

FMA FOCUS

NOV 2021 / VOL 55, NO 2

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

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America



VIRTUE: MERCY

“No one is merciful without being in union with the Father. He is the infinite mercy.” — Pope Francis. Whole communities of religious men and women have named themselves after this title of Our Lady of Mercy and for good reason. Mercy is one of the strongest virtues because it encompasses forgiveness, knowledge, love, compassion and justice. So much of scripture contains stories of saints and sinners who were merciful and who had mercy shown to them including Adam, Noah, Peter, Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well and the good thief. Being merciful to others and to ourselves does not always come easy but it is worth the effort. The act makes us more like Him when we practice it, a truly worthwhile pursuit. ■

Remembering All Saints and All Souls



The feasts of All Saints and All Souls are different but connected. In that they give us ample opportunity to pray for those who have gone before us.

The Solemnity of All Saints, or All Saints’ Day, November 1, was originally instituted to honor those who were martyred for their Christian faith in the Roman empire. Today it is a holy day of obligation in which all saints are recognized and remembered, especially those who were martyred. Pope Gregory III consecrated a chapel at St. Peter’s Basilica to all the saints, as well, with an anniversary date of November 1. Rome officially adopted November 1, as the date of the feast of All Saints in the eight century.

Everyone should strive to be a saint. One of the hallmarks of the

saint in practice is his or her humility. Think of St. Francis. While he respected and held up all of God's creations, he never put himself in the front of the line. His most celebrated peace prayer, "It is in giving that we receive...in pardoning that we are pardoned and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

All Christians are candidates for sainthood. Saint Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, wrote: "to the church of God that is in Corinth, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy, with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours" (1 Cor 1:2). One of the critical attributes of saints is to love others and that means to forgive. In the First Letter of John (4:20) we read: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen."

The day following All Saints Day, November 2, is the Commemoration of All of the Faithful Departed, or All Souls' Day. On this day we pray for all those who have died and have not reached heaven, including our friends and relatives and those we have never met. We pray that through the mercy of God they will rest in peace. Some families in addition to Mass, spend the day going to

the gravesites of their loved ones, cleaning them, adding candles or flowers and praying for the souls in purgatory. While November 2 is dedicated to All Souls it should not be the only day we remember in prayer our departed brothers and sisters. In fact, during each Mass there is time to pray these exact intentions. Also, during this month, and always when remembering those gone before us, let us include departed religious, including former teachers or heads of school and those Bishops or priests who impacted personal faith formations.



Did You Know...

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:

**Father Robert, OFM
Franciscan Mission Associates
P.O. Box 598, Dept. 2213
Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**



FMA Focus, official organ of Franciscan Mission Associates, is published quarterly in February, June, September and November.

FMA Focus is a member of the Catholic Press Association, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers.

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.

THE CHRISTMAS CRIB OF ST. FRANCIS

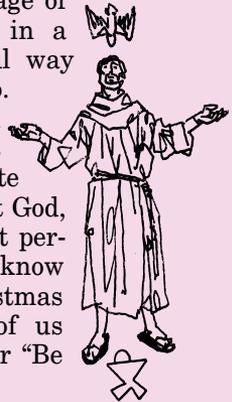
The Franciscans have a spirit of making use of simple things to teach profound doctrine that goes back to their founder, Father Francis. What encompasses the simple and the profound more than the birth story of Christ and the manger? Did you know St. Francis is known for making the very first Nativity display? As a deacon, St. Francis realized the chapel he was to celebrate Christmas Mass in was too small. So he set up an altar in an area in town, creating a manger and even adding some barnyard animals, an ox and a donkey. This beautiful manger scene had not just animals but also a live baby that St. Francis embraced during the Mass, according to historical accounts. These live participants brought home the truth that the story isn't **just** a story, or a parable, but instead is a historical reality – Christ had come to live with us on earth.

The Christmas Crib is so simple that children understand it, and the one thing we see regularly during Christmas is the children, even the youngest, gathered around the crib in church. They ask about Jesus when viewing the empty place all during Advent where the baby Jesus will rest His head. This longing is a wonderful way to reinforce with children and adults how we are longing for Christ

in our lives and we are waiting, during Advent, for His coming.

Mary and Joseph and their love for each other, and of Jesus, is also on full display in a carefully curated Christmas Crib. Joseph, the father, the caretaker, finds a simple place for his young wife to bring forward Jesus. Amid the animals and the stark simplicity of the manger, Jesus, the one who saves us all, is born. We are reminded as Christians to strip away the trappings of today's society and all it's over the top expectations. Do we really need another expensive television, handbag, or sneakers? Do we, when our Lord made do with so little?

Often the manger scene is at school, or church, but why not try this year to include the scene in your own home. Flash back to St. Francis and his need to include the message of Christ being born in a simple but beautiful way all those years ago. That can remind you that although great theologians can write great treatises about God, the simple faith that permits the child to know Jesus in the Christmas Crib is what all of us should be looking for "Be as little children." ■



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. 2215, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CELEBRATED EACH DECEMBER

A lot of people don't understand that devotion to Mary doesn't take away anything from her son Jesus Christ. No mother would ever do that. The Church calendar is filled with feasts of Mary (every Saturday for example) because she has come to earth to be sure we understand how important it is to know her son Jesus.

So many of us are familiar with the beautiful story of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The story takes place in the 16th century in a small village near Mexico City. A poor man named Juan Diego, a widower, was on his way to Saturday Mass to celebrate Our Lady. He was walking by a hill that was called Tepeyac when he heard what he described as beautiful music, like warbling birds. Suddenly ahead of him a beautiful radiant woman appeared. She spoke to him in

his language and directed him to the bishop at that time, a Franciscan named Juan de Zumarraga. She also asked Juan Diego to build her a house on the hill. Knowing he needed to consult the hierarchy of the church, Juan Diego set out to meet the church leaders in the region. The bishop at first did not believe Juan Diego and asked for proof that in fact this apparition was truly Our Lady. Not dejected at all, Juan Diego continued to believe. A few days after the first visit, Our Lady again appeared to Juan Diego, this time directing him to gather flowers at the top of the hill; he found roses, even though it was winter. The roses were gathered into his cloak and brought to the bishop. When Juan Diego dropped the roses in front of the bishop, the cloak now had in it a life-sized image of the Virgin Mary. December 12, the day her image appeared on the cloak, became a national holiday in Mexico in 1859. More than 20 million people visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe each year, now on the same hill where Juan Diego first saw her hundreds of years ago.

It took courage to return to the bishop with the gifts from Our Lady. Juan Diego, a convert to Christianity truly believed. For the rest of his life Juan Diego lived next door to the church he had built on the site. He was buried in the church and became a saint in 2002. He has had many miracles attributed to him.

His belief allowed others to be given the gift of God's grace. Imagine a world where he ignored Our Lady – or said no. What a sad and dark world that would be. ■



Prepare to meet Jesus. Be ready and wait

Advent is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus. The readings at Mass are particularly special because they allow us to prepare and to revel in the wonder what is to come. Look no further than the very first Sunday, November 28. In the second reading Paul writes to the Thessalonians, reminding them to do as Christ asked, live the life expected because we do not know when He will come again in Glory.

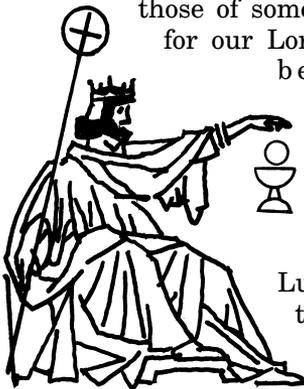
*Finally, brothers and sisters,
we earnestly ask and exhort you in
the Lord Jesus that,
as you received from us
how you should conduct your-
selves to please God
and as you are conducting your-
selves you do so even more.*

*For you know what instructions
we gave you through the Lord
Jesus. (1 Thes. 4:1-2)*

We also need to hear these words as we move through Advent. Often, much as we try, the season becomes less about what is coming into our hearts and more about what we want to come into our hands. Our hearts, minds and actions should be those of someone waiting

for our Lord, not for a
beautifully
wrapped
gift under a
tree.

In the
Gospel
reading,
Luke describes
the coming of
the Son of
Man



*There will be signs in the sun, the
moon and the stars,
and on earth nations will be in
dismay,
perplexed by the roaring of the sea
and the waves... And then they
will see the Son of Man
coming in a cloud with power and
great glory. (Lk 21:25, 27)*

Luke tells us it will be the waiting and the knowing of what is to come that will be difficult for those who are not ready. "People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (LK 21:26). The rest of the Gospel gives the faithful the way to ensure we are ready. We don't need to die of fright in anticipation.

*Beware that your hearts do not
become drowsy
from carousing and drunkenness
and the anxieties of daily life,
and that day catch you by sur-
prise like a trap.*

*Be vigilant at all times
and pray that you have the
strength
to escape the tribulations that are
imminent
and to stand before the Son of
Man." (LK 21:34-36)*

Read and reflect on Luke's Gospel and the readings on the first Sunday to begin your Advent journey this year. Begin with the first Sunday but continue to focus on all of the readings for this year and allow them to help you prepare for the coming of Jesus. ■

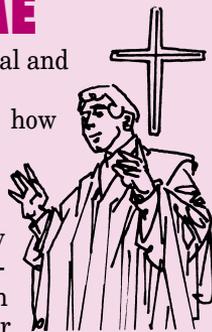
A PRICELESS GIFT - YOUR TIME

Perhaps nothing is more fleeting than time. One way to have more time is to manage it just a little better. There is a quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin, "Lost time is never found again."

So true. With the constant light from our phones or watches, with endless scrolling day in and day out, it seems like we are always busy. But doing what is the question. What are we looking for on our phones, something to keep us busy too often? Or something, a news item or social media post that distracts us from some other responsibility or better use of our time. We do not have an infinite amount of time here on earth. And most mental health professionals recommend unplugging from our worlds and worries, they also recommend not just doomscrolling, or mindlessly spending time in front of a computer or television. Relentless interaction with technology does not relax us, or even make us better people. It is the opposite many times. Too many young people don't learn the courtesies and communication skills they need later in life to succeed because their entire lives are online. Now that we have hopefully moved past the time of online learning and working, it is important to reemerge into the world and use our precious gift of time to reconnect with people and tasks that

increase our intellectual and spiritual life.

Not all of us know how to use our time effectively, especially with the endless distractions that technology affords. Business executives take courses in how to manage their time, teachers work with students and parents try to help their own children by setting up schedules and being good examples. One way to be more aware of how your time is used is to take a small notebook and for just a week mark down exactly what you do with your time. Start right after Mass on Sunday and keep it until after Mass the next week. Now, sit down and see if you can find time to do some of these items that make the best use of your time; visit a sick friend, help with a parish project, or write an email or call a relative. God gave us gifts to share with others on earth. The most important use of our time is to remember God is the center of our lives, and just ten extra minutes in prayer each day until Christmas comes, supports your spiritual life and puts your priorities right. Your phone won't miss you and you will feel more enlightened and more whole with each passing hour. ■



A SPIRITUAL CHRISTMAS GIFT

If you wish to give a spiritual gift for your loved ones or for 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. 2212, Mount Vernon, NY 10551

Director's Letter

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

FRANCISCAN FRIARS/P.O. BOX 598/MOUNT VERNON, N.Y.

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TEL. AREA CODE: 914 664-5604



Dear Friends of the Franciscans,

Welcome to Advent, the season of joyously preparing and waiting. For many of us this means preparing a to-do list and waiting for our families to once again gather around the table for a long-awaited celebration.

This year there is hope that we will also be gathering again in the churches, waiting for Christ and preparing our hearts. This Advent season take advantage of how many ways God is reaching out to you. Add an extra Mass to your daily schedule, visit the confessional and ask for forgiveness of your sins. Make your heart and mind places where Jesus can dwell in peace. Forgiving yourself and others will give you an unimagined peace and will become a catalyst, allowing those you forgive to forgive you and others. This cascade of love and mercy not only changes you but can also change the community in which you worship. And don't let this new-found zeal become a discarded way of life, like the torn ribbons and bows on December 26. Instead, decide this new way to prepare, keeping Jesus at the center of your life, is not a four-week trial, but instead a new you for the new year and beyond.

God is always with you; remember that and turn your face to Him. While we are not always worthy, His love remains steadfast and a beacon of hope and mercy throughout our lives.

Thank you for supporting our missions for another difficult year. Know you are always in our prayers as we move forward toward our ultimate goal of everlasting life.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "FR. Robert, OFM". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

FROM HANGAR TO COVID CLINIC

Fr. Jack, O.F.M.

When the world was struck with the Coronavirus pandemic, a sense of fear and anxiety overwhelmed all of God's people. Many doctors, nurses, research scientists, first responders and the like, rushed to aid of victims of this strange and terrible disease. Across the globe, countries were experiencing the stress of combating this new and invisible enemy. Because of the attack on the respiratory faculties of the human body, different manufacturing companies were pursuing creative ways of providing assistance to the medical teams on the front lines. Many of you have heard of, seen or even participated in the production of such priceless and important items as respirators, mask, alcohol gels, etc. One such company, in Mexico, offered to provide modular diagnostic clinics. This company's main product for commercialization is: Hangars for aircraft.

A gentleman by the name of Carlos of the GMI corporation made contact with the owner of Aeroman (a company that maintains aircraft, repairs them and checks them for approved flight status). When a man named Robert and wife, Celina, heard of Carlos's proposal to aid El Salvador with one of the modular kits, they immediately accepted on behalf of our beloved association AGAPE, with designs of treating potential victims suspect of COVID-19. The directors of the Gloria de Kriete Foundation, which has a number of programs in cooperation with AGAPE, believed that such a new addition to our medical programs would not only serve to help combat the spread of COVID, but, in line with AGAPE's thinking, would serve as the inception of future hospital services for the poor.

The modular kit arrived and was off-loaded in the parking lot of our Shrine of



Divine Providence at AGAPE's main address in Sonzacate, Sonsonate. After a few weeks of discerning where to locate the project, taking into account the fact that it needed to be somewhat isolated from the rest of our other clinical activities, so as not to contaminate individuals: e.g. our home for the elderly or our hemodialysis clinic and specialties clinic already with reduced numbers because of the pandemic, preparation of the land site would begin in the Northeastern section of AGAPE's property.

After the ground work was completed: i.e. making the site level, and the AGAPE team started putting the building "puzzle" together. In just over a month's time the whole structure, outside and inside was ready for blessing and inauguration. And in no time, we had our first patients suffering with the noted Chronic Respiratory Infection.

AGAPE remains very grateful to all its donors who recognize in the association's transparency of genuine care and love in the Spirit of St. Francis of Assisi for the poor. You who read these words must consider yourselves the recipients of multiple blessings for your contributions to the office of our Franciscan Mission Associates which reaches out to God's needy children in Central America and the work of the Franciscans there. ■



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DEACON IN OLANCHO

Fr. Victor, O.F.M.

I hope you are enjoying abundant blessings and may the Lord keep you healthy and strong in the midst of this pandemic.

I greet you from our mission in Central America and I warmly thank you for your prayers for all our missionary brothers and for your generous financial contribution to carry out all our projects.

I am currently in the diocese of Olancho, Honduras. I am completing my deacon service program here at the cathedral parish. The diocese of Olancho is one of the poorest in Honduras and is recognized as a Franciscan and missionary God. Some communities are very far from the parish headquarters, it takes at least four or five hours to reach them.

Currently the missions are reprimanding each other by taking all sanitary measures. We visit the villages four days a week. In the visits to the villages, we celebrate the Eucharist and

perform some sacraments such as baptisms and marriages.

The people are very grateful for our visit and feel very identified with the Franciscan charism.

Some villages are so poor that they still do not have a chapel and the celebrations are held in private homes. The diocese is always looking for help to solve this need.

At the parish headquarters, activities are being resumed little by little. One of the most representative social projects is the Santa Gertrudis complex. Santa Gertrudis, founded by Fr. Albert, O.F.M., is a healthcare center for people of all ages. It consists of an orphanage, which currently houses 30 children, a school, a home for the elderly and a bakery that works as a source of income to support the different projects.

Keep our people and our work in your prayers as we remember you each day in our prayers. ■



Words Worth Noting



God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking His mercy.

Pope Francis

Courage is being afraid but going on anyway.

Dan Rather

Speak when you are angry and you will make the greatest speech you will ever regret.

David Russell

No man ever listened himself out of a job.

Calvin Coolidge

It is better to be a child of God than king of the whole world.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga

A sense of humor is a major defense against minor troubles.

Mignon McLaughlin

Pride leaves home on horseback, but returns on foot.

German proverb

For prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God.

St. Teresa of Avila

If you can't make it better you can laugh at it.

Erma Bombeck

Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them.

Lady Bird Johnson

Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Father Robert,

I've just completed your recent issue of FOCUS. How valuable it is to my spiritual life. As a cursillitsa evangelization is a real commitment, so your articles fit like a glove. Thank you and I shall pray with you for Fr. Guillermo and the people who must miss him.

In Christ,
A.S.
Jacksonville Beach, FL

Dear Father,

All the years I've been devoted to the Franciscans. I've been meaning to tell you why! Many years ago (30) our son who was ten was hit by a car in our neighborhood and died then and there, but not before something wonderful happened in this terrible event. There were three Franciscan priests returning from summer classes at La Salle college here in PA. They came upon the accident and stayed with our son Kevin, right in the middle of police and ambulances. They called us right away and told us. It made us feel better and special in God's eyes. They said Mass at our request. We did keep in touch, but then they transferred and we lost touch. Our faith in the Franciscans and St. Anthony has never ceased. God bless all of you.

B.C.
Philadelphia, PA

Dear Father,

I wish to thank St. Jude for answering my prayers and for favors received again. St. Jude is truly a great, powerful and understanding saint. He will have my devotion always.

Thank you again,
D.E.
Birmingham, AL

Dear Father Robert,

Thank you for your most recent donation of the pamphlets "Simple Ways To Pray." We truly appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness to the women at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The literature will be given to the Chapel Library and then made available to the women who are in need of spiritual guidance.

It means so much to the women when they realize others remember them.

Please remember that in helping meet basic needs, you are also providing the gift of hope to a person who may have lost it and feel alone.

May God continue to bless you and your wonderful ministry.

Sister M.A.C.
Bedford Hills, NY

ST. JUDE'S CONTINUED ATTRACTION

Did you ever wonder what it is that attracts people to St. Jude? Not because he does the impossible, although that does make him appear like a superhero. Not because we know a lot about him, because we don't. Not because Jesus favored him over another of the other apostles, John was the beloved disciple and Peter was placed in charge. The reason is that Jude is secure, a rock in his ability to stand for the idea that Christianity meets all odds and wins, especially today, when life becomes more and more complicated each year.

St. Jude, one of Christ's twelve apostles, tradition tells us preached the faith in Persia, where he died a martyr.

Not much is known about this devout man but he is usually depicted with writing materials. In some art he has a flame above his head, indicating the inspiration and help of the Holy Spirit in composing his writings. St. Jude is the Patron Saint of Hope and Impossible Causes, in part because of his new testament epistle in which he directs those who follow Jesus to be steadfast in trying circumstances.

"You, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in

the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life." (Jude: 20-21)

And in part because of the many times pilgrims came to St. Jude's grave to pray and many reported a powerful intercession after their prayers. As a companion of Jesus, Jude was a witness to the devastation caused by those who did not believe. Each story and remembrance of St. Jude solidified his place in history.

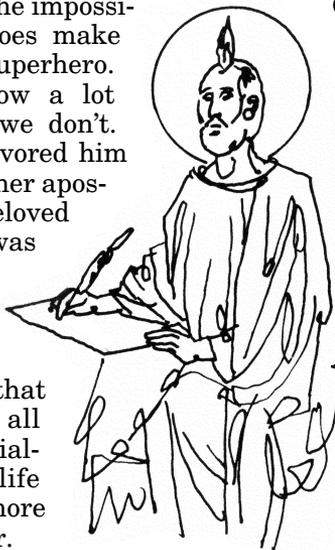
Below is a short prayer you can use each day for your own intentions and for those who need the intercessions but do not yet know the true way of the Lord.

St. Jude patron of the desperate and Saint of the Impossible.

I turn to you in trusting prayer. Centuries of Christians have found you to be a mighty helper in overcoming seemingly impossible barriers.

We entrust to you our present need. Pray that we never lose heart

when the way seems dark and dreary. We await your help and praise God for guiding us to seek your help in especially difficult situations. Amen. ■



Visit us on the web [franciscanmissionassoc.org](http://www.franciscanmissionassoc.org)
or on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/user/FranMissAssoc>

SPIRITUAL BOUQUET - A TRULY PRICELESS GIFT

We are all in the season of giving. Our time and talents are wonderful gifts for every person on our list. Another one size fits all kind of gift is a spiritual bouquet. As students, we often create them for our pastors or religious sisters if they are celebrating an anniversary or a birthday. But there is no reason anyone on our list couldn't get this beautiful expression of our faith and love. What is a "spiritual bouquet?" Like the name, it is a bouquet, but instead of flowers it is a group of prayers gathered together for a particular intention. The idea is that each prayer is like a flower and that the group is like a bouquet, mystically offered as a gift to God for a particular intention. That is why, for example, you'll sometimes see Catholics organize "spiritual bouquets" for particular purposes, such as for the intentions of the Pope in honor of his birthday. Those who participate promise a certain amount of prayers and devotions for the intention and then the list is compiled and given to the person whose intentions are being remembered in prayer.

The true intent is to show the recipient that they are not alone but

part of a larger body – the community of Christ. The bouquet is held before the Lord in prayer, reminding the recipient also that they are, of course, held gently and lovingly by our heavenly Father at all times. Advent is a wonderful time to revive this offering. The steps are simple.

First, decide to whom you will be sending the spiritual bouquet, really consider their needs and challenges at this time. Next, draw up a list of prayers and put them down on a handmade card, for instance write:

"For your intentions I have remembered you in ten Masses, the reception of the Eucharist ten times, ten rosaries and ten prayers to your patron saint."

If you are so inclined you can embellish the gift basket with a card, some silk flowers and colorful pastel paper or cellophane wrapping.

Give a Spiritual Bouquet to your parents if you are privileged to have them with you still. Remember a sick friend and make sure you give to a young person or two. Their questions, their sense of wonder, will grow as a learned experience in faith as they unwrap their spiritual gift. ■

ST. ANTHONY'S BREAD

Offerings in honor of St. Anthony, either in petition for a favor sought, or in thanksgiving for a favor received, are used to assist the poor. Thus, they have received the name, St. Anthony's Bread. Such offerings are also used to help educate priests and religious.

Fr. Robert will gladly send you a leaflet explaining the origin and purpose of this devout practice, now centuries old. Please write:

**St. Anthony's Bread, Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept 2214, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

FINISHING OUT THE YEAR OF ST. JOSEPH

As we close out the Year of St. Joseph this December, make time to reflect on the beautiful Apostolic Letter “Patris Corde” (with a father’s heart) with its heartfelt descriptions of St. Joseph. Pope Francis’s declaration of the Year of St. Joseph came at a time when the whole world needed a comforting father. The Holy Father said he wrote the letter during the pandemic, a time when we could see more easily the importance of everyday people, who like St. Joseph, go unnoticed in everyday situations but become the bulwark which sustain a nation, and indeed a world.

Doctors, nurses, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caregivers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests, men and women religious, and so very many others. They understood that no one is saved alone...

How many people daily exercise patience and offer hope, taking care to spread not panic, but shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday ways, how to accept and deal with a crisis by adjusting their routines, looking ahead and encouraging the practice of prayer. How many are praying, making sacrifices and interceding for the good of all. (Patris Corde)

Pope Francis encouraged the faithful to see Joseph in many ways. First, as a beloved and tender and loving

father who saw Jesus grow daily “in wisdom and in years and in divine and human favor” (Lk 2:52). Second, as an obedient and accepting father, who when asked to take on a mysteriously pregnant Mary did so with complete confidence. “When Joseph awoke from sleep he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him” (Mt 1:24). Pope Francis writes: we should not confuse Joseph’s acceptance with resignation but instead see it as courageous.

“...acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit’s gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments” (Patris Corde).

Lastly, Pope Francis reminds us that Joseph was a working father who stayed in the shadows. Just like many fathers as head of the house, they are part of the financial support that allows the family to survive. Joseph’s work done with dedication and not an insistence of being in the limelight, created the home life that nurtured the Holy Family and its divine mission.

“Fathers are not born, but made. A man does not become a father simply by bringing a child into the world, but by taking up the responsibility to care for that child. Whenever a man accepts responsibility for the life of another, in some way he becomes a father to that person.” (Patris Corde).

What does St. Joseph mean to you? Think about that. This man who also said yes to God’s call. ■



Special Novena Schedule Advent-Christmas 2021

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 1-30Novena for the Faithful Departed
- 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)

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 2211, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

The Novices of Immaculate Conception Franciscan Province of New York

The novices visited Gubbio, the site of the famous “Wolf of Gubbio.” The story, as seen in Chapter 21 of the Fioretti, tells of St. Francis making peace with the wolf, who had ravaged the town of Gubbio and its environs.



*Wishing you and yours A Blessed Christmas and New Year.
Our thoughts and prayers are with you*