

October 2009



The Franciscan Legionnaire

Newsletter of the Friars Legion of St. Peter's Church in the Loop
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Peace and Everything Good

With this Franciscan greeting, I am happy to greet you as I write my first article for this newsletter of the Friars Legion of St Peter's. We remain grateful to Fr. Bob Sprott OFM who authored for ten years the articles for The Franciscan Legionnaire; his insights, his knowledge and understanding of various topics helped all of us to grow in clarity and wisdom. As Fr. Bob wrote his good-byes to us last month, we wish him much peace and health, joy and grace in his new ministry in Arizona.

Br. Herb invited me, Fr. Chuck Faso, to take up the pen for these articles. So here I am, indeed not a stranger to St Peter's. As some of you may remember, the vow of Obedience brought me to the doors of St Peter's in 1978 as director of music and liturgy, programs and ministries. In 1988, I was appointed pastor of St Peter's, much to my surprise. The last few years of my stay here on Madison Street at St Peter's, I headed up the Capital Campaign. In 1998, I moved to a new ministry and place of residence here in Chicago. For these past twelve years, I have been an itinerant preacher throughout the United States – preaching parish missions, retreats, days of recollection. For six years consecutively, I was called to preach for a month at a time in Hawaii. But as we all know, when Jesus calls, you have to go. Thank you Jesus! Since 2008, I have offered my preaching to Franciscans: Friars and Sisters, and Laity, the Secular Franciscans – all three Orders.

A few weeks ago, Br Herb here at St Peter's invited me to write these articles for the Legionnaire. Here I am today. Let me say, that

I would love to hear from you – suggestions, comments, topics for articles, criticisms, questions, etc. Let's make this our Legionnaire. Let's use this communication arm of St Peter's (6000 copies are printed and mailed each month and another 1000 copies are available at St Peter's) as one way to share our faith, our insights, our ideas.

In this issue, 1) I will write about the various ways we Franciscans celebrate the feast of St Francis 2) What celebrations will be held at St Peter's. 3) Books about St Francis. 4) Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Glad to be with you through the Legionnaire and look forward to the months ahead of sharing with you. Happy Feast of St Francis! Happy Month of St Francis! Happy October!

Fr. Chuck Faso, OFM
www.frchuckofm.org

Il Poverello, Francis, the Poor Man of Assisi!



On October 3, Franciscans around the world

will gather to remember St Francis' death, his passing from this life to the glory of heaven. This celebration on October 3rd, is called by its Latin name, "Transitus" – the going over, the Passover, the passing over through death to life eternal. With the evening of October 3rd, the next day begins. So, the feast of St Francis is celebrated on the fourth of October.

TRANSITUS: The Memorial of the Passing of St Francis has been celebrated at twilight on October 3rd, by Friars and other followers of St Francis at least since the eighteenth century .

The original rite was simple:

- 1) The antiphon "O Sanctissima Anima"
- 2) Psalm 142
- 3) The antiphon "Salve, Sancte Pater"
- 4) Prayer

The *Transitus* is an attempt to celebrate our Franciscan identity by rooting ourselves ritually both in the scriptures and the historical foundations of our brotherhood. Good ritual always names and lifts up the life-giving values, of a person or group of persons united around those values. A good celebration of an ongoing experience then deepens, confirms and affirms that experience. For us whose lives are touched by and motivated by Francis of Assisi and his total response to following Jesus the Christ by living the Gospel, our prayers, songs, rituals celebrating the Feast of St Francis can deepen and affirm our vocation to living the Gospel of Jesus the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) even more fully and with greater joy and commitment.

Over the years, communities have often incorporated elements from the narratives surrounding the passing of Francis of Assisi. These narratives were primarily taken from the biographies of Thomas of Celano, St Bonaventure and the Legend of Perugia. Even though these accounts do not always agree on the historical sequence of events surrounding the passing of St Francis, they basically have

four common elements:

- 1) The death of Francis in the context of praise: the singing of Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*
- 2) A motif of "leave taking": Francis asked for the reading of the Gospel of John: washing the apostles' feet (John 13:1-20) and a sharing of bread.
- 3) The singing of Psalm 142
- 4) The exhortation and blessing of the brothers.

Candles, light, bread and incense can enrich the ritual.

The *Transitus* will be celebrated at St Peter's in the Loop on Saturday, October 3rd at 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome! No exceptions!

First, the story of the dying of St Francis:

Francis embraces Sister Death, Oct. 3., 1226.

Two years after he had received the stigmata – that is twenty years after the beginning of his religious life – Francis asked to be brought to St Mary of the Portiuncula, in the valley below Assisi that rises above on the side of Mount Subasio. Francis began the Order around this chapel in 1209. He wanted to yield up his spirit where he had first received the spirit of grace. He has himself placed naked up on the naked ground. He waited without fear for his triumph, and said to his brothers: "I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do."

He spent the few days that remained before his death in praise, teaching his companions whom he loved so much and whom he called to his side to praise Christ with him. He himself, in as far as he was able, broke forth in Psalm 142: "*I cry to the Lord with my voice; to the Lord, I make loud supplication.*" He exhorted his brothers with fatherly affection to love God. He spoke a long time about practicing patience and poverty, setting the counsels of the holy Gospel ahead of all other prescriptions. Then he stretched out his arms over them in the form of a cross, because he loved that sign, and blessed all

brothers, both present and absent, in the power and in the name of the Crucified.

Francis also invited all creatures to praise God, and exhorted them to love God. He exhorted death itself to give praise, and going joyfully to meet death, he invited death to make its lodging with him. **“Welcome”** he said, **“my sister death.”**

When Francis had finished his inspiring admonition, he told his brothers to bring a book of the Gospels and asked to have the Gospel according to St John read to him from the place that begins: “Before the feast of Passover.” He was recalling that most holy supper which the Lord celebrated as his last supper with his disciples.

Then when many brothers had gathered about, whose father and leader he was, and while they were standing reverently at his side awaiting his blessed death and happy end, his most holy soul was freed from his body and received into the abyss of God’s glory, and Francis fell asleep in God.

The whole city of Assisi rushed in a body and the whole region hastened to see the wonderful things of God which the Lord of Majesty had made manifest in his holy servant.

Here ends the story of Francis’ death on Oct 3rd, 1226, at the age of 45 years old. And the world has not been the same since. This Troubadour of God’s love and mercy, this Herald of the Great King, this brother to every person and creature, this Patron of Environment. He died as he lived during the last twenty years of his life, seeing and embracing all as gift of God.

A question this raises for us: How will our daily living shape our dying? How do we want to die, for die we will? What words do we want to say? What feelings for others, for God, for ourselves do we hope we will have? Have we reflected on our death recently, at all? Today, you and I are one day closer to our deaths, our

letting go of this part of the journey of life.

The “O Sanctissima Anima” that we chant during the Transitus is directed to St Francis. The words are:

*O most holy and hallowed soul,
In passing from this life
Heaven’s dwellers congregate,
Angelic choirs echo their joyful praise and
The glorious Trinity welcomes him saying:
Remain with us here forever and ever!*

May we hear these same words from God at our Transitus, our death and awakening to the fullness of life, promised us in Baptism.

“May the Lord give you Peace!” Francis wrote in his Last Will and Testament that God revealed to him this greeting and urged us to bless others with these same words.

Il Signore ti dia la pace!

May the Lord give you Peace! On this feast of St Francis and all through the year.

Franciscan Festival 2009 **At St Peter’s in the Loop**

Saturday Oct 3, 7 PM – Transitus

Sunday Oct 4, 12:30 PM – Solemn Mass

Monday Oct 5, 12:45 PM – Organ recital by Br. Gary Jeriha OFM of St Peter’s

Tuesday Oct 6, 12:10 – Megan Wells, writer & performing artist, The Bulbul Middle Eastern Music Ensemble – St Francis & the Sultan of Egypt

Wednesday, Oct 7, 5:45 PM-7:45 PM, *Francesco*, 1989 Italian film in English

Thursday, Oct 8, 12:45 PM – Organ Recital by Andrew P. Fredel, Organist & Choir Director at St Peter’s

Books about St Francis

The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace by Paul Moses

Reflections on St Francis by John Michael Talbot

15 Days of Prayer with Saint Francis of Assisi
By Thaddee Matura, OFM

The Franciscan Story: St Francis of Assisi and his influence since the thirteenth century
by Maurice Carmody

Francis of Assisi: Performing the Gosepl Life
By Lawrence S. Cunningham

Franciscan Prayer by Ilia Delio, OSF

The Passionate Troubadour: A Miedieval Novel about Francis of Assisi by Edward Hays

These and many other books and videos about St Francis are available at St Peter's Book and Gift Shop located on the lower level of St Peter's Church, 110 W Madison St, Chicago IL.

Pilgrimage to Holy Land

Since 1980, I have led Pilgrimages to the Holy Land. I have been to Israel/Palestine 27 times and lived there for four months in 1983. Fr. Bill Burton OFM, a Biblicist, a Scripture teacher and scholar, and I will be leading a Pilgrimage on Nov. 27-Dec 6, 2009. Safe and Transforming experience. Call AMI Travel at 773-777-4900 or click on

<http://www.amitravel.com/sitePage.aspx?pageID=349>

In May, Sr Barbara Leonhard and I will lead a pilgrimage for all Franciscans to the Holy Land.
<http://www.amitravel.com/sitePage.aspx?pageID=355>

APPLICATION FOR YEAR-LONG MEMORIAL CANDLE

(Please print, leaving a space between each word.)

To be lit in honor of:

Living_____ Deceased_____

Requested by:

Date candle is to be lit: Immediately_____
Specific
Date_____

The offering for the Memorial Candle is \$150.00. Please enclose a check for the full amount with this form.

APPLICATION FOR PERPETUAL ENROLLMENT IN THE FRIARS LEGION

(Please print, leaving a space between each word.)

Please Enroll:

as a Perpetual Member of the Saint Peter's Friars Legion.

Living_____ Deceased_____

Your Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip Code:

OFFERING: Individual, \$25.00_____
Family, \$100.00_____ (*Immediate family, parents and children*)