



The Franciscan Legionnaire

Newsletter of the Friars Legion of St. Peter's Church in the Loop

110 W. Madison St., Chicago, IL 60602 ❖ Phone: 312-372-5111

E-mail: FriarsLegion@aol.com ❖ Web Site: www.stpetersloop.org

May the Lord give you Peace!

By Fr Chuck Faso, OFM (www.frchuckofm.org)

Happy Easter! From Easter Sunday on April 24 to Pentecost Sunday June 24, we celebrate Easter. Alleluia! There were the six weeks of Lenten prayer, almsgiving, and fasting and the celebration of the Triduum (Holy Thursday Evening Mass, Good Friday, Holy Saturday Vigil Service to Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday). And now - The Lord is RISEN! Alleluia! The Lord is TRULY risen! Alleluia! Forty Days of fasting during Lent burst into Fifty Days of feasting and rejoicing during these seven weeks of Easter. We, like Jesus the Christ, were once dead, but now we live forever. Alleluia! Let the Easter-ing continue!



The Cross – The Tau Cross

The cross was the symbol of the most painful and shameful death that could be inflicted on any one. The Romans used crucifixion often, killing hundreds of people at a time. All is changed since Jesus embraced the cross as a sign of his love and compassion for each of us. The Cross now is the sign of victory, of love, of forgiveness, of hope for all who believe that Jesus is Lord. He once was dead but now is risen and living in glory at the right hand of the Holy One.

TAU Cross

The Franciscan Family of Friars, Sisters, and lay Secular Franciscans often wear a Cross, a Tau Cross. St Francis signed a blessing to Brother Leo by using his name and a Tau. Where did this form of the cross come from? What is its meaning? Why is it today a symbol of Franciscans?

Historical Crucifixion of Jesus

The TAU is the more authentic shape of the real cross of the historical Jesus Christ. Ancient Roman texts show that the victim of crucifixion carried the 100-pound horizontal beam of his cross, the patibulum, to which, at the execution site, his arms would be tied or nailed.

Archeological finds of skeletons have shown, by damage to the forearm bones, that nails were inserted just above the wrists so that the bones would support the weight of the body. (Nails through the palms of the hands would be torn out by the weight.). The body would be hauled up on to the upright piece, the stipes, which had been fixed in the ground or was there permanently. The patibulum, the cross beam, rested on top of the stipes, and was held in place by a spike, or in a notch. The resulting shape of the cross is of a horizontal bar on an upright piece -- a T.



The TAU and the Bible

This symbol that looks like a sort of fancy capital letter "T" was originally the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the Old Testament - the Hebrew Scriptures – the letter tau signified the end, or the accomplishment of the revealed word. In contrast, it is the first letter of the Torah – the Jewish name for the first five books (the Pentateuch) of the Old Testament, which make up the Law of Moses.

One of the first references to the symbol of the TAU appears in Ezekiel 9:4. The people were worshipping false gods, even in Jerusalem, in fact even near the Temple. Ezekiel heard the voice of God say "Go all through the city, all through

Jerusalem and mark a TAU (an X, a cross) on the foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of all the filth practiced in it.” So those who showed this mark were those who remained people of God, rejecting all that is false and unclean. Most of the present Christian Symbolism of the TAU comes from the context of this passage.



For Christians the shape of the TAU – that of a cross – has become every precious indeed since Christ fulfilled the plan of God by his death on a cross and his Resurrection, his Triumph over evil. Since all of us come to the glorious fulfillment of the Resurrection only through the cross, it is not surprising to find the early

Christians using this sign, the TAU, frequently. In the catacombs in Rome, many of the funeral name plates have a TAU symbol inscribed in the middle of the name. In 546 Bishop Gall of France organized a procession and painted the TAU on walls and doors in order to stop a plague that was then ravishing the French countryside. To a group of hospital caretakers, founded in 1095 in France, and called Antonites, with Anthony the Hermit (251-356) as their patron, the TAU was a sign of physical and moral health. They put the TAU on top of their staffs and painted it on their habits.

St Francis and the TAU

Significant for us Franciscans is the love St Francis had for this symbol. He had met and worked with the Antonites in 1210 at their leper hospital in Rome, where he would have been very familiar with the symbol. The TAU sign was used also in the Crusades.



Men were going to war under this sign and for Francis the TAU was the symbol for his own Christian battle. He gloried in the words of Pope Innocent III, who at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 said: “Mercy will be given to those who bear the TAU, the mark of a life, penitent and renewed in Christ.”

From then on Francis took the TAU as his own symbol. It was his desire to carry the cross in all of his conduct. The TAU symbolized his true mission: to preach the love of Christ to all, to bring all to penance and conversion, to make sure that the love and compassion of Christ, poured out for all people, did not flow in vain.



St Bonaventure wrote: “This TAU had all the veneration and all the devotion of the Saint. He spoke of the Cross often in order to recommend it and he traced the Tau on himself before beginning each of his actions.”

Thomas Celano, the first biographer of St Francis, tells us the saint used this sign at the end of all his letters and he painted it on the walls of the friars’ dwellings. Proof of all this is still to be seen on the walls and in old manuscripts.

One of the best known manuscripts is the original of the Blessing of Brother Leo. It seems that Brother Leo was beginning to despair of his salvation and was wishing for some comforting words from Francis. Realizing the spiritual sadness Brother Leo was under-going, Francis wrote this blessing from the Book of Numbers for him:

“May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord show his face to you and be merciful to you. May the Lord lift up his face upon you and give you peace.”



Francis then added: “God bless you, Brother Leo,” and sketched a head and drew a TAU over this picture. We can imagine Brother Leo’s joy at seeing himself marked with a TAU, a sign of salvation. Immediately, his fear left him. He wrote under Francis’ signature: “This blessing was given to me, Brother Leo, by Blessed Francis who wrote it in his own hand, and it is also his hand that drew the

head and the TAU.” This parchment can be seen today in the Basilica of St Francis in Assisi.



There are of course numerous illustrations of Francis’ use of and love for the symbol of the TAU. The TAU is simply a symbol of the cross. Gazing on this symbol we hope for salvation and forgiveness, for hope and peace, and we are absolutely assured of mercy and love. But we must sign ourselves with the cross – as

the people of Ezekiel’s day were to be signed with the TAU. Doing this, we show that we reject the false gods of materialism, power, injustice, greed, control, and choose instead the love and mercy of Jesus, the Compassion of God- in the Crib, on the Cross, and on the Altar.

During this Easter Season, may we look up at the Cross and recommit ourselves to life, and to doing all we can so the life that flows from the Cross will heal and free us all.

May the Lord Easter in you and be a Dayspring for any Dimness! Alleluia!

Happy Mother’s Day

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To all Mothers, we say thank you for your love and sacrifices, for being there to wipe a tear and give a hug, to listen to our hurts and hopes. Thanks for your words of encouragement and understanding. We salute you. We honor you. We love you,

living and deceased. We remember you always. May you be blessed now and forever with the fullness of life in the everlasting embrace of God’s love.

Songs for the Month of Mary

Every school day in May, we would bring flowers from home for the May Altar in our classroom. Perhaps you remember these two hymns that we sang ever day in May:

On this day, O beautiful Mother,

On this day we give thee our love.
Near thee, Madonna, fondly we hover,
Trusting thy gentle care to prove.

On this day we ask to share,
Dearest Mother, thy sweet care;
Aid us ere our feet astray
Wander from thy guiding way.



Bring flowers of the rarest

bring blossoms the fairest,
from garden and woodland and hillside and dale;
our full hearts are swelling,
our glad voices telling
the praise of the loveliest flower of the vale!

O Mary we crown thee with blossoms today!
Queen of the Angels and Queen of the May.
O Mary we crown thee with blossoms today,
Queen of the Angels and Queen of the May.

Your Personal Financial Considerations

Retirees face longevity and reinvestment risks. The right strategy can help you enjoy your retirement years. Here are some questions you might want to consider in shaping a financially comfortable retirement.

- 1) What options do I have to maximize Social Security benefits?
- 2) How can I supplement my Social Security and my pension?

3) How can I allocate my investments to help reduce risk while maximizing return potential?

10) Is your Single Sum meeting your legacy needs for family and/or your favorite charity?

4) If you could get a strong income in retirement, how long would you like it to last?

If you would like a free meeting to discuss any of the above considerations or other ideas/strategies you would like to pursue, call Peter Wells at 847-543-4886.

5) How much of your retirement savings can you afford to lose?

Leaving a Legacy for St. Peter Church in the Loop

6) How important are guarantees to you?

St. Peter Church in the Loop is a sacred space where much healing and spiritual comfort and rejuvenation occur. Would you please consider leaving a legacy in your will or estate plan for St. Peter Church in the Loop? Would you like to leave St. Peter Church say \$10,000 or \$25,000 or \$50,000 or more from your current assets or *create* such an asset for a fraction of the ultimate gift? For ideas on how to create your dream gift to St. Peter Church in the Loop call Peter Wells at 847-543-4886.

7) If you could get a guaranteed income for the rest of your life, how much of that income would you like to guarantee?

8) Is income for life that is safe, predictable and guaranteed of prime importance to you?

9) Have you considered strategies to make the most of your “just in case” funds?

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)