the exultation of the Spirit of God within us, the sign of the presence of God.

But what about those who did not choose poverty? No one chooses the poverty that demeans them, destroys their sense of their own dignity and worth, that alienates them from oth-



Photo: Ottonio Duran, OFM

When a friar is vested, he receives a cord with three knots, representing his vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In habit, he will wear that cord for life.

ers, including from God who, for some, seems to have abandoned them. What do we Franciscans have to say to them?

I believe that we Franciscans are saying this to the poor: “Here we are. We are here for you and with you. We will stand by you, help you, speak out, as Christ did against those who oppress and reject you and keep you poor in order to keep themselves above you. You embody the Christ we love, and we see, beyond what others see, to the core of who you really are, beautiful humans God created and whom human poverty has tried to erase or make

“Here we are. We are here for you and with you. We will stand by you, help you, speak out, as Christ did against those who oppress and reject you and keep you poor.”

ugly. We work justice with and for you; for as St. Bonaventure tells us, ‘Justice makes beautiful that which has been deformed.’

“We work this kind of justice not only in order to try to lift up and lighten your burden, but also to show you your own light, the light of Christ shining through you from within you,” say we Francis-

cans. “Our voluntary poverty prevents us from *not* seeing you. Riches and power erase you from the society of the ‘haves.’ We try to not let that happen. For if our voluntary, Christ-like Franciscan poverty does not embrace you who suffer real and debilitating material poverty, then our vow of poverty is a kind of self-referential hypocrisy. Franciscan poverty says loudly and clearly, ‘Remember to remember the poor, who are the face of Christ.’

“It is our vocation as Franciscans to stand with you who are poor or broken or marginalized; together we work mercy with you; we ask you if we can join with you as together we work to rise with Christ to a new life of hope. God lives among us when we work in solidarity with one another, no matter how poor we are, how alienated we feel. God is there with us. God has been there himself. God emptied himself, became poor with and for us.”

That is why St. Francis asked his friars to be poor and to work with and among the poor. As we live and work among those without physical wealth, we live a powerful powerlessness that is the face of God among us. ❖

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Father Murray Bodo, poet and author, is a friar of St. John the Baptist Province, OFM.

'We're Coming Back Pretty Strong'

BY JOHN FEISTER

It's been a long, long time, but as vaccinations spread and pandemic restrictions lift, the ministries of Saint Barbara Province are starting to see the light of day. We talked to some folks around the province for an update, in four key ministries: education, work among the poorest, parish ministry in the Old Missions, and retreat work.

Father Garrett Galvin and his staff at the Franciscan School of Theology (FST), at University of San Diego, have been making strides in spite of COVID-19. "We went basically to working from home over Zoom around March 15, a year ago," he explains.

The school has been serving the needs of 55 students, remotely, during the restrictions. All of the classrooms and activities have been online. In the fall he

anticipates returning to the classroom. "We've had three groups of graduates in the three terms. So we've postponed graduation until we feel like we can safely do it together." That would be near Labor Day, in early September.

But there is a silver lining. "We've hired a number of significant new personnel during this time, including a new vice president for enrollment management and a new vice president for academic affairs, and a new development director as we assemble a new executive team following our move from Oceanside to San Diego.

"Those people bring really strong digital skills with them," observes Father Garrett. That led to an unexpected outcome: What started as a way to manage current enrollment remotely blossomed



Photo by Christine Avella, Courtesy of FST Instagram

The Franciscan School of Theology is housed here, at University of San Diego. Double rainbows may not be common, but they certainly point to a bright future!

into an entirely new recruitment approach.

Another plus: “We’ve talked for a long time about wanting to do an online degree,” Father Garrett continues. Things have moved quickly in that direction. We’ll cover that story in a future issue of this magazine.

St. Anthony’s Dining Room

Brother Dick Tandy’s story is not quite so positive. At St. Anthony Foundation, in San Francisco’s Tenderloin District, the lives of the very poor have been made even harder by the pandemic itself and by the restrictions. Drug addiction has always been a problem nearby, for example. “Opiates [like Fentanyl] have become more of a problem,” says DT, as Brother Dick is known on the streets. “It’s a lot cheaper than heroin or crack; they take a shot, it’s too strong, and it kills them.” He was on his way to a funeral when we talked. “It’s hard emotionally to have people dying around you.”

Brother Dick explains that St. Anthony’s Foundation, a landmark Franciscan institution, has “moved all of our services outside, under a big tent.” The staff has operated like that since March of 2020, handing out parcels of food, about 2,000 per day. Now the inside dining room is opening again, where people down on their luck can experience dignity along with some food and

respite from the heat. “I really don’t know how the mechanics of that are going to work,” he says—the reopening is new to everyone, and will be gradual. The dining room will reopen at 25% capacity.

A hospitality ministry of fresh, hot coffee started outside the adjoining St. Boniface parish during the pandemic and grew dramatically. “That’s not going away,” says Brother Dick.

The Great Outdoors

Pastor Dan Lackie has been more than a little busy at St. Barbara parish during this pandemic year. Much of the activity around Old Mission Santa Barbara ground to a halt and is slowly reopening in the coming months. But the parish, through Zoom meetings and outdoor Masses, has kept serving the faithful around shutdowns and restrictions.

“Everybody is focusing on the governor’s reopening,” says Father Dan. “But the challenge is that local county guidelines and diocesan guidelines don’t all line up with that. So it really does come down to a question of local protocols.

“An interesting thing: We have a large contingent who prefer to be outside—they’ve just really taken to it—especially in this beautiful setting. The birds are singing, there are mountains in the distance.” The birds seemed especially helpful in light of restrictions against



St. Anthony’s chaplain Brother Martin Sanabria oversees the delivery of donated products from Star Route Farms (Bolinas). This food will not go to waste.

**Friars Mark Schroeder
and Larry Gosselin
at Old Mission
Santa Barbara take
a break to join the
local community
for a Peace Concert
by musician David
Segall.**



Photo courtesy of Old Mission Santa Barbara Instagram

singing. It seems likely that there will be more outdoor Masses even when the pandemic is long gone.

Father Dan guesses that about half of the parish has not been on-site during the pandemic, even for outdoor Masses. And online attendance, useful as it is, has been a weak substitute. “As more people come to in-person Mass,” he says, “they are excited to be back. They feel connected.

“Some of the younger folks especially are really tired of being on Zoom [online videoconference],” he observes. All manner of meetings and religious education have been on Zoom all year long. “They want to be in person. They see the value of being in person to pray; they value the Eucharist. I don’t see that slipping away.” Father Dan doesn’t fear the decline that some have predicted. “All in all, coming out of the pandemic, I would say we’re coming back together pretty strong.”

Going on Retreat

The retreats of the province have been extremely limited over the past year, but Janet Gardner, at San Damiano Retreat in Danville, California, sees things picking up. “There are signs of life!” she says. She speaks of the annual volunteer working retreat, a few weeks back, where 15 retreatants spent days cleaning up, gardening, and improving the

grounds of the beautiful center in the hills above Danville, California. Some weeks before that was the Mother’s Day Brunch, with about 40 attendees (all masking and observing social distance).

Janet is feeling a transition happen: “We’re still doing the Zoom retreats online, but people are starting to call and see about scheduling for retreats in the fall.

“We need to let people know that we’re open again. People long for personal contact again. But there’s always going to be a segment that likes Zoom. And we’ve been able to collaborate on joint retreats with the other retreat centers—that’s a plus.

“On the other hand, we’ve always offered personal retreats, and that’s something people have really been craving. That’s one of the first things we’ve been able to do as we are opening up, because you don’t have to worry about social distancing.”

The center was able to hold outdoor liturgies around Easter this year, after missing—“was it one year?” she asks, laughing. We’ve all lost some track of time. The Easter liturgies a few months ago really brought something home to Janet: “I think that’s when we knew that this place is special, and I need to keep going. People really miss it.” ♦

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John Feister is editor of this publication.

concerning care

Center of Hope

BY PAT FANNING

Take a walk down Hope Street in downtown Los Angeles and you'll see the place that "serves hope," as they say at the St. Francis Center. The Center was started as a soup kitchen in 1972 by the legendary friar Hugh Noonan, founder of the nationally broadcast "Hour of St. Francis" radio program. Today St. Francis is not only a dining room that serves anyone who's hungry, but it's also a vibrant Center of social services. It's anchored by a uniquely qualified laywoman.

"I use my clinical skills every day here," says Jan Falk, the Center's new director. She came in mid-May with a wealth of experience in different parts of the country. She's a clinical psychologist who worked most recently in Bend, Oregon, advocating for children caught in their parents' contentious divorces. Earlier in her career she served as executive director of St. Francis House, a Boston ministry of Franciscans of New York's Holy Name Province. That's a large

program, focusing on homelessness and other issues of Bostonians living in poverty.

"So I was familiar with the kind of work they do here in Los Angeles. That's what attracted me to this job." She had moved to LA. to be near one of her three grown sons. Her skills and experience are a perfect match with St. Francis Center. "Our guests are so needy, there are so many multilayered problems." She knows from experience there is no easy fix: "You could work 100 hours a day and still make no dent."

But she exaggerates. The Center is certainly making a difference in the Skid Row area. "St. Francis Center is an incredible place," she says. It has grown a lot compared to its original presence as a pantry and soup kitchen. "We not only feed people, we provide case management, we do eviction prevention and housing referrals." During the COVID-19 pandemic, they started a "pantry box"



St. Francis Center Director Jan Falk oversees all manner of social services, including trucks that service satellite food banks.

Photo courtesy of Jan Falk



Lines got longer in the pandemic,...

Photos courtesy of St. Francis Center Instagram



...vaccinations were critical.

program, offering families food help in the form of take-out boxes.

Those pantry boxes are high quality, Jan says. “It’s just an incredible showing of the selflessness and generosity of the LA community.” The boxes differ from one day to the next. “You’ll always have fresh produce—tomatillos, tomatoes, asparagus, whatever’s in season—fresh bread, great stuff.”

There are contributions from Costco, Trader Joe’s, Target, and a variety of other places, she explains. “Any family would welcome them. We make home-made soup every day out of these fresh ingredients too. Volunteers come in and cut it all up. It’s always healthy, unprocessed foods.”

One thing that attracted Jan to St. Francis Center was the way the meals are served, at dining room tables. “I’ve always been in homeless programs where they just dished out the stuff from a cafeteria line. Here we actually serve the food, like in a restaurant.” The guests, staff, and board of directors are equally important here.

It’s all pandemic-adjusted but returning to normal as restrictions lift. “We’ll get back from the pantry to Alfresco B-Star dining,” she says lightly. “No, that’s not true!” She clearly sees a place for humor. “I think humor’s essential,” she says. “We have a wonderful environment where no one has to walk on eggshells. It’s a really inclusive, welcoming place.”

Fifteen staff work at the Center. They



Volunteers number 3,000 annually.

and about 3,000 volunteers provide about 180,000 various services each year. They join together, as they say, to “serve hope.” There are health and hygiene services, services for seniors, a youth summer camp, a food pantry (with pop-up satellite pantries around town), as well as the dining room, all in the spirit of St. Francis.

In spite of so many efforts, she says, “this is not a huge, esoteric complex. It’s so simple, so elegant, so meaningful.... We’re here to help people stay alive,” she says. Jan, along with staff and volunteers, is indeed offering hope. That’s what brought her here: “I want to make a difference.” ♦

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Pat Fanning is a frequent contributor to this magazine. You can read more about St. Francis Center at StFrancisCenterLA.org.

St. Francis Mural

St. Francis Center · Los Angeles, CA

The work of the Center speaks for itself. But a little visual help never hurts. That's the thinking of Franciscan Brother Victor Vega, chaplain at St. Francis Center. He has been busy in recent months creating a large St. Francis mural—more accurately he's coordinating the work.

"I wanted to have something that identifies us as a Franciscan building, something that identifies or reflects what we do here at the Center," he says. "I like art, but I don't have the talent to do it! But when I need something for my ministry, I find people who can do it."

The mural was underway during this interview. "One of our guests here is the painter, with two other guests." The painter prefers to be anonymous.

"The idea is to have something that incorporates Franciscan values with our staff and our guests," he says. "But we also want to advertise and promote the artists that we have here. Maybe they can get jobs from people seeing their work."

Brother Victor wanted a particular image for the artists to paint: "I wanted a picture of St. Francis giving bread to other guests, the idea of giving and receiving. That's what we do at the Center."



Photos courtesy of St. Francis Center

Brother Victor Vega holds a scene that inspires the mural: St. Francis' encounter with those marginalized by poverty.

An artist who prefers anonymity works with Brother Victor to bring the image of St. Francis to life on the center's outside wall.



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OCTOBER

***The Spirituality of St.
Francis & St. Clare***

**October 2-4, 2021
San Damiano Retreat
Danville, California
Dan Riley**

What was the spirituality of these founders of the Franciscan movement? Come spend the days before the Feast of St. Francis exploring their spirituality and how it can shape our own.

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Christian Journey***

**October 22–24, 2021
San Damiano Retreat
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Tom Bachhuber**

Life is about facing and managing

change—career, personal, family, spiritual. This retreat is an opportunity to reflect on your life and your faith, exploring avenues for new opportunities. You will engage in practical career transition content, poetry, and prayer, which will allow you to begin clarifying vocational needs and goals.

More information:

sandamiano.org
925.837.9141

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

***Zoom Online: Advent
series: “Women in Scripture
Who Waited for God’s
Promise: Sarah, Ruth,
Elizabeth, and Mary”***

**November 23 and 30;
December 7 and 14, 2021
(All from 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.)**

**San Damiano Retreat
Danville, California
Jan Stegner, MTS, MMC**

Advent is a time of renewal, a time to dwell on the promise of God to each of us and to our community. Join us online to reflect on the powerful women

who bear the gift of Emmanuel for all of us.

More information:

sandamiano.org
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JANUARY 2022

Serenity Retreat

**January 21–23, 2022
Mission San Luis Rey Retreat
Oceanside, California
Father Tom Weston, SJ**

Continue your healing as you spend a full weekend in person with women and men in recovery from alcoholism and addiction. Our focus is the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. We invite members of Al-Anon, all AA groups, alcoholics, addicts, friends, and family members. Pray, meditate, and reflect in an inviting and peaceful environment.

More information:

sanluisrey.org
760.757.3651

donor profile: Melissa Transou’s Grateful Spirit: *continued from page 7*

the other leadership of the Province. Melissa felt fortunate that she was able to continue to grow into her position and decided she wanted to give something back.

She went to the St. Barbara Province website and began a monthly recurring donation. “I wanted

to help take care of the friars because they do so much for others,” Melissa shares. “It’s a modest donation. I know some people might think ‘it’s a small amount, so why bother?’ But I thought that every little bit helps. I figure if enough people pitch in, a little bit adds

up to something bigger.”

Turns out she’s a fundraiser-by-example. Monthly giving is easy to set up and no amount is too small. To start a recurring monthly donation, visit sbfranciscans.org/ donate or call the Office of Outreach at 510-536-3722, extension 109. ♦



at last

Leaders of six OFM provinces in the US recently signed on to a statement from some bishops and the Tyler Clementi Foundation, excerpted here.

As we see in the Gospels, Jesus Christ taught **love, mercy, and welcome** for all people, especially for those who felt persecuted or marginalized in any way; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that LGBT people are to be treated with “respect, compassion and sensitivity.”

All people of goodwill should help, support, and defend LGBT youth; who attempt suicide at much higher rates than their straight counterparts; who are often homeless because of families who reject them; who are rejected, bullied and harassed; and who are the target of violent acts at alarming rates.

The Catholic Church values the God-given dignity of all human life and we take this opportunity to say to our LGBT friends, especially young people, that **we stand with you** and oppose any form of violence, bullying, or harassment directed at you.

**Most of all, know that
God created you, God loves you,
and God is on your side.**

In signing on to this statement, the provincial ministers have reaffirmed their support of their LGBT sisters and brothers, who experience high rates of harassment, violence, and suicide.

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