

Befriending God



One of the most life enriching experiences we can have is friendship. Being with a favorite person in whom we place our trust and love fills us with delight. It gives us that “warm” feeling that we are of value to another and to ourselves. Our friend cares for us, tolerates our shortcomings and surprises us when we least expect. That person will also tell us our truth and point out when we are treading on dangerous ground. True friends love us for who we are, warts and all.

Now imagine a relationship with God in Jesus who is the ultimate friend. Each day as we begin we tell this friend how much we are looking forward to the day with him. At evening we pause again and tell him how much we enjoyed his presence, felt his loving embrace and say a word of thanks.

The problem of course is life is not always like that and relationships don’t always run well. There are good days and there are painful days and some days we know we should have just stayed in bed. Now if we have a very good friend he or she is the person in whom we can confide all of this. There is no limit to the sharing we can do with that person. Good days and bad days are offered and received with equal enthusiasm. This is real friendship.

If we can trust ourselves to reveal all of who we are to Jesus then we begin to enter into a relationship with him that is destined to deepen. Now that person of Jesus needs to be another who is willing and able to help us along the way. We call this “Spiritual Direction”. Simply defined, it is being with a skilled person to whom we unfold and reveal who we are as we travel on this spiritual journey. The sole purpose of doing this is to learn what is going on in our life with our relationship with Jesus and to stay on the right track. In fact the spiritual director helps us maintain our direction with God and to God. A spiritual director doesn’t so much tell us what to do but rather helps us appreciate who we are in our desire for God. When we deeply want to know and love God then we are choosing the path that is right and life-giving. Spiritual Direction helps us stay on that path and helps us maintain our holy relationship with God in Jesus.

Spiritual direction is ongoing throughout our life, but is of particular importance when we are discerning some major change in life. If we are sensing a vocation of service in the church then this is a perfect time to find a good director and begin to explore this call to be God’s minister; a perfect time to re-direct ourselves to God.

- Friar Mark Steed, OFM Conv.



Friendship

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800 Years of Franciscan Life



Pope Benedict XVI addresses Franciscan men and women at Castel Gandolfo on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the approval of the Rule.

Francis of Assisi's *Testament* is a document that reflects his incredible vision and wisdom. It was probably written over a few days at the end of Francis' life. In that document, Francis says: "And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down, simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me."

In this year of 2009, Franciscan men and women throughout the world celebrate 800 years since Francis of Assisi first received approval of our way of life in 1209 from Pope Innocent III at the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. From April 15-19, Franciscan men and women gathered in Assisi to celebrate this anniversary. In an audience at Castel Gandolfo on April 18, Pope Benedict XVI commented on Francis' words to "live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel." In that audience for Franciscan men and women, Pope Benedict said, "And here we come to the point that surely lies at the heart of our meeting. I would summarize it as follows: the Gospel as a

rule of life. 'The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this. To observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:' this is what Francis writes at the beginning of his Rule. He defined himself entirely in the light of the Gospel. This is his charm. This is the enduring relevance. . . So the Poverello has become a living gospel, able to attract to Christ men and women of all ages, especially young people, who prefer radical idealism to half-measures. The Bishop of Assisi, Guido, and then Pope Innocent III recognized in the proposal of Francis and his companions the authenticity of the Gospel, and knew how to encourage their commitment for the good of the Church."

What is critical for Franciscan men and women to this day is to live the Gospel within the communion of the Church. This was very important for Francis of Assisi. During his time, there were other religious groups and movements that were developing that were opposed to the Church. Francis wanted to live the Gospel in communion with the Church and also for the good of the Church. For more than 800 years, Franciscan men and women have strived to live the Gospel in communion for the Church and "for the good of the Church." Our life of fraternity is not just for us, just as Francis is not just for us. Who we are and what we do in the Gospel life within the communion of the Church is for the good of the Church and the good of the world. Like Francis, we wish to embrace Christ crucified. Like Francis, we want to be witnesses to the beauty of God. With Francis, we wish to rejoice in the humility and charity of a God Who loves us so. As we have done for 800 years, so we continue in the love of the Lord as brothers and sisters.



Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome

Friar Basil Heiser Has Died



Friar Basil Heiser

On January 12, 2009, Friar Basil Heiser, a former minister general of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual died at 100 years of age. He had celebrated his centennial just eight days before in Rome where he had lived since 1960.

A native of Indiana, Friar Basil had spent 80 years of his life as a Conventual Franciscan friar. He spoke about how being a friar was what God had called him to do. Friar Basil's tenure as minister general of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual lasted from 1960 to 1972. This was an exciting time for the Roman Catholic Church, which reexamined its relationship with the world during the 1962 to 1965 Second Vatican Council. Friar Basil participated in the Council. He argued that the Church needed a strong social ministry.

As the years went by, Friar Basil never considered retirement. He was a man who in true Franciscan fashion based his life on service. After his tenure as minister general expired, he worked as under-secretary to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and as an adviser to all friars. He was also a great storyteller. Around the time of his 100th birthday he sat down with Friar Jim Kent for a selection of interviews. In his steady and compassionate voice he told Friar Jim that he freely put himself in

God's hands. On January 12 God called Friar Basil to eternal rest. His brothers in Rome and around the world will continue to think of him fondly.

Listen to Friar Jim Kent's interview with Friar Basil Heiser:
www.franciscans.org/FriarBasilHeiserRIP.cfm



Friars Meet in Costa Rica



Friars discussing the current state of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual at a meeting in Costa Rica

The Conventual Franciscan friars live all over the world fulfilling a variety of ministries. They are however brothers and like all brothers they frequently come together to pray, reflect on their experiences, and plan for the future. From January 28 to February 1, 2009, the representative friars of the Federation of Latin American Conventuals (FALC) and the Conventual Franciscan Conference (CFC) did precisely that. Their meeting point was the Conventual Franciscan friary and retreat center in Alajuela, Costa Rica.

FALC as the name suggests represents every Conventual Franciscan territory in the Latin American world. The CFC on the other hand covers the United States, Canada, England, and Ireland. Members of both conferences fill leadership positions in their provinces.

Friar Marco Tasca, the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual and assistants general Friar John-Joseph Dolan and Friar Jorge Fernandez attended the Alajuela meeting along with other conference members. The first day, the group spent in recollection and prayer. The following three days were ones of animated discussion about the state



(left to right) Friars J-J Dolan and Jorge Fernandez

of the order in the various represented jurisdictions. Some highlights included the friars present speaking about their respective provinces and various ministries. Friar Michael Lorentsen – the vocation director for North America’s Immaculate Conception Province – also talked about vocation promotion and vocation discernment in the United States and Canada.

The gathering in Alajuela left all the participants energized and excited. The future for the Order of Friars Minor Conventual is bright. And when Friar Marco Tasca addressed his brothers about fraternal life and service, he reminded them of all the possibilities they have as friars to influence the world positively.

FrancisCorps Wins Award



The staff at FrancisCorps – the Franciscan lay volunteer program – started 2009 on a high note; the group discovered that the US Local Business Association from Washington, D.C. had awarded FrancisCorps the Best of Syracuse Award in the category of social services.

Based in Syracuse, New York, FrancisCorps is all about service. Run by three Franciscans, Brother Jim Moore, Sister Marcia Barry, and Sister Ann Kenyon along with administrative assistant Maria T. Pallone, a lay person, FrancisCorps provides an opportunity for recent college graduates to spend one year of their lives together in a community serving others. Depending on their qualifications, volunteers work either in Syracuse or Costa Rica. They fulfill a variety of ministries which range from staffing a food pantry, working as a social outreach coordinator with school-aged children, working with developmentally disabled adults, working in a medical clinic, etc.

At FrancisCorps volunteers focus on the humanity of the people they are dealing with and not on incomes. This approach reflects the wider realignment of our culture today. The pursuit of money for its own sake – as events from the last year or two demonstrate – has left many nations in need and uncertain of what the future will hold.

More information on FrancisCorps at www.franciscorps.com.

Friar Jude Winkler is Blogging



Friar Jude Winkler

Friar Jude Winkler’s ministry is evangelization. This ministry is one of physical endurance because it involves constant travel. Friar Jude spends his time in churches, parish halls, retreats centers, and elsewhere preaching the Gospel, celebrating mass, and generally reinforcing the faith of others. Friar Jude is also a renowned author, having published 150 articles on the Scriptures as well as 25 children’s books.

Now Friar Jude is adding a new component to his ministry, a blog called *The Good News Note: Reflections from the Road*. In the blog, Friar Jude will share with us his discoveries from the various places where he preaches. Book reviews, reflections on topics of theology, and other features will make *The Good News Note: Reflections from the Road* an exciting read to which readers will return time and time again.

Connect to Friar Jude’s blog and those of other Franciscan friars at <http://www.franciscans.org/bloggingfriars.cfm>.

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