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The Way of St. Francis

**Journeys
Toward
Meaningful
Lives**

THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS PROVINCE OF SAINT BARBARA

The Way of Saint Francis

Summer/Fall 2015, Vol. 20, No. 3

Publisher

Very Reverend John Hardin, OFM
Provincial Minister

Editor

Father Dan Lackie, OFM

Editorial Advisor

Mr. John Godges

Editorial Staff

Mr. Kevin Murray
Brother Scott Slattum, OFM

Art Direction and Design

Paul Tokmakian Graphic Design

Staff Photographer

Brother Dick Tandy, OFM

Contributors

Father Dan Lackie, OFM
Father Ken Laverone, OFM
Brother Vincent Nguyen, OFM
Father Warren Rouse, OFM
Brother Scott Slattum, OFM

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on the cover

A trekker on the Camino de Santiago casts a contemplative shadow. The stylized scallop symbol inscribed in the paving stone in the foreground represents Saint James. Representations of this symbol are seen frequently along the 484-mile-long route. The remains of the apostle Saint James are interred in the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, which is the culmination of the Camino de Santiago. Hikers have been making this pilgrimage for over 1,000 years. Read Fr. Ken Laverone's account of his journey along this "pilgrim's road," beginning on page 12.

PHOTO: DREAMSTIME.COM

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Have a comment or suggestion?
Let us know by sending an email to
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The Way | SUMMER/FALL 2015

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.



www.sbfranciscans.org



dear friends...



How Pilgrims Make Progress

It was the third day of our annual Province Retreat when the main speaker issued an intriguing directive: "Be faithful to your future."

I felt spun around. Wasn't faith connected to the what's gone before, namely, the past—the faith of our fathers (if not our mothers!)? After all, we have our Franciscan tradition to be faithful to, not to mention Francis of Assisi himself, who set the bar of discipleship so impossibly high!

And maybe that's just the point: I, we, cannot be another St. Francis. There was and is only one of those. Furthermore, as scholars tell us, Franciscans have survived and thrived over these many centuries because of an energetic spirituality directed at engagement with a surrounding culture, adaptation, and discovery. Being faithful to the future places the emphasis on transformation over preservation. The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard is famous for pointing out that while life can be understood only backwards, it must be lived forwards. Adelante, anyone?

Drawing on scripture, St. Francis described the Gospel life as the journey of a pilgrim. It is the paradox of pilgrimage that while the roads walked

are worn and rutted by countless footsteps of those who've gone before us, a pilgrim is always aimed at something new, something meaningful. The stories of this issue of The Way give voice to pilgrims and illustrate the important traits of those individuals and communities who live like pilgrims: adaptability, humility, and a taste for interdependence. For those who want to be faithful to the future, this is a pretty good list of virtues with which to start. ♦

Fr. Dan Lackie, OFM

Editor

Three ways I've been inspired to a pilgrim faith:

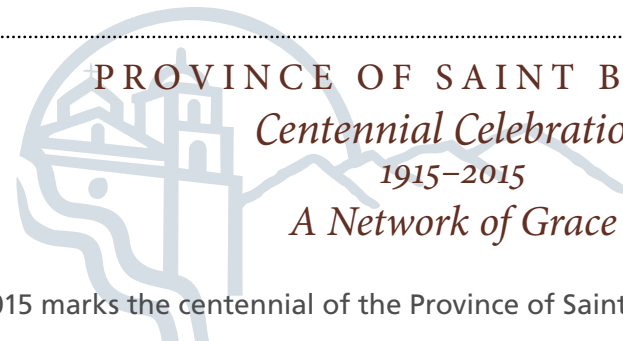
1
Watching the movie "The Way" (2011, directed by Emilio Estevez)

2
Meditating on Psalm 84, especially verse 6: "Happy are those whose hearts are set on pilgrim roads."

3
Listening to (and singing!) "Jerusalem, My Destiny," by Rory Cooney (1990, GIA)

by the way

This is a selection of events occurring in the Province over the next few months. If you have any questions regarding this list, please call the Province for more information at 510.536.3722.



PROVINCE OF SAINT BARBARA

Centennial Celebration

1915–2015

A Network of Grace

2015 marks the centennial of the Province of Saint Barbara.

We invite you to join us in celebrating the past 100 years of the Franciscan presence in the West and to look toward the next 100 years. Attend one of our special events throughout the Province. A traveling archival exhibit will also highlight key milestones in our history. We are grateful to you for accompanying us on our journey.

Mark your calendars! Current exhibit locations and dates are as follows:

August 20–23, 2015

St. John the Baptist Parish
Portland, Oregon

September 4, 2015

St. Francis Retreat Center
San Juan Bautista, California

September 17–20, 2015

Old Mission San Luis Rey
Oceanside, California

September 26, 2015

St. Elizabeth's Parish
Oakland, California

October 4, 2015

St. Boniface Parish and
St. Anthony's Dining Room
San Francisco, California

November 13–15, 2015

Franciscan Renewal Center
Scottsdale, Arizona

December 4–5, 2015

Old Mission Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, California

The Centennial Celebration will culminate at Old Mission Santa Barbara, in Santa Barbara, California, the weekend of December 4–5, 2015. Highlights will include a celebratory Mass on Friday, December 4, followed by an Open House on Saturday, December 5, featuring the Santa Barbara Mission Archive-Library and free admission to the Museum.

Check our website for the most current schedule:
www.sbfranciscans.org/centennial

snapshot

St. Anthony Grand Opening
October 4, 2014 (Feast of St. Francis)
San Francisco, CA

Taken by Br. Rick Tandy, OFM



On a cool day in October 2014, Fr. Barry Brunsman, OFM, kneels down to embrace the wheelchair of a man living on the streets of San Francisco, California, and to listen to him. Our staff photographer, Br. Dick Tandy, OFM, captured this quiet, unplanned moment.

The photograph evokes the long heritage of the Franciscan friars. In his Testament, which he wrote in 1226 just prior to his death, St. Francis recalled the beginnings of his own ministry: "The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too

bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body."

Francis experienced the presence of Jesus in the person of a poor leper. As he wrote later, God had led

him to "true wealth" in the least conspicuous of places.

Ever since, Francis and his followers have made it their mission to live like the poor Christ, while gently steering the Church and society toward places on the margin, toward the poor, and toward new ways of building community. ❖

the word

Everyone's Number One!

by Fr. Warren Rouse, OFM

Book of Numbers: 11:24-30

SOMETIMES, AS YOUNGSTERS in parochial school when nuns wore their black habits (Did they really have feet?), we believed that they were especially graced by God and simply loved to pray. Obviously, these women were the chosen ones, compared to us spiritual peasants.

Indeed, statues of canonized nuns always showed them as smiling, serene, and terrifically pious, to say nothing of our Blessed Mother, who usually—and with all sincere respect—resembled a sort of Avon Lady.

"Gathering seventy elders of the people, he (Moses) had them stand around the tent. The LORD then came down in the cloud and spoke to him. Taking some of the spirit that was on Moses, he bestowed it on the seventy elders; and as the spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied."

Then the "Oops!"

"Now two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, were not in the gathering but had been left in the camp. They too had been on the list, but had not gone out to the tent; yet the spirit came to rest on them also, and they prophesied in the camp."

Whoa!

"So, when a young man quickly told Moses, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp,' Joshua, son of Nun, who from his youth had been Moses' aide, said, 'Moses, my lord, stop them.' But Moses answered him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the people of the LORD were prophets! Would that the LORD might bestow his spirit on them all!'" And with that snappy retort, "Moses retired to the camp, along with the elders of Israel."

End of case, no comment.

What we have here is the universal but disturbing temptation to make comparisons: "I wish I could pray like" or "I am not good enough." Whatever the situation, it seems that

the basic subconscious reasoning is "I am not good enough." This is reminiscent of a Gospel scene (Mk. 9:38-40):

"John said to him, 'Teacher, we saw a man who was driving out demons in your name, and we told him to stop, because he doesn't belong to our group.' 'Do not try to stop him,' Jesus told them, 'because no one who performs a miracle in my name will be able soon afterward to say evil things about me. For whoever is not against us is for us.'" And St. Paul adds the advice Jesus gave to him: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." (2 Cor. 12:9).

No moaning, then, no envy, no comparisons with others. In this, Martin Buber is quite blunt:

"The great and holy deeds done by others are examples for us, since they show, in a concrete manner, what greatness and holiness is, but they are not models which we should copy.

"Every man's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never-recurring potentialities, and not the repetition

of something that another, and be it even the greatest, has already achieved. But what it is that can and shall be done by just this person and no other, can be revealed to him only in himself."

And Cardinal Hume echoes this: "Each person is led differently. No two people pray in the same way, for instance, and what God reveals of himself to any individual is known only to that person alone."

"Don't let this throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room in my Father's house for you." (John 14:1 Tr Peterson) ♦

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Fr. Warren Rouse, OFM, holds advanced degrees in music and liturgical studies. He has written close to 200 articles for The Way magazine. A former pastor, teacher, and retreat director, he edits the Province newsletter, WestFriars, and is the author of Words of Wisdom. He lives at Serra Retreat in Malibu, California. FrWarren@serraretreat.com

friar profile

Br. Eric Pilarcik, OFM

Date of Birth:

October 19, 1966

Entered Novitiate:

June 28, 2007

Temporary Vows:

July 4, 2008

Solemn Vows:

August 20, 2011

Current Ministry:

Vocation Animator

Future Friars: From Scouting for Films to Scouting for Fulfillment

by Br. Scott Slattum, OFM



"Sharing our lives is key to future vocations," says Br. Eric, right.

From movie locations to Franciscan vocations, Br. Eric's life could be described as helping others bring their visions to life. He began his career in real estate. He then became a location scout for Hollywood studios, and now he scouts for vocations.

Br. Eric is the vocation animator for the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara. When I asked him what a vocation animator was, he replied: "One who enlivens or inspires." When I asked him if he thought it was an appropriate description of his work, he enlivened me by referring me to the National Religious Vocation Conference study on recent vocations to religious life.

According to the study, new members to religious life had been attracted to their particular religious orders by the example of their members, and especially by their sense of joy, their down-to-earth nature, and their commitment and zeal. "My job is to animate our community to become present to the men discerning a vocation to religious life," he said.

"The sharing of our lives with theirs is the key to future vocations." He inspired me to ask more questions.

What motivates you to do vocation ministry?

I truly believe our life is a wonderful way to live and serve others. It's a hidden treasure within the world. It's a secret that needs to be revealed to young men looking to live a life full of purpose, love, and joy. This life motivates me.

What are you most excited about in vocation work?

I am inspired by men willing to search out God's calling, men who are willing to participate in our way of life and serve others. When I see men willing to pick up their cross and follow Jesus, it challenges me to grow in my own faith.

What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

I am privileged to journey with the men entering the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara. I am inspired by their enthusiasm, zeal, and their personal holiness. I have seen our future through them,

and it is good! As we look to the future, I hope we continue to draw closer to our friar brothers throughout the United States. I hope we deepen our commitment to both “the spirit of prayer and devotion” and “the work of our hands.”



“I’m at home with the friars,” says Br. Eric, who changed his work from scouting for movies to scouting for meaning and purpose.

ERIC’S VOCATION STORY

Br. Eric began his career in real estate as a broker in Michigan, working alongside his parents. After 12 years in that field, the words of the Holy Cross Brothers at Notre Dame University, where he had attended college, came back to haunt him: “Life is short; live it!”

In 2000, he moved to Los Angeles, exchanging his winter wear for summer wear. He loved movies and hoped he could transfer his skills in real estate to scouting locations for television and movies. However, he soon discovered the old saying —“It’s not what you know, but who

you know”—to be true.

Br. Eric described his situation. “‘What am I doing?’ I asked myself as I stood over the bowl of half-eaten macaroni and cheese. I was questioning my life choices. I was working for a temp agency refilling chips and dips for Craft Services on a movie set.” Providence would soon intervene, and his friend Natasha would introduce him to the Harrison Ford of Moscow, Rodion Nahapetov.

Br. Eric’s scouting career took off with a Russian detective show filmed in Los Angeles. After several years of scouting locations for

high-quality and some questionable-quality movies he became restless. This time, instead of scouting for movies, he began scouting for purpose and meaning.

Br. Eric discovered this meaning in helping juvenile offenders envision a new way of life. He volunteered at Camp Miller in Malibu, California. He prepared youth for their sacraments and led faith-sharing groups. “These youth were very open, wanting to change their lives, and seemed to be hyperaware of God’s voice within their lives,” he said. “They challenged me to become aware of God’s voice and His presence within my own life.”

Br. Eric found himself scouting out a new direction for his life, too. He began looking at religious life. He started out discerning with the Jesuits. “After an eight-day discernment retreat, they handed me

an application, which I thought seemed fast.” The Jesuits were not a good fit for Br. Eric. “I started to pay attention to what gave me life and realized it was my detention ministry, working with the poor and marginalized.” He soon found his way to the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara. “I was at home with the friars and their ministry to the poor and marginalized,” he said.

“I especially loved my time with the friar’s discernment group held at St. Francis Parish in Los Angeles,” said Br. Eric. This experience would plant the seeds of a future ministry with the friars. Instead of scouting for locations, he would scout for vocations. He would help others discover God’s vision for their lives, and, in the process, shape the future of the Province of Saint Barbara. ♦

How You Can Help

The National Religious Vocation Conference study on recent vocations to religious life points out that many of those entering religious life did not experience a great deal of encouragement from parents, siblings, and other family members when they were first considering a vocation to religious life. Remember to support the young men in your community who are discerning a potential religious vocation.

According to the study, the second most common way men became acquainted with the religious institution they joined was through the recommendation of a friend or advisor. Don’t forget to ask the men in your life, “Have you ever thought about religious life? I think you would make a great Franciscan friar!”

The future of the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Saint Barbara also lies in the hands of our staffs, volunteers, parishioners, and supporters, and their willingness to share our lives with the young men in their communities. As Br. Eric pointed out: “It’s a good life, a life full of purpose, love, and joy.” It’s the best-kept secret that we actually don’t want to be a secret.

franciscan thoughts

The Camino de Santiago: The Journey into God



By Fr. Ken Laverone, OFM as told to Br. Scott Slattum, OFM

ALL PHOTOS BY FR. KEN LAVERONE EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

As I reached the French-Spanish border, the sun peeked through the fog and the brilliant green trees. Their fresh new leaves shimmered in the wind. On the horizon, Roncesvalles, an old monastery, was rising. It was stunning. Earlier that morning, I had joined 250 other pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago. Our resting place for the first night would be this monastery, which dates to the Middle Ages and has been a hospice for pilgrims since then.

Daybreak on the Camino de Santiago in May 2014 near St. Jean, France, near the French-Spanish border, where Fr. Ken began his 484-mile, month-long journey that would end with his arrival in Santiago, Spain, on June 9. (inset image, opposite) Fr. Ken "on the road."

PHOTO: DREAMSTIME.COM

The pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago began 1,200 years ago upon the discovery of the remains, in a Christian necropolis in northwestern Spain, of St. James. He had evangelized Spain after the death of Jesus, but then, upon returning to Jerusalem, was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I. According to legend, his friends snuck his body out of Jerusalem back to Spain, where his tomb went forgotten for

Either the *albergues* or inexpensive restaurants provided my meals. I walked between 12 to 15 miles each day. At that rate, I arrived in the city of Santiago de Compostela, the site of a cathedral built atop the spot where the saint's remains were said to have been found, after 30-plus days.

The Start of the Way

I discovered along the way, however, that the pilgrimage walk was



over 800 years. At that time, it was determined by the local bishop that the remains found in the necropolis were those of St. James. News then spread throughout the Christian world, and thousands of pilgrims trekked to his tomb. Every year, thousands of people of faith—and of no faith—will make this same pilgrimage I made a year ago.

I made the 484-mile journey on foot with a 20-plus pound backpack. Most nights, I stayed in *albergues*, hostel-like places, where a few to several dozen pilgrims slept after a long day's walk. I also stayed at seven Franciscan friaries along the way.

not about reaching Santiago de Compostela. The journey was about an encounter with God through others. It was about an encounter with God through the created world. It was, most of all, an encounter between God and myself.

Those who had made this journey before me told me they came back as different people. So they and other pilgrims often asked me, "How do you intend to return?" My response was, "I don't have a clue." I needed to wait and see what would happen. I had no agenda other than to pray, think, be quiet, and walk with people who would help *show* me The Way!



Photos: (opposite) airing of the boots, from O'Cebreiro to Samos; (this page, top to bottom) friendship, from Caldadilla de la Cuerza to Bercianos del Real Camino;

A lay brother at the entrance of St. Mary's Chapel in O'Cebreiro; break time, from Acebo to Cacabelos



An Encounter with Others

I began the pilgrimage with people from throughout the world, men and women from Europe, Australia, and the Americas. I spoke with South Africans, French, Italians, Americans, Brazilians, Dutch, Danish, Austrians, Germans, and I

am sure a few whom I can't remember. We would walk together, chat, and then others or I would pick up the pace and move on, and I would be alone for a while. After weeks on the trail, we became friends and a community.

Each pilgrim had his or her reason



Photos: (this page, clockwise from left) a shady spot, from Hontanos to Itero; music, from Mansillas del Mula to Leon; breaking bread, from Arco do Pino to Santiago; (opposite page, top) life imitating art, from Pamplona to Puente de Reina; (bottom) adorned crucifix, on the way to Ventas de Naron

for the journey, but the journey brought us together. We were all searching for something beyond ourselves. In the telling and listening of our stories, we formed a deep respect for one another's needs and differences. Untethered from the normal duties and distractions of our modern daily lives, we developed a deep caring for one another's physical, emotional, and spiritual discomforts.

I walked with an interesting retired Frenchman. I found him to be a philosopher. We soon spoke on the topic of spirituality, faith, and religion. Like others I had met along the way, he goes to Mass with regularity, but to Communion only a couple times a year. One of my new Irish friends shared the same feelings

about Communion, but he also only seldom goes to Mass. This gave me pause, but in a respectful way, leading me to consider: There is a deep desire for many people of my age for "church," but so many see the hypocrisy and the inconsistency within the institution. Still, they sense a call to be in communion with one another.

My encounter with others often led to my celebrating the Eucharist. The sacrament became our symbol of communion on many levels. One friend, Andrew, with no formal faith experience in his life, even found his way to our celebration of Mass.

Other pilgrims had introduced me to Andrew, who was from Bakersfield, California. He told me his remarkable story. He was 23



years old; at the ages of 14 and 16 he had brain surgeries, the last surgery leaving him paralyzed on his left side. He struggled with severe seizures for a long time with no support from family. Andrew struggled with alcohol abuse until his conversion experience with Jesus, and he then cleaned up his life. He had struggled to walk again—first with a walker, then with a cane. Now he was walking the Camino with a limp and a weak left side. I was impressed with his struggle, his determination, his wish to live fully, and his search for love and direction on the Camino.

Another day, I came upon a 15th-century church. I inquired of the "lady of the Church" if I could celebrate Mass. She was receptive. She went to the *albergues* in the village, and all the pilgrims staying in the village knew within an hour that Mass would be at 6 p.m. Some knew that I was a priest; some didn't; and many were surprised when I began Mass. The gospel for Mass was Jesus' saying he is the Way (the Camino), the truth, and the life. I reminded the people gathered there that we are on the Camino (the Way) searching

for the truth so we may have life!

A couple days later, an Italian man started a conversation with me along the Camino. He had been at Mass the evening before. Eugenio had two things he wanted to discuss. One was the death of his older brother in a motorcycle accident 25 years before when Eugenio was 15 and his brother was 18. Eugenio was still mourning. We talked at length about his feelings and his loss. He also wanted to understand how to read the Gospels. He carried a book of the Gospels with him, and yet he





somehow felt he didn't know how to read them. He wasn't illiterate, but it was as if he was clinging to something that had been stolen from him.

An Encounter with Creation

There is something mystical about the Camino. The ancient monasteries, churches, and villages speak a message to all who visit. I would often stop in a small chapel to recite, "We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all your churches in the world, and we bless you because, by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world." I often could not complete this simple prayer of St. Francis without choking up or tears flowing down my cheeks. I found myself reflecting on my father's recent death in these sacred sanctuaries.

The beauty of the mountains, the rivers, and the blooming roses spoke, too. The wheat fields captured what was taking place internally along the Camino. The early summer fields were

turning from bright green to pale yellow, soon to become golden and ready for harvest. I could not help but think that, two weeks into the journey, many of us, including myself, were also beginning to change "colors." It was still too early to see, however, what would be harvested.

An Encounter with God

I was reminded often of St. Francis of Assisi and his journey toward God. One day, I spotted at a distance my Camino friends whom I had not seen for several days. "Hey!" I shouted out to them. We approached each other with excitement and joy. We shared where we had been, what and whom we had seen since our last meeting. I could not help but think: This must have been how the first friars responded to one another as they crossed each other's paths after months and maybe years on their own sacred Ways.

I asked myself, "What was it about Francis that made them willing to follow the Holy Gospel



Photos: (this page, top) Santa María de León Cathedral in León; (above) stations of the cross in the Santa María de León Cathedral; (opposite) mission almost accomplished



in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity?" Was it his love of Lady Poverty? Was it his love of Lady Poverty? Was it his love for creation? Was it his understanding that we are all brothers and sisters? No, I concluded, it was nothing about Francis. Rather, it was everything about God. The friars' desire to follow the Holy Gospel was simply an extension of their experience and love of God.

I discovered this love on the Camino, too. The journey, without a doubt, had its challenges, discomforts, fears, and days of hesitations and questions. Certain days, I wanted to leave. But I continued, despite my discomforts and questions, because of the understanding, compassion, and accompaniment of so many others.

I experienced the act of living simply on the Camino. I discovered the ability to be at peace with people of various backgrounds. I stood in wonder and awe in the midst of creation. I came to know my fellow pilgrims as true brothers and sisters. But it was love that drew me closer to God, a love that I discovered in the faces of the other pilgrims and in the sacred sites, spiritual and natural, along the Camino de Santiago.

The End of the Way

On Pentecost Sunday, my final day on the Camino, I concelebrated the Pilgrims' Noon Mass with my companions with whom I had begun the journey. As I distributed Eucharist to my new friends, my throat tightened as I saw their faces. Tears of gratitude and joy flowed as I pronounced, "Body of Christ." The Eucharist became "Thanksgiving" at the same time that it became "Communion." I, and I dare say they, had fallen in love with the God of love whom we had encountered on the Camino de Santiago.

I was asked in the beginning, "How do you intend to return?" My response now: "To know that I am loved by God and that I am capable of great love for others. ♦"

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Fr. Ken Laverone, OFM, JCL, is a Franciscan priest of the Province of Saint Barbara. He has served as pastor of several churches in the Diocese of Monterey and the Diocese of Sacramento. Formerly the Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Monterey, he is currently the Vicar Provincial for the Saint Barbara Province. He is also a professor of Canon Law at the Franciscan School of Theology. He completed a Master of Divinity degree at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California, in 1978; a Master of Arts degree in Theology at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, in 1994; and a Licentiate in Canon Law at the University of St. Thomas in Rome, Italy, in 2004.

Sts. Simon & Jude Parish

A Community Remembers from Whence It Came—and Gives Back

by Fr. Dan Lackie, OFM

TALK TO A GROUP OF PARISHIONERS at Sts. Simon & Jude about their history, and soon enough, it will come out: “It all started like this ...”

It’s 1963, and Fr. Terrance Cronin, OFM, then-top friar in the Province of Saint Barbara, receives a call from the archbishop of Los Angeles requesting that the friars take on parish work in the fast-growing southern outskirts of the archdiocese. The parish in question is located in Huntington Beach, then a sleepy town of oil rigs and bean fields. Before giving his answer, Fr. Terrance asks his excellency if he might pay the parish a visit. “Of course,” comes the reply.

And so, the following Sunday, Fr. Terrance finds his way to a small church on the corner of Orange and 9th streets in “downtown” Huntington Beach. He slips into the back of the church dressed in his street clothes, the better to get a true feel for the place and an answer to this question: Would this be a good fit for the friars?

As the story goes, his answer

came at Communion time, when the young mother standing next to him turned to our incognito padre with a sheepish smile and whispered her request: “Would you please hold my sleeping baby while I go up to Communion?” Mildly stunned by this casual gesture of trust so outlandish by today’s standards, Fr. Terrance instantly perceived a sign from God: a little child shall lead them.

And so it’s come to pass that, for fifty years, the friars have been involved in pastoral ministry in what is now the 3,000-family parish of Sts. Simon & Jude in the still fast-growing Diocese of Orange. For our donor profile this month, our shout out goes not to an individual, but to this community of Franciscan generosity. The founding story reverberates with truths that still hold: Hospitality, welcome, an open hand, and a loving and trusting heart animate this holy place. ❖



Photos: (clockwise from top) volunteers preparing a meal in the parish hall kitchen; parishioners enjoying food in the parish hall; parish youth after a performance of the Passion; a full church at Sunday Mass; the annual Fall Festival celebrating the Feast of St. Francis; (inset) the first church building in 1908

Sts. Simon & Jude Parish by the Numbers

1912	year parish established	1964	year friars arrived at parish
3,800	registered parish families	7	friars in residence
160	parishioners serving on parish boards, councils, or commissions	515	liturgical ministers (acolytes, altar servers, choir, environment, eucharistic ministers, greeters, lectors, musicians, servers, and ushers)
526	children in parish school		
595	children in faith formation or sacramental preparation		



Vietnamese Icon of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception

The theological insight of the Immaculate Conception of Mary was long championed by Franciscan theologians prior to its official proclamation by Pope Pius IX in 1854. This icon, "written" by Franciscan brother Vincent Nguyen, features distinctive cultural signs that capture the beauty of this teaching and the strength of divine goodness and love to which it directs us.

Mary, as Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, wears the white Vietnamese "Ao Dai" (pronounced as Ao Zai), which symbolizes her purity, with the blue sash indicating her holiness. She looks straight ahead and walks forthrightly. Set off by the strong red lines symbolizing God's love surrounding everything, Our Lady enacts with clarity the opening words of the Magnificat, her great canticle in the Gospel of Luke: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God, my savior." (Lk. 1:46-47)

The gesture of Mary's hands is the traditional Vietnamese way of a servant who says "Yes, Lord" to the king. In a subtle cultural pointer, God's kingship and loving design are indicated by the icon through its overall shape, which is similar to that of the Chinese character for the King (王). In this character, three horizontal lines represent heaven, humanity, and earth, and one vertical line joins them. In the icon, Our Lady becomes that vertical line, as she stands tall to join glory (blue), hope (black), and human-kind, in this case even extending into the space of death where Adam and Eve, crouched in shame, are touched by the words of love she bears. The Vietnamese script translates to "surprise: Immaculate Conception."

In 1854, Pius IX solemnly proclaimed: "The most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin." The icon is an invitation to behold Mary's holiness and more. In the words of Fr. Pat McCloskey, OFM, Franciscan editor of the *St. Anthony Messenger*: "Rightly understood, the incomparable holiness of Mary shows forth the incomparable goodness of God." ❖

About the Artist

Iconographer Vincent Nguyen, OFM, a friar of the Province of Saint Barbara, currently resides at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside, California, where he is completing his studies in theology at the Franciscan School of Theology. Br. Vincent was commissioned to create the icons of the San Damiano Crucifix which now hang in the Serra Center at Mission San Luis Rey Parish and in the chapel of the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale, Arizona.

The sixth of eight children, Br. Vincent was born in Vietnam to a traditional Catholic family. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, his father was captured and became a political prisoner for seven years. After his father was released, Vincent and his family were allowed to take refuge in the United States, where Vincent joined the Saint Barbara friars and was received into the novitiate on July 5, 2004.

at last

Our Hopes and Dreams

By Br. Scott Slattum, OFM



As St. Francis awaited Sister Death to embrace him as a lover would embrace her beloved, his brothers gathered near. He spoke one last time to them: "I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you yours."

Francis understood that his followers could not resort to a simple imitation of him, that they should live the Gospel in the way it was theirs to do. We gathered our postulants, the newest members in formation, to ask them to share their hopes and dreams for living the Gospel life in our Province.

Shant Kohkasian (top left)

Shant shared stories of his life in Iraq. His life often consisted of explosions, blazing vehicles, and gunfire. It was in Baghdad, a place ravaged by war, that he heard the call to religious life and discovered St. Francis through the invitation of a religious sister. His hope and dream for the Province is that it will continue to share the greeting of St. Francis with the world: "Peace and All Good."

Anthony Edward (top right)

Anthony grew up with a desire to secure justice for others. His search began in Phoenix, Arizona. He volunteered in charities, worked for non-profits, taught school, and served 16 years in the armed forces. His hope and dream for the Province is that it will be a strong promoter of justice.

Henry Djoj (bottom)

Henry was born in Banjarmasin, Indonesia, and raised in Jakarta. He grew up attending Jesuit schools and Boston College, developing his love for the arts, and earning a master's degree in architectural design. He designed low-income housing and commercial property. When asked why he did not join the Jesuits, his simple answer was "the poor." His hope and dream for the Province is that it will continue to be devoted to the poor and marginalized. ❖

What are your hopes and dreams for the Province of Saint Barbara?

**Please share your answers on our Facebook page at:
www.facebook.org/FranciscanFriarsSaintBarbara**

Br. Scott Slattum, OFM, is a Franciscan friar of the Province of Saint Barbara.

"I have done what is mine to do; may Christ
teach you what is yours to do."

The Life of Saint Francis: Second Book

by Thomas of Celano

Franciscan Friars of California, Inc.
Province of Saint Barbara
1500 34th Ave
Oakland, CA 94601



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