



The Franciscan Legionnaire

Newsletter of the Friars Legion of St. Peter's Church in the Loop
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May the Lord Give you Peace!

Lent: A Season for Fasting and Feasting

Lent, the six week season for prayer and fasting and almsgiving, will begin on February 22. Lent is the season of final preparation for Catechumens who will be initiated into the Church by the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) at the Holy Saturday/Easter Vigil Service. Lent is the season for those who are already baptized to prepare for the Renewal of Baptismal Vows at the Easter Vigil Service and at all the masses on Easter Sunday.



Concerning the word Lent, The Catholic Encyclopedia states: "The Teutonic word *Lent*, which we employ to denote the forty days' fast preceding Easter, originally meant no more than the spring season. Still it has been used from the Anglo-Saxon period to translate the more significant Latin term *quadagesima* (French *carême*, [Italian](#) *quaresima*, Spanish *cuaresma*), meaning the "forty days", or more literally the "fortieth day".

When asked how to live Lent, Pope Benedict answered: "It seems to me that the time of Lent should be a time of fasting from words and images, because we need a little silence, a little space, without being constantly bombarded with images. We need to create spaces of silence to open our hearts to the true image, to the true word."

Remember the great question that we asked before Ash Wednesday: What are you giving up for Lent – chocolate, movies, TV?. This is still a good question. The more important question is to ask why do I need to give up something for Lent. For me to give up something is about making room in my heart and in my daily schedule,

for someone whom I have not spent enough good, quality time with – with God, with the Bible, with spiritual reading, with spouse and children, with neighbors, with the poor, with the sick, with my own heart's desires and hungers.

The word Lent comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *Lencten* which means springtime, time for new life and new sources of life. "But I am too busy!" so goes the old excuse. Lent is a time for no excuses for doing what we know that we really need to do and want to do.



Out with the excuses and in with making time for what each of us needs and hungers for.

Maybe I need to give up whatever it is that hinders me from spending quality time with family members. Maybe this is the Lent that I will read the Bible, attend a Bible study, or participate

in daily Mass. Maybe this Lent I will spend fifteen to thirty minutes a day in quiet to listen to

God's voice calling me by name to a deeper relationship. Maybe I need to give up, to fast from certain negative and life-draining actions/attitudes and do the opposite by feasting on virtue, on the good and beautiful. For example:

Fast from judging others.
 Feast on words that affirm others.

Fast from discontentment.
 Feast on gratitude.

Fast from anger.
 Feast on patience.

Fast from pessimism.
 Feast on optimism

Fast from worry.
 Feast on God's Providence

Fast from complaining.
Feast on appreciation.

Fast from bitterness.
Feast on compassion for others.

Fast from discouragement.
Feast on hope.

Fast from suspicion.
Feast on truth.

Fast from idle gossip.
Feast on silence with a purpose.



On Ash Wednesday at St Peter's in the Loop of Chicago, c. 30,000 people will kneel down and present themselves for ashes on their foreheads. Thus they are marked for a 40 day journey of renewal, of conversion, of turning to God and others with greater love. This 2012 Lent – from Ash Wednesday until evening Mass of Holy Thursday – never happened before and never will happen again. Let's make this Lent the best we have ever made.

Shakespeare wrote: "Readiness is All!" Let's prepare and plan for Lent 2012. What do we hope happens this Lent? How do we hope our lives will be different when we celebrate Easter Sunday? What are our hearts' desires for our life – with God, with others, with creation, with ourselves? Let's be prayer partners for each other. Let's pray every day during Lent for every person who reads this Legionnaire. What a source of strength and support to know that so many others are praying for us. (Seven Thousand Legionnaire Newsletters are printed, mailed and picked up in the Lobby of St Peter's.)



Fr Richard Rohr OFM joined the Franciscans of St John the Baptist Province of Cincinnati OH and was ordained. After several years of ministering to youth and the Community of New Jerusalem in Cincinnati, he moved to Albuquerque NM and joined the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province – one of the seven Provinces of the Order of



Friars Minor (OFM) in the United States. There Fr Richard began the Center for Action and Contemplation.

Here in Fr Richard's own words is a description of the history and purpose of the Center:

"The Center for Action and Contemplation began as a tantalizing dream in 1986 during my first year in Albuquerque. By October of 1987 we were ready to put together a newsletter, and Pat Malcolm became the obvious choice for the artist. The cover of the first edition was a drawing of Dorothy Day, one of our many inspirations. The name for the Newsletter is Radical Grace. This name was chosen because it expressed the paradoxical nature of the Center's purpose. We were trying to stand in a middle place, not a stance of mediocrity, but at the center of the cross, where opposites are held together.

Action and contemplation were once thought of as mutually exclusive, but we believed that they must be brought together or neither one would make sense. We felt that we were trying to be radical in both senses of the word, simultaneously rooted in tradition and boldly experimental. One of the expressions of the radical nature of our work was our extensive inclusivity, bridging gaps within the spiritual and justice communities, building a rhythm of contemplative prayer and Zen meditation into our days, and even more fundamentally, believing that external behavior should be connected to and supported by inner guidance.

Another aspect of our radical stance was our belief in the necessary link between art and justice, in an erotic and passionate commitment to life. We wanted not an elite aestheticism but a fiercely grounded faith in the power and beauty to move-and possibly save-the world.

We planted our flag and set out to do something bold and beautiful and meaningful in the world. We believed then, as we do now, that the power to be truly radical comes from trusting entirely in God's grace and that such trust is the most radical action possible. We know one thing for certain: grace has brought us to this place and grace flows in and through and among us. In our best dream, Grace itself does the work; guides our hands and our hearts', motivates our choices. We continue to realize that everything is a gift.

The Mission for the Center is: We are a center for experiential education, rooted in the Gospels, encouraging the transformation of human consciousness through contemplation, and equipping people to be instruments of peaceful change in the world."

St Clare: 800th Anniversary

This year of 2012 marks the 800th Anniversary of the Founding of the Order of Poor Clares by St Clare of Assisi with the guidance and example of St Francis of Assisi. Our General Minister in Rome, Fr Jose Rodriguez Carballo, OFM, wrote a letter to Poor Clares throughout the world.



The Poor Clare Sisters number over 15,000 sisters throughout the world in 16 federations and in over 70 countries. His words are an inspiration and a fount of knowledge about St Clare's spirituality. St Clare died in 1253 in Assisi at the age of 59. The Pope canonized her two years later in 1255. Last month, I included the first part of Fr Jose Carballo OFM's letter to the Poor Clares. Here is the second and concluding part of that letter.

25th Anniversary of the Spirit of Assisi

It is providential that the eighth anniversary coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Spirit of Assisi. The evangelical experience of both Francis and Clare has led John Paul II to choose Assisi as the place to carry out the historic gesture of gathering the Leaders of the world to pray for peace. From this gesture came forth what, from then on, became known as the *Spirit of Assisi*.

We, Franciscans, are born in Assisi, but we are not to consider the *Spirit of Assisi* as a glory of the family, rather as an urgent invitation to offer our contribution and service to build a more peaceful world. And you, Poor Clares, have much to offer because the message of Francis and Clare – as John Paul II said in Assisi in 1993 – can be summed up “in three words of the Gospel today: poverty, peace and prayer”. “Poverty and peace” the Pope continued, “are two requirements of Christ's message, still valid for the world today more than ever.” The Holy Father the concluded by saying that “evangelical poverty is the source of peace.”

This doesn't mean avoiding the complexity of the issues or denying the urgency of profound change. It simply means that the *civilization of love* will not arise unless it is at the center of our cities and unless we have the boldness to be poor and free, and enter the “cloister” with *Lady Poverty* to understand in a new way the “secret of things” and its joyous response to the needs of men.

Conclusion: Francis & Clare

We, Friars Minor, and you, Poor Clares, can never forget one fact, namely, that “one and the same Spirit has brought the Friars and the poor little women out of this world” (2Cel 204).



We have been birthed by the same Spirit who inspired Francis and Clare to live the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, according to a happy expression by John Paul II in 1982, “it is not possible”, he said, “to distinguish these two names: Francis and Clare; these two phenomenon: Francis and Clare; these two legends: Francis and Clare. These two statements: “Francis and Clare.” In fact, both have expressed the original Franciscan Ideal, the complementarity between the goings of Francis and his brothers and the *being* of Clare and the Sisters.

This, then, is about being able to combine both autonomy and reciprocity. This is an aspect we will try to do at the First International Congress of Presidents of the Federations of the OSC and Assistants, from February 5 to 12, 2012. At this point, I would like to renew, also on behalf of the Brothers, Francis' commitment always to have diligent care of and special concern for you, Poor Clares (cf. *Rule of Clare* 6:3-4).

Let me conclude this brief letter for the Feast of St. Clare 2011 by hearkening back to the evening of April 16, 2011, and proposing again the same desires with which I concluded my homily during that special circumstance, namely, that the Eighth Centenary of the Consecration of Saint Clare and the Founding of the Order of the Poor Clares may be a period of grace for the daughters of Saint Clare so that you may know and live your vocation better and be a sign in the world of a God who is love; and for the Friars Minor: may this be a time to intensify their fraternal rapport with the Poor Sisters, so that all may see in Clare “a mirror and an example” of adherence to Christ, our only Lord and Savior.



“May the Lord be always with you, and may you always be with him” (*Blessing of Clare*).

Rome, July 15, 2011

Feast of St. Bonaventure, Doctor of the Church
Fr. José Rodriguez Carballo, ofm
Minister General, OFM

