

OUR LADY OF THE VALLEY PARISH CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS – OCT 4TH, 2021

If we were to go into all the ways the spirit of Francis & Clare have touched our lives, we would be here all night; so we want to reflect for a few minutes on two of their writings, a poem and a letter, which have been set to music.

[Peter plays melody of *All Creatures of Our God and King*/then Refrain of *Sacred Creation*].



The songs based on the writings of Francis and Clare reveal the essence of their inner lives of prayer and service.

I just played two settings of the Cantic of Brother Sun, which Francis composed at the end of his life. He wrote this poem while he was ill & St. Clare was caring for him at San Damiano, the first church he rebuilt & gave to her for her community. We sang the first one as our entrance, this is the 2nd:

Sacred the **land**, sacred the **water**, Sacred the **sky** holy & true.

Sacred all **life**, sacred **each other**, all reflect **God** who is good.

[Peter] All praise be yours through Brother **Sun**, bearing a likeness to you most High One.

Sister **Moon** & **Stars** who are precious, splendid, ride your glorious sky .

[Anna] Brother **wind** & **air** that pervades Vary their moods to sustain all you've made.

Sister **water**, useful & pure, Lowly, freely sharing her life.

[both] Sacred the Land...

[Peter] Through brother **fire** you brighten the night, Strong & robust, yet playful & bright.

Sister **earth**, our mother who nurtures, Feeding, yielding flower & herb.

[both] All praise be yours through those who **forgive** enduring in peace in You they shall live

Sister **Death** whom none can outrun embracing, rebirthing **all** who choose love.

On this Feast of St. Francis, we want to reflect with you using **3** words & **2** songs. **Sacred Creation**, the musical setting for the poem Francis wrote that we just sang – was composed in the 20th century by a Friar from California, Rufino Zaragosa. [We'll sing yet another setting at the end of this Mass.

The **3** words are **Creation, Compassion, & Contemplation**.

St. Francis reveals the deep truth that the land, the water, the air & all creatures are sacred. He underlines our connection to them by calling them his brothers & sisters. Pope Francis found in this cantic the inspiration for his Encyclical *Laudato Si*, [that's Praise be to you, my Lord in Italian]. The Pope challenges us & the whole human race to care for the earth, our common home.

The words of the song, "**sacred all life, sacred each other, all reflect God who is good**" are an invitation to us to recognize God's presence reflected in all of creation. They are also a call to **compassion** for all creatures & a challenge to respect & care for **human** life from its beginnings to our last breath; To care especially for the neglected, the poor, the sick, the incarcerated, & those oppressed because of their race, gender or sexual orientation.

If St. Francis were here in person, he would be challenging all of us to work to reverse climate change, to end racism, clericalism & most of the other "isms" in our 21st century.

He would be doing it the way he did it in his own time, not by ranting & raving & condemning but by preaching Good News & walking in the footprints of Christ by loving as he loved. Following the words of St. Paul, "**Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.**"



[Anna]

The wellspring of the energy & impact of St. Francis on his world & ours is the **3rd word, Contemplation.** It is said that Francis spent **1/3** of his life praying in caves & hermitages, another **3rd** in active ministry – caring for lepers & preaching the Gospel of Christ & **1/3** as a pilgrim travelling between the 2; Travelling throughout Italy, to Syria to confront the crusaders & meet the Sultan, facing what he thought was to be a meeting with Sister Death & encouraging his Friars to go out 2 by 2 to spread a message of love & reconciliation to the whole world.

Fr. Tom (on the left) serving as Christ served at the dinner after the Mass

But the icon of this 3rd word, “**contemplation.**” who has inspired us & so many in our world is

--**St. Clare**, the co-founder of the **Franciscan Movement.**

Peter & I would like to sing Briege O’Hare, an Irish Poor Clare’s musical setting of the words

that **St. Clare** wrote to **St. Agnes of Prague.**

Gaze Upon the Lord (Briege O’Hare, OSC)

GAZE UPON THE LORD; GAZE UPON HIS FACE.

GAZE UPON THE ONE WHO HOLDS YOU IN HIS EMBRACE.

GAZE UPON HIS LIFE; GAZE UPON HIS LOVE;

GAZE UPON HIS COMING POOR FROM HEAV’N ABOVE.

LOOK UPON YOUR LORD; LOOK UPON HIS WAY.

LOOK UPON HIS HEART WHICH OPENS TO EACH DAY.

THOUGH HE WAS DESPISED, THE LOWEST OF OUR RACE,

LOOK UPON HIS SACRED CROSS WHICH BRINGS LIFE AND GRACE.

IF YOU OPEN TO LIFE’S PAIN, THEN WITH HIM YOU SHALL REIGN

AND ALLOW YOUR HEART TO WEEP, THEN WITH HIM YOU’LL REJOICE.

OPEN TO HIS CROSS THE WOUNDS OF EACH DAY’S LOVE,

THEN YOU’LL KNOW THE SPLENDOR OF HIS KINGDOM ABOVE.

[Anna] St. Clare & contemplation leading to action

I first heard this song while I was on Sabbatical in Rome from Briege O'Hare, a Poor Clare sister who spent a week with us. She was the one who composed it. The way it portrayed what she believed so moved me that I couldn't wait to let Fr. Peter hear it when I got home.

But Peter found it was hard to listen to because of the poor quality of the recording. It took over a year for Peter to really hear it. To me it summed up my whole life & I could see in it in the major themes of our missions & retreats.

All that I really had to do was to deeply GAZE upon Jesus –his face,
–the way He lived & loved –how he didn't "hold onto" or "cling to" anything in His Life.

–the way He opened up his heart to whatever each day brought no matter how badly those around him interpreted the events & people in his life. The CROSS brought all He needed of "life & grace", even though it seemed to contradict reality.

All we need to do is to be open to "the wounds of each day's love" & we'd "know"
What He was trying to teach us with his life.

[and anyone who truly loves knows that it involves pain]

Nothing was too difficult to handle if we 'really' looked at Jesus.

–even if the whole world seemed to be against us.

Agnes followed **Clare's** advice –& it **worked**, ...**but...** it wasn't easy.

I learned how to sing that song from that '**not-so-good**' tape and made it my own. Peter even got to like it & use it in his prayer.

How has the spirit of Francis & Clare touched my Life?

Peter - After Irene passed through in August, 2011, my world changed overnight. My house by the creek became my house **in** the creek. I lost almost everything in the doublewide trailer which had been my home & the site of Bethany Ministries which Sr. Anna & I began in 1995. St. Francis, imitating Christ, let go of possessing anything & gave his whole life to following his way. On that Monday, I felt more like a follower of Francis than I had ever felt since I became a Franciscan Friar in 1968. The shock of losing so much, made me aware of how unimportant most 'stuff' is. And it opened me to the richness of sharing the loss of so many in this parish & this county. It led me to begin new relationships while deepening those we already had. I had tried to show the **compassion** of Christ throughout my life, but this was a time when I deeply felt that Jesus had given me one heart with the lowly, beginning with myself.



Supper after the Feast Day Mass

How has the spirit of Francis & Clare touched your Life?

General Intercessions - [ANNA](#)

Francis revered **all** creation / as a reflection of the Creator; /

May we respect all forms of life, / especially those living creatures which depend on our care; /

We pray to the Lord. -LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER

Clare courageously / left **all** to follow the Gospel, / & /

became the co-founder / of the Franciscan Movement; /

Bless all who follow / the Spirit of Clare & Francis / in their efforts to live the Gospel of Christ. /

We pray to the Lord. -LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER

Francis found Jesus in the poor /

Move us to action / which springs from compassion / seeking communion & solidarity /
with the poor, / the humble & the lowly. /

We pray to the Lord. -LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER

Clare & Francis made their relationship / with God & Christ central / through their prayer; /

Keep our hearts free from clutter / so that they may be centered on you. /

We pray to the Lord. -LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER

Francis & Clare radiated seraphic joy / born of love for you; /

Inflame our hearts, / make them big enough / to embrace **all** of creation & each other
as our sisters & brothers. /

We pray to the Lord. -LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER

Francis called Lady Poverty his bride; /

Free us from the lure of consumerism / that we may live /
the simplicity to which / the Gospel calls us. /

We pray to the Lord. -LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER

PETER

Let us pray in the very words of St. Francis

Almighty, eternal, just, & merciful God, / grant us the grace to do for you alone /
what we know / you want us to do, / & always to desire / what pleases you. /

Thus, inwardly cleansed, / interiorly enlightened & inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, /
may we be able to follow in the footprints / of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. /

And by your grace alone, / may we make our way to you, Most High, who live & rule /
in perfect Trinity & simple Unity, / & are glorified forever & ever. / Amen. /

Link to video

Feast of St. Francis. October 4, 2021. Our Lady of the Valley Parish, Middleburgh NY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spnK7eLqb3A&t=38s> Feast of St. Francis – part 1. Entrance to mid homily.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOstdWTi81A&t=35s> Feast of St. Francis – part 2, End of homily to closing hymn.