

FMA

FOCUS



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Franciscan Mission Associates
Mt. Vernon, N.Y. 10551

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America



Virtue: Joy

The most visible sign of the dedicated Christian is joyfulness. Yet how often we Christians give the appearance of being sober and solemn, harried, preoccupied and gloomy in our outlook. Pope Francis tells us often that joy is the root of our faith and it is up to us to nurture the joy and not the grudges, the whining or the negative thoughts. During recent remarks Pope Francis reminded us the path to true devotion, "Joy, prayer and gratitude are three attitudes that prepare us to live Christmas in an authentic way."

Joy of heart does not depend wholly on our condition in life, but more on our inner attitude. God wants us to be happy. "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice you just; exult, all you upright of heart." (Ps. 32:11) Let's remember St. Teresa of Avila said, "a sad saint is a sorry saint." ■

FACING OUR FINAL HOURS



This season forcefully reminds us of the inescapable fact of death. Not just the dying of the leaves and the welcoming of winter, but the celebration of All Souls' Day in which we commemorate the faithful departed. Because of our faith, and our knowledge of the truth of Christ, we should not fear our last hours on earth. It is important to remember that God did not create death – "God did not make death, nor does He rejoice in the destruction of the living. For He fashioned all things that they might have being and the creatures of the world are wholesome" (Wisdom 1:13-14). Instead it is God

who shows us death is not the end, but the beginning.

St. Francis shows, in his last moments, the way to face our final days and hours. Stories abound regarding St. Francis's last days and how he embraced death even encouraging those around him to call it "Sister Death" – a close and beloved relative. St. Francis encouraged us to not live in fear of death or hatred but instead to look beyond our mortal lives to the eternal. To see that when "Sister Death" greets us we will go home to our Lord who loves us and created us. It will be the end of all earthly pain and anguish and we will be filled with the beauty of our Lord.

Easier said than done for many. It is with great difficulty we give up the mortal, or earthly way of thinking about death, or losing our loved ones. This month we should pray to strengthen our commitment to the Lord and to a fully holy life, filled with joy.

Pope Benedict reminded us that Heaven is not an imaginary place but it is instead "God himself." In an early morning Mass in 2012, Pope Benedict also reminded the faithful that "The

Blessed Mother continues, always, especially in difficult hours of trial to watch over her children." And that her assumption into Heaven reminds us that "our whole being is destined for the fullness of life, that one who lives and dies in love for God and for one's neighbor will be transfigured into the image of the glorious body of the risen Lord." Life everlasting, in the company of our Lord is our final destination and our continued faith and devotion will get us there. ■

Remember...

Both in life and in death, we belong to the Lord (Romans 14: 8)

You can continue to carry on the work of the Missions and the people they serve by remembering them in your estate plans. These legacies of love can be made in many different ways to fit your individual circumstances. Consider making a bequest of whatever you wish to: Franciscan Mission Associates, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598. Or, if you wish additional information about making a will, please feel free to contact:

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Please address all correspondence to Father Robert, O.F.M., at P.O. Box 598, Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10551. Please send changes of address six weeks in advance; if possible include your mailing label, and give both old and new address.

Living in God's Kingdom Each Day

So often when we pray, at Mass or on our own, we recite well-worn words like “Thy Kingdom come,” a petition on our lips each time we offer the Lord’s Prayer. This distinct prayer looks to the end times when the earth will be transformed. God’s reign will be one of peace and joy, of truth and justice universally established forever. It is a pledge to welcome God’s Kingdom and it is our uttering of our own hopes and pleas that we too will be welcomed into God’s kingdom.

How different that is from the world we see in the daily headlines, or in the news. They are all conflict and confusion, including families being torn apart, migrants fleeing war, death and destruction. Or the stories remind us not all are heeding the Word of God, some are consumed by the material world and its fleeting satisfactions our world is steeped in scandals, bribery murder and every crime. It is often almost defeating. How can I, one person, manage to make a dent in the world’s most painful

problems and sorrows? It’s enough sometimes to throw up your hands and give in to the lawlessness misery. We see suffering and pain, and we are, for the most part, comfortable in our warm beds, with full stomachs. But there is something each individual can do to assuage the pain and to make the world more reflective of His vision. We can best advance the coming of God’s rule (which in essence has already come with the victory of Christ over sin and death) by our own adherence to His example. The Kingdom of God is within you. Christ assures us. Our cooperation with God’s grace establishes His kingdom within us, and in our own area of influence. It grows silently and obscurely like a seed in the ground and like yeast in the loaf. As the root of the tree can scratch the hardest stone, so does God’s Rule overcome all obstacles. Prayer, patience and following God’s will – three things we can do right now, to ease the life of someone miles away. ■

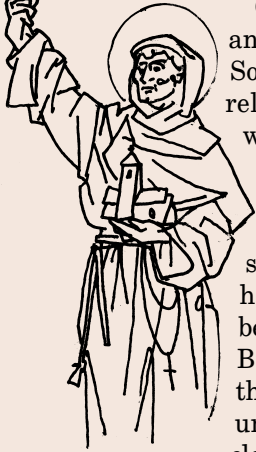
Father Roberto Siguere, O.F.M. Receives Award

Recently, Father Roberto Siguere, O.F.M., received a special award from the municipality of San Lucas Sacatepequez where he was stationed for four years 1984-1987. The award presented by the mayor and his council, included a plaque dedicated to Fr. Roberto that proclaims he has been declared an “ambassador of peace.” Underneath the inscription reads “for his great work of evangelization and



for his ceaseless work for the reconstruction of our parish church for the benefit of our people.” This refers especially to his instrumental work after the earthquake of 1976. In attendance among the many people of the town were his family and various board members of Valley of the Angels and our Franciscan sisters from the Valley of the Angels. ■

LEARNING TO LET THE LORD LEAD



God knows best and knows all. Sometimes it is a relief to say these words out loud. We so often try to wrestle our lives into some straight line, some hard worn road we believe is our path. But, more often than not, there are unforeseen obstacles, tragedies, suf-

ferings, and even joys that are in store for us. No one's life illustrates that more than our own beloved St. Anthony of Padua. His short time on earth and missionary labors show us in great detail how we are not often the master of our own ship. And that is ok, in fact it is great. We need to rely on God's wisdom and mercy to allow us to advance the coming of God's reign on earth.

In his humility, St. Anthony did not know in advance how the Lord meant to use him. How could he have anticipated the countless shrines and churches that today honor his educated life? Never could he have imagined the differences his example and prayers would make for so many thousands of people seven

centuries after his death. Nor can any of us imagine how the Lord will bring about the Kingdom of God out of our own life and work. What we do know is that the coming of the Kingdom does not include bells and whistles.

Instead Pope Francis said the Kingdom is "humble, hidden and in that way it grows." The Pope encourages us to pray to gain wisdom and insight, "How is my relationship with the Holy Spirit, the one who makes the kingdom of God grow inside me? Do I truly believe the Kingdom of God is among us, is hidden, or do I like a big show better?" Lets spend these long winter months opening our hearts to St. Anthony and ask his help in becoming the people God wants us to be. Here is a prayer from our website to use as a guide.

All we can do is to love God, do our best to follow Christ and leave all the rest in the Lord's hands.

Kind and gracious St. Anthony, hear my petition. Bring me the strength and courage you gave to those who heard you preach and teach in your time on earth.

Quiet my heart, still my fears. Help me become steadfast, strong and believing so that I can wait in joyful hope for the knowledge to understand and do what God wills for me. Hear my humble plea. Amen. ■

VOCATIONS

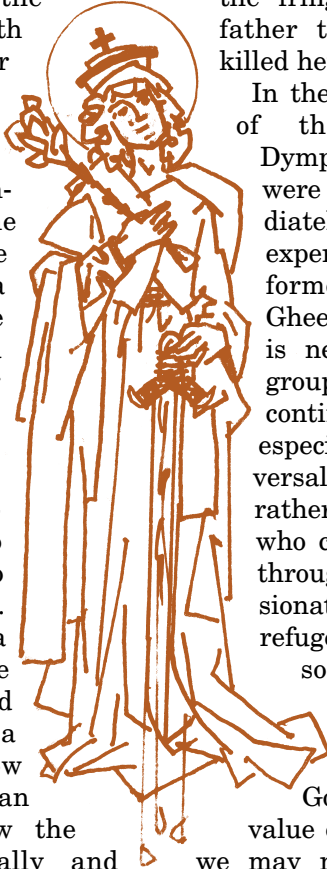
Please pray for the young people at home and in the missions who are ready and eager to dedicate their lives to God and the spiritual welfare of His people.

Often all they really need is the special courage to hear God's call and to answer Him. Please join us in daily prayer, especially during the seasons of Advent and Christmas, for God's grace in providing devoted brothers, sisters, priests, and religious for Christ's work in today's world.

For further information please write Fr. Robert, O.F.M. at
Franciscan Mission Associates, P.O. Box 598, Dept. 2185, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

The Valiant and Welcoming St. Dymphna

St. Dymphna was the Christian daughter of a 7th century pagan king. Her mother was a Christian mother of noble background who saw beauty and promise in her daughter. Dymphna, when she entered adolescence, chose Jesus above all and took a vow of chastity. She is the patron of the nervous and emotionally disturbed. Her short life was filled with such turmoil and fear. After the death of her mother, Dymphna quickly discovered she had few places to turn. She had to learn to trust her confessor, St. Gerebernus. Dymphna could not think of her home as a safe place so she fled across the sea; she became a refugee in what is now modern Belgium. As an outcast herself she drew the marginalized, the mentally and physically disabled to her. During that time in history, mentally ill or physically challenged individuals were not helped, they were simply cut off from society and left to fend for themselves. Many of these outcasts came to the oratory Dymphna and her companions built in Gheel, where she, her confessor and companions lived as hermits. According to lore, she and her tiny band of resisters found many followers and continued outreach to those on

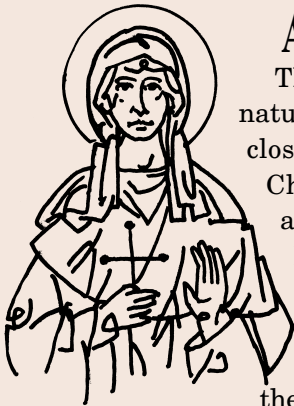


the fringes of society until her father tracked them down and killed her.

In the 13th century, the bodies of the murdered princess Dymphna and her companions were discovered. Almost immediately the sick and disabled experienced miracles at those former gathering places in Gheel. St. Dymphna's presence is needed even today. Those groups that were marginalized continue to need our attention, especially refugees who are universally regarded as a problem rather than as human persons who can know the love of God through the ministry of compassionate people. Pray daily for refugees. Pray for all those in society who are seen as "less than perfect" and pray for their caretakers, like St. Dymphna who followed God's will and respected the value of each human life. While we may not have the courage of Dymphna or her resolute faith right now, we can ask her to intercede on our behalf when dealing with difficult and anxiety inducing episodes. And we can pray for those around the world who deal with strife and pain and danger on a daily basis. ■



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A SEASON OF THANKS AND GIVING

The end of nature's cycle, the close of the Church's year and the feasts of November all coincide. Also this month we focus on the examples and the powerful aid of All Saints who now intercede for us in the joy of their heavenly happiness. One November saint who exemplified gratitude is Saint Elizabeth of Hungary whom we celebrate November 17th.

Elizabeth was born a noblewoman in 1207 in Bratislava, Hungary. As was the culture at the time she was betrothed at a young age to Ludwig of Thuringia – in Germany and they were wed when she was a teen and he in his early 20s. During their short marriage, her husband supported Elizabeth's devotion to prayer and charity. She was truly grateful for her abundance. She used her funds to feed the poor and even built a hospital at the foot of the steep hill near her castle so the sick could be treated without any more physical exertion. One of the more striking stories about St. Elizabeth is that she put a man with leprosy in her bed to care for him. Her husband, who had his limits, was upset – he was concerned about the health of their family. When Ludwig pulled back the covers to expose the

man – it is said he saw instead the crucified Christ, a testament to God's relationship with Elizabeth and hers with Him. By all accounts Ludwig and Elizabeth's marriage was happy and they had three children. And when he suffered an early death, from the plague in 1227, Elizabeth turned totally to God. A year after her husband's death, after proper burial and providing for her children, she joined the Third Order of St. Francis. She dedicated her remaining years to austerity and service working in a hospice for the sick, the poor and the old. Her love for Christ and for her departed husband was the fuel she needed to continue her work. She was indeed grateful for the chance to serve and to have had such a life of riches. The work was difficult and she became ill just three years after her husband passed and she joined him at the young age of 24 having helped so many in her short life. Elizabeth was so grateful for the life she was given. She was generous with herself and her resources until the end of her life.

Let us make sure during this month of abundance and especially on Thanksgiving, we in America, join our friends and fellow citizens in the civic observance of gratitude to God for the favors and blessings we have so bountifully received this year. Above all, we thank God for the gift of faith, which enables us to see ourselves and our life in true perspective. ■

Director's Letter

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.
FRANCISCAN FRIARS/P.O. BOX 598/MOUNT VERNON, N.Y. 10551-0598
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Dear friend of the Franciscans,

November is the month for mourning but also a month for joy. Our remembering our loved ones gone from this world brings sorrow, but our knowing they are with God brings us great joy.

*“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”
(Jn. 11:25-26).*

Traditionally the church has dedicated November to the holy souls. But let us not decide that it is only during November that we pray for the faithful departed. Let’s remember during each Mass there is time set aside to pray for our departed brothers and sisters in Christ.

And while we pray for our own family and friends, why don’t we broaden our prayer circle. Let us include departed religious including popes, bishops, priests and nuns, especially those who taught us long ago in elementary school. And lastly, we need to pray for the forgotten ones, those who are not remembered by family or anyone. These need our prayers, sometimes the most, to finish that journey into eternal life.

Know that we at Franciscan Mission Associates hold all our friends and benefactors, living and deceased, in grateful and prayerful remembrance.

God bless you during this Advent season,

Fr. Robert, OFM

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

BROTHER LIFE AND SISTER DEATH

Fr. Albert, O.F.M.

In these 18 years of its existence dozens of elderly from all over Olancho and from other parts of Honduras have come to live with us in our home for the aged. Most have never married and have never had children; others have children living in the United States. Still others had kids who have forgotten completely about their parents, and that is exactly why we started this home for the aged. To cater to those people who end up alone in life with no one to take care of them.

One of the things that has always caught my attention working with the elderly is the fact that life and death are so very present in our home. There comes a week when we have three or four funerals, then comes six months when nobody dies and we seem to forget all about it, then again, sister death comes visiting and another two or three of our brothers leave for their last voyage. We, as Franciscans, seem to have a different outlook about death. I remember when we were in the seminary this sounds weird, we even used to share a bottle of good Maltese wine during supper after someone died. We were happy to know for sure that one of our brothers is somewhere up there with our father, St. Francis.

About a week ago, Servando, one of our residents at the home for the aged, felt that his time on this planet was coming to an end. He was 87 years old and had been living with us for the last nine years. As usual, one of the Franciscan nuns who work at the home asked him if he wanted to go to confession. Gladly he accepted. I heard his confession, administered the sacraments of the sick and even gave him Holy Communion. He then told me that

before dying he wanted to talk to me personally. Everyone left the room and he even asked me to close the door. I sat on his bed; he took hold of my hand and what he told me I will always remember until the day I die. "Padre Alberto, before I die I wanted to thank you. When I came here nine years ago, dirty, hungry and so very alone, you never even asked me any questions. You accepted me for what I am...A person. You bathed me, you fed me and you even gave me a decent bed. How about if I were a thief, a crook or even a murderer? In this place I found love and happiness like I never had them in my life. And so, before I die, I wanted to thank you, rest assured that from heaven I will be praying for you and the nuns and for all my brothers and sisters who live in this beautiful place."



To tell you the truth, I had hot tears running down my face. I leaned on his bed and we embraced. It was the best hug I ever experienced in my life. It was the fierce hug of a happy dying man.

I stood up and blessed Servando for the last time and as soon as I did that Servando closed his eyes and started his trip toward eternity. Believe me he had such a nice smile on his face!

I spent a long time by Servando's bed...remembering, going over in my mind what he had just told me, his very last testament. Once again, sister death had visited our home for the elderly but what a beautiful visit.

Maybe, after all, St. Francis was right when he called death his sister. The very sister we all have to meet one day. ■

LEAGUE OF ANGELS

Fr. Michael, O.F.M.



Karla had just been offered the exclusive privilege of beginning a new and unprecedented baseball program here in Guatemala under the auspices of a Major League Baseball course called "Coach Development Program." As she drove, her mind raced and then she decided to pray about where the best place to begin would be. Immediately, Valley of the Angels entered her mind and she felt God inviting her to ask our very own angels at Valley to have the honor of receiving this unique opportunity! Whether it was Fr. Rocco himself who interceded from heaven to finally implement his dream or just another extraordinary grace from God to bless his children, we will never know, but we are delighted that Karla was inspired to ask us first.

Through their collaboration with the Guatemalan Federation of Baseball, Karla (MLB and CDP Graduate), and Cathy, are on a mission to take baseball in Guatemala to a new level by 2030. They are both the real movers and shakers behind the founding of the Baseball Formation and Education Program here at Valley this year.

The program consists of regimented practice routines that not only aim at enhancing Valley's primary school students' baseball skills but seeks to cultivate and instill Gospel values for life. Ample research and experience show that practicing a sport is an integral development component for any child that can be used as a means to teach fundamental principles and values, such as discipline, commitment, fraternity, punctuality, honesty, working as a team and perseverance. The important lessons of winning with humility and gratitude and losing with dignity are instrumental skills for maturity. All of these lessons can easily be sustained and applied in everyday life. In addition to the obvious benefit of developing their physical motor skills and mental abilities, and nurturing virtues, we also hope this program will open scholarship opportunities for our students' future.

We are especially blessed to have two special and highly sought after coaches, Jorge and Fabian. While Cathy and Karla volunteer their time to spearhead the general operations of the program, Jorge serves as the head coach and prepares the day-to-day work plans. Each of them are personally invested, enthusiastically committed and highly effective in motivating and encouraging the children to continue to enhance their baseball skills on a weekly basis.



We have already seen so much fruit from this program. Luz, one of the younger girls, is a great example as she is learning to give the best of herself on and off the field.

Andréé, a second grader, is another good example. He came into the program with challenging circumstances at home, and initially had some real issues. In a short time however, he has shown great improvement and really turned it around. In particular, he has responded very well to the male coaches who serve as good and much-needed male role models, giving students boundaries and ample structure within the context of discipline with love.



Another beautiful example is Eduardo, who is so beloved by all the staff, that they have nicknamed him “the shadow” because of his propensity to stick so close to the coaches. As soon as the recess bell rings, you can be sure Eduardo is the first one asking “Can I get to bat, can I catch the ball, can I play please?”

One of the more heart warming experiences has been that of Alexander, a new first grade boy at Valley, who has a speech impediment that makes it difficult for him to express himself. During the very first day of training, Alexander was attached to the fence of the field and the only thing he said was “I want to go home, I want to go home.” But within a very short time, became involved during a game and became eager to learn everything he could.



These stories all share a common thread – they show the impact and effectiveness that love alone can bring. While this prestigious program consists of a high caliber proficient team of dedicated coaches, it is really fueled and powered by the love that is transmitted personally, heart to heart. This is what ultimately affirms the human dignity of the children and reminds them of their inestimable value so that they rediscover the truth of their God – given identity as children of God. ■

Words Worth Noting



Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.

Pierre Teilard de Chardin

Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life is a hero to me.

Fred Rogers

When the heart is right the mind and body will follow.

Coretta Scott King

It's not what you look at that matters, it is what you see.

Henry David Thoreau

When things go wrong don't go with them.

Elvis Presley

I'm not funny. What I am is brave.

Lucille Ball

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test his character, give him power.

Abraham Lincoln

We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become.

Clare of Assisi

A fallen leaf is nothing more than a summer's wave goodbye.

Unknown

You can't go to Heaven hating somebody. Forgive now. Be compassionate now.

Mother Angelica

Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Franciscan Friars,

I thank you so much for the box you sent to our Catholic Ministry. Everything was perfect. The calendars we requested were wonderful! Our inmates will have smiles on their faces as we humbly give them a small gift, especially because it is a surprise. Thank you again in Christ's Holy Name.

M.R.T.
Lake City, FL

Dear Father,

Thank you for your prayers for me as I celebrate my 75th birthday. My special saint is St. Anthony.

Thanks again,
A.P.
Phoenix Township, AR

Dear Father Robert,

On behalf of the residents at Willowbrook Court Medical, I'd like to give you a big heartfelt thank you for the St. Anthony Chaplets.

Each resident was so appreciative in receiving them.

Thank you again,
C.M.
Boca Raton, FL

Dear Father Robert,

So love your FOCUS coming to our home, always look forward to it. Each and every page delights my reading soul. Thank you for being a wonderful servant of God to and for His people.

Yours in our loving and forgiving Lord, Jesus Christ, and his loving Mother, Mary.

E.N.
Huntington Beach, CA

Dear Father Robert,

I want to thank St. Anthony in answering my prayers for my brother's special intention - it was granted and answered. I have another intention, I have to have surgery and I am asking for prayers that my operation is a success without complications. I do not want to be a burden to my brothers or daughter because they need to work. Please keep me in your prayers for my intentions.

A.W.
Fort Washington, PA

JUST FOR TODAY

The sweet old prayer *Just for Today* sums up very well our main job as followers of Christ. It reminds us of Christ's advice not to be anxious or worried but instead, with his guidance to be present in the moment and live for today. Presented both as a hymn or a prayer, it is widely quoted on the Internet and abridged. But even with its many different compositions the theme remains the same. Be present – live your best faith-filled Christian life today.

*Lord, for tomorrow and its needs
I do not pray;
keep me, my God, from stain of sin,
just for today.*

How often have we made long term New Year's resolutions, or Lenten promises of abstinence that we have failed to follow through? We pursued a vision that is sometimes impossible. Instead, this prayer and our Lord's own words ask that we focus on today's sin, today's transgression. "Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself." (Mt. 6:33-34) In a way, it is a relief. Instead of being overwhelmed, tacking one more thing on our to-do list, we are more focused.

*Let me both diligently work
and duly pray;
let me be kind in word and deed,
just for today.*

Another relief. As much as we try, we are human and being kind isn't always easy especially in today's fast-paced and highly charged world. But if we just have to work on a 24-hour period, that we can do. Use every encounter to be more Christ like.

*And if today my tide of life
should ebb away,
give me thy sacraments divine,
sweet Lord, today.*

This is a reminder that we should not put off the sacraments. Go to that daily Mass you keep saying you want to attend, receive Communion. Also find the schedule for confession. Make today, the day you strengthen your faith by participating more fully in our blessed sacraments.

*So, for tomorrow and its needs
I do not pray;
but keep me, guide me, love me,
Lord,
just for today.*

Let us work to live fully in the present untroubled by our past, whatever it may have been, and unconcerned for the future which has not yet and may never come. All we need do really is to remain faithful this hour, each minute at a time. ■

A CLEARER VIEW OF OUR LORD THROUGH SCRIPTURE

How different reality can be from how our fears, expectations and imaginations may make it. So often today teens and young adults get their “realities” from a book or a video that barely depicts reality. Love stories are often too quick to resolve themselves or parental interference is seen as destructive, not instrumental in their growth. The best way to develop a relationship is with an actual person – a parent, a spouse, a friend. This way of interacting is one that not just teens are getting away from. In the same vein the best way to develop a relationship with God, not one based on hyperbole, is to read the scripture. Too many of us have wrong ideas about God. If we think about God at all, we may picture Him poorly as an exacting parent or a stern taskmaster. Yes, for some of us God may have a poor image.

Our human minds cannot imagine what God is like. This is the reason our Savior spoke to us in parables so that we might be able to sense and appreciate truths too great for our minds to comprehend fully. This, too, is the reason the Church wishes us to react and ponder the Scriptures. Thus we absorb the mind of Christ and learn through Him what God is like. “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (Jn. 14:9)

Start with the Old Testament – this is where the stories, or parables show God’s love and His mercy even when humans despair, or turn away. Some we know by heart, the story of Job for instance but reflecting on the story of Jonah gives us insight into God’s limitless mercy. Remember Jonah tried to run from God, he didn’t want the responsibility and he was swallowed by a great fish. Once he repented Jonah was freed but was commanded by God to go to Nineveh to save those souls. Jonah did as God asked and those in Nineveh did repent and God relented from His plan to destroy them. This angered Jonah who didn’t see how his enemies should be forgiven. Proof of how a human mind cannot understand the mercy of God. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. This is such a difficult idea for humans to grasp. It is not in our nature to forgive but that is exactly what God repeatedly asks us to do. By doing so we are more like Him and can better our way to being with Him forever. Seek God in scripture and work on strengthening the most important relationship in your life. ■

Visit us on the web franciscanmissionassoc.org
or on YouTube
<http://www.youtube.com/user/FranMissAssoc>

St. Joseph Holy Family Father

So much attention is paid during Christmas to Jesus and Mary. But let us not forget that St. Joseph filled an important position during the birth and early life of Jesus. His love of his son and his faith in God allowed Joseph to humbly raise the Son of God on Earth and give Jesus the love and support he needed. At first Joseph was, in his human capacity, reluctant to take on the burden, but then he was visited by an angel of the Lord in a dream, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy



Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Mt. 1:20-21). After this meeting, Joseph “did as

the Angel commanded him” and welcomed Mary into his home. Joseph is by all accounts a giving and caring father and husband. Imagine traveling, with a young and very pregnant wife to a far away land to begin your trade again. According to the Bible stories Joseph sacrificed and worried as all fathers do for his son and his family. In Luke’s gospel when Jesus is found at the temple, Mary tells her teenage son “your father and I” were terribly worried. But Jesus explains he is answering to a higher authority – God the Father. This context is lost on his parents who are so relieved to see him safe. Joseph was Jesus’s father on Earth and according to scant historical accounts, loved and raised Jesus with a passion many fathers understand all too well. During Advent, let us pray to St. Joseph to take us under his protection as he did Jesus. As the watchful guardian of the Holy Family, let us ask St. Joseph to kindly keep us far from error and temptation and to help us imitate his example and virtue. ■

A SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS GIFT

If you wish to give a spiritual gift for your loved ones or special friends at Christmas, may we suggest a gift enrollment in Franciscan Mission Associates.

Those you enroll at Christmas will share spiritually in the Masses and prayers of all our Franciscan friars during the next year and in a Special Novena of Masses to begin on Christmas Day.

You will receive beautifully engraved Christmas gift cards, well in advance. Each card is designed to show your name as the donor and the name of each person you decide to enroll. You may mail the gift announcements or give them as you choose.

To obtain additional Christmas enrollment cards, please write today to:

Fr. Robert, O.F.M., Box 598, Dept. 2182, Mount Vernon, NY 10551

Special Novena Schedule Advent-Christmas 2018

All year round Franciscan Mission Associates conducts a regular schedule of spiritual and devotional exercises in which all benefactors are invited to take part. During the Winter months the Special Novena schedule is:

- November 1-30For the Faithful Departed (30 Masses)
- December 1-31Infant Savior (31 Masses)
- December 8-16Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- December 16-24Feast of Christmas (in Padua)
- December 24-January 1Feast of Christmas (in Assisi)
- December 25-January 2Christ Child Novena (in Bethlehem)

Additional Masses: For our good friends and their intentions, Mass is celebrated daily. Also, Two Novena of Masses are said each month from the 2nd through 19th.

All Franciscan Mission Associates, sponsors, and benefactors are asked to join in prayer for the intentions and petitions of those taking part in the exercises. Please pray also for our Franciscan missionaries, for the people they serve, for an increase in vocations and for all our associates. Kindly forward your petitions for the Novenas scheduled to:

**Father Robert, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept 2181, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

JOIN US ON PILGRIMAGE

MAY 6-17, 2019

12-Day Pilgrimage to the Marian Shrines

Fatima - El Camino de Santiago - Avila - Zaragoza

Lourdes - Montserrat - Barcelona

Dear Father, Please send information on Pilgrimage to Portugal, Spain & France

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

**Mail to: Pilgrimage Office, Dept. N, P.O. Box 598, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598
Tel: 914-664-1747 or 914-664-5604, franciscanmissionassoc.org**