

FMA FOCUS

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

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America



VIRTUE: LOVE

Every parent knows the special love he or she has for their child. And if they have more than one, the love grows exponentially. Every child knows the special love he or she has for their parents. Such a love marks the parent-child relationship as unique in nature. That love doesn't go away if the parent or child is separated by death. In fact, that bond is sometimes stronger. God, our Father, loves us with a special love as well. Each one of us is unique and loved. *We love because he first loved us.* (Jn 4:19) It is God's most special gift to us all. God's love for us teaches us how to love others as He loves us. ■

Love for the elderly



"How important grandparents are for family life, for passing on the human and religious heritage which is so essential for each and every society! How important it is that young family members and grandparents have intergenerational exchanges and dialogues, especially within the context of the family." (Pope Francis)

This past summer marked the third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, an annual celebration established by Pope Francis. Pope Francis chose as this year's theme "His mercy is from age to age" (Lk 1:50), expressing a link with World Youth Day, which took place in Lisbon, Portugal from August 1-6, 2023. Pope Francis, in many of his addresses, reminds all the faithful of the importance of their elders.

“A long life – so the Bible teaches – is a blessing, and the elderly are not outcasts to be shunned but living signs of the goodness of God who bestows life in abundance.”

World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly was established by Pope Francis in January 2021, is celebrated each year on the fourth Sunday of July, coinciding with the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s parents, Jesus’ grandparents, Sts. Joachim and Anne.

Pope Francis has long championed the elderly and called for their continued care as they age, recognizing the value they continue to reveal each year. The Pope has called on society not only to revere the time spent here by the elderly, but to ensure they have safe retirement plans, access to free or lower cost medications, and resources that allow for continued dignity in old age. To establish these requests societies, churches and secular organizations must be close to those in need, be aware of the elderly population within their communities and regularly offer them care, advice, and guidance.

Despite the challenges of our jobs or activities, we must make sure we save time for our elderly. Time isn’t

always easy to spare, but there is a great deal of reward in knowing you are doing God’s will in service to those who kept our faith and our society alive before you. Even the very gift of life has come from our elders. With an aging society, we must make a conscious effort to be present to the elderly. It can be as simple as stopping after Mass and smiling. It may mean checking occasionally to see if someone needs a trip to the grocery store. These are ways to be loving and compassionate to those who paved the way for all of us. ■

Remembrance

You can continue to carry on your own good work for the missions and the people they serve by remembering them in your will. To do so, simply make a bequest of whatever you wish to: FRANCISCAN MISSION ASSOCIATES, Mount Vernon, NY 10551. If you wish additional information about how to do this, please feel free to contact:

**Father Robert, O.F.M.,
Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept 1232
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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.

HOW WE HUNGER AND THIRST – BUT NOT FOR FOOD!

At different times during each and every day one is bound to call out “I’m starving.” Parents hear it first thing in the morning before school, and at the end of the school day when students return



home. For adults it is often when the coffee has settled, and it is not quite time for lunch. We get a snack, and we are back on track. Sometimes over a long weekend we can also be “starving” for company – so we call, visit, or text a friend or family member and satiate our need for companionship! We use that word “starving” too easily. Surely most of us are not really starving for food, or companionship. Hungry for them – absolutely. Food and company can sustain us now as we navigate our earthly lives, but what truly sustains us for eternity is our Lord. The beautiful responsorial psalm for the first Sunday in September this year, Psalm 63, attributed to King David when he was in the wilderness, reminds us what we are really aching for and what really sustains us. The powerful response is **“My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.”**

We attribute the ache or pain we feel in our hearts each day to a number of other sources. But could it be that we are aching for something else? That we are not satiating our

thirst for the Lord? Reading the words of the psalm, one can’t help but understand the spiritual pain David was in. It can also be the pain we find ourselves in, lost adrift without the path

back to our Lord and salvation?

O God, you are my God whom I seek;

for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts

like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water.

Thus have I gazed toward you in the sanctuary

to see your power and your glory,

for your kindness is a greater good than life;

my lips shall glorify you.

Our praise of the Lord and our demonstrations of love can show God that we know He guides our every move.

Thus will I bless you while I live;

lifting up my hands, I will call upon your name.

As with the riches of a banquet shall my soul be satisfied, and with exultant lips my mouth shall praise you.

God knows the answers to our prayers, our hopes and our wishes. It is only with His love that we will find ourselves no longer thirsty or hungry but will be at peace with Him in all things. ■

AGE IS NO BARRIER – ST. JOHN OF CAPISTRANO

In today's world many people pursue a career much different from the one they pursued in college or early adulthood. So it can be with religious vocations. Not everyone listens intently to the call the first time. Often it takes a great deal of time to realize that God is indeed The Way. These later vocation programs are not new. In fact, history speaks to mature vocations as one of God's continuing gifts to the Church.

Take the famous Franciscan Friar, St. John of Capistrano. Born about 200 years after St. Francis of Assisi, this 15th Century brilliant scholar, lawyer, governor, and diplomat brought a wealth of "professional" experience to his vocation. Born at Capistrano in the Abruzzi area of Italy, his life must have seemed all but settled on a well-to-do path to a lifetime of success.

In the year 1412, he became governor of the city of Perugia, where he campaigned against civic corruption and bribery. Four years later, he was dispatched on a peace-making mission to the city-state of Malatesta, a mission that would change his life.

Instead of negotiating, the Malatesta government threw him into prison.

There, John had time to reflect on a gnawing intrusion into his busy world: a call to abandon the world, seek forgiveness for his sins, and become a Franciscan Friar. One vivid, unforgettable dream sealed John's resolve.

He told of St. Francis appearing

to him in the dream, indeed inspiring him to enter the Franciscan Order. And on October 4, of 1416, John joined the Friars Minor, and was ordained a priest in 1420. He was then 34 years old – at that time, an age regarded as almost middle aged.

While his preaching and evident holiness drew thousands of people, along with an equal number of converts, John found that God could make good use of his former professional skills.

He served in many leadership roles within the Franciscan Order and was sought out by kings and popes to resolve issues of the times. He was frequently dispatched on papal diplomatic missions. By the time he died of plague on October 23, 1456, Friar John was credited as a major influence in preventing the Turkish Empire from expanding throughout much of Europe. He was 70 years old when he died, an advanced age for the times, and had spent over half his life in service to Christ and his Church.

As we all pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, call on St. John of Capistrano. While he is the official patron of military chaplains, among other salutations, St. John is a fitting "recruiter" and patron of vocations – late or early – for our times. ■



Go and do – Christ’s loving command

Doing is what makes love real. Parents are well aware of this. And Mary and Joseph did for Jesus as parents today do for their children. By the time a child is three, for instance, he or she needs their shoes tied over 1000 times. Simple, ordinary things like this are the things Mary and Joseph did for Jesus as a child. The sentiments in the story about finding Jesus in the temple will be familiar to many parents. Luke’s Gospel describes how his parents were quite concerned when they realized their son was not with them on the return.

Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

A great sigh of relief for Mary and Joseph, but they were still concerned and understandably upset – because their son caused them pain. Jesus, in the Gospel account, responds by telling his parents this is God’s plan. Although they don’t understand, they accept what he says.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to

him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.”

And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

This is a moment of growth for the entire Holy Family. A glimpse, for parents, of the fact that their child is growing up, and a sense from their son that the parents will always worry. That is how they show their love to their young son; by showing concern, but also by listening to him as he lets them know he is following the path God has laid out for Him.

While none of us will raise a Son of God, we are raising, hopefully, future saints and stewards of our faith. Are our basic tasks different? Clothing, caring, nurturing? Not if we do them in the same sense of service to the Lord as Mary and Joseph did. We gain merit from every tied shoe, from every meal, from every loving word. We show our love in deeds. ■

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Father Robert includes a special remembrance for all Franciscan Mission Associates on their birthday if he knows when it is. To be remembered at his Mass on your birthday please send him the filled in form below at any time.

My name is _____

My Birthday is: Month and Day _____

My address is _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Fr. Robert, O.F.M., Dept. 1235,

Franciscan Mission Associates, PO Box 598, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

ST. FRANCIS - PATRON OF LIFE

If ever a saint's view were needed today, it is surely that of St. Francis. He had such a great reverence for all life and all God's creations. Francis praised God in all his works and has become famous for his Canticle of Creation. Our society has become desensitized. We have less reverence for life than in ages past. With Francis, we can show our love for God's creation, including our own planet earth, by being especially conscious of the value of life in all its stages. Serving God in the turbulent era spanning the late 12th and early 13th centuries, St. Francis had this to say, in one of his letters to the faithful:

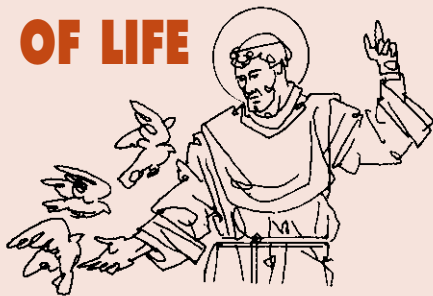
We should never desire to be over others. Instead, we ought to be servants who are submissive to every human being for God's sake.

It's a tall order indeed that Francis holds out to those who seek to live a true Christian life; to be among the people and to serve.

Pope Benedict named a Franciscan who emulated these qualities in our own times a saint; on October 21, 2012, Blessed Mother Marianne Cope (of Molokai) was canonized.

Presiding at her beatification in 2005, Cardinal Saraiva Martins called Mother Marianne's life "a wonderful work of divine grace. She demonstrated the beauty of the life of a true Franciscan."

In the early 1880's, leaders in Hawaii sent letters to more than 50 religious



orders, for American religious to assist with the Church's work among leprosy patients. Mother Marianne was the only religious superior to accept the call.

In 1883, with six of her sisters, Mother Marianne departed from the Syracuse, N.Y. motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities. In Honolulu, she organized a nearby receiving station for patients, later opening a hospital and girls' school on Maui. By 1888, she moved on to Molokai. There she opened a home for women and girls. And in 1889, following the death of Fr. Damien de Veuster, she took over administration of the home for men and boys. She died there in 1918, at age 80.

In the residents of Molokai, Cardinal Saraiva Martins said, Mother Marianne saw "the face of Christ" – as did St. Francis, some six centuries earlier, placing a priority on working with the sick and disabled.

This Fall, call on St. Francis and Mother Marianne, one of his many Franciscan descendants, for their help as we too speak up for the dignity and sacredness of life in our own day. ■

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 1233, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

Director's Letter

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

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

10551-0598

TEL. AREA CODE: 914 664-5604



Dear Friend of the Franciscans,

During the month of September we spend time with our Blessed Mother Mary, especially celebrating the Nativity of Mary on September 8. Mary has a special role in the lives of the faithful. She, as a young girl herself, said yes to God; yes, I will follow your will.

Last year in a September address, Pope Francis reminded us that Mary's life is one that can be inspiring to all mothers. "Mary experienced the tenderness of God as a daughter, full of grace, in order to share this tenderness as a mother through her union with the mission of her Son." Pope Francis said Mary teaches people to experience the joy of Christ and send it out to the world, to others who don't always have a weekday Mass or other sacraments at their disposal.

Mary's love for her son was evident in their interactions. Her belief in Jesus was unwavering and her sorrow in watching her only son die is heartbreaking. She manifests her motherly love for Jesus and for all of us as we pass through this life. Turn to Mary this Fall with your prayers of gratitude and of need. She will never let you down.

May you feel God's love and grace now and forever,

Fr. Robert, OFM

Fr. Robert, O.F.M.

SERVING SENIORS FOR TWO DECADES IN OLANCHO

by Fr. Albert, O.F.M.

It has been more than twenty years since we opened our doors to the sick and dying elders. In that time, we have made sure God's love and care is extended to those in true need in our community. I remember the beginning of the journey and am so grateful for all the help and support as we continue to serve those in need.

When the Franciscan vow of obedience sent me to work in Olancho, I was assigned to the Cathedral parish of Juticalpa as Pastor. We used to have a parish council meeting every three months. In most of those early meetings, I heard the same complaint, "*Padrecito, tenemos que hacer algo para los ancianos*" (Father, we have to do something for the elderly of the diocese). I soon came to understand that in all of the state of Olancho, with a population of more than half a million people, there was not a single home for the elderly. It took many years of hard thinking, reflection and prayer really to do something about this urgent problem.

The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back was when we actually found an eighty-year-old man dead, wrapped in old rags, plastic and cardboard in a doorway in Juticalpa. He had no family. We buried the old timer. Then and there, we decided that, as a Church, we had to urgently address this problem. Back in those days, when I was a Pastor at Santa Gertrudis in the same town of Juticalpa, the Bishop gave us a piece of land. An architect from the parish generously drew up the plans. The entire parish began to organize activities to raise funds. On my end, I began to write letters to all my friends,

contacts, brothers and sisters, asking for help.

Saint Francis entered the scene in a very mysterious way. I once knew this girl, named Marina, who in her early adult life married a Canadian. One day, Marina turned up telling me that her husband, Frank, worked in the Canadian embassy in the capital city of Tegucigalpa. Marina offered to bring him over to see if he could help. A few days later, Frank, an important Canadian official from Ottawa, visited us for a first-hand look at the situation. Upon viewing what had been accomplished up to that time, he promised to help us complete the project. Ten days later, we were presented with a \$300,000 check to construct a roof, courtesy of the Canadian embassy in Honduras. Yes, St. Francis surely works in mysterious ways. On Sunday, January 10, 2000, Bishop Muldoon, O.F.M. blessed the Hogar de Ancianos "Paz y Bien." On the very same day, the home received its first five "ancianos" (seniors), who literally used to eat and sleep on the streets of Juticalpa.



Today, more than twenty years later, our home for the elderly is known all over the country. It's even well known by the President of Honduras, who occasionally stops by unexpectedly to chat with the residents. Benefactors from Toronto, as well as many cities in the United States and Europe, help us maintain the place with their generous and constant donations, and people from all over Olancho chip in with donations of corn, beans and rice to provide food. We are very happy to be able to help our older brothers and sisters. One day, we too will be old. And who knows, maybe some of us will be looking for a bed at the hogar (home)!!! For now, the elderly of Olancho do not have to live and die on the streets anymore. The doors of our home are always open to them. ■



KINDLE FOR "KINDER"

Fr. Jack, O.F.M.

Imagine the look on poor little kids' faces (some in kindergarten and others of primary school age) getting a visit from Fr. Jack with a box of Kindle tablets. AGAPE was gifted with some 45 kindles (Fire 7) from Cable and Wireless Business so that the youngsters in two of our programs could have the opportunity to enjoy the different applications for learning and playtime. With the help of our IT staff, the tablets were properly configured to meet the needs of the children so that all the adult staffers have to do is hand them out and ensure they are turned on and off properly. The children have a keen technological knowledge usage of these handheld gadgets, and handle the rest themselves.

In any society, the children are its hope and future. We must provide them with the encouragement to pursue the virtues of justice, peace, love and humility which our Lord requires of all his followers. When you contemplate the missions from afar, you might feel that prayers, fasting and sacrifices are enough. These personal religious acts are so important for us and those we serve far from home and we are grateful. In return, our prayers and gratitude are all we can offer for your generosity.

But just think of the many faces you light up with a gift in your families at birthdays, anniversaries and the Christmas holiday season. At AGAPE, this is an occurrence whenever you make a donation to the Franciscan

Mission Associates (FMA). The FMA receives your gift and promptly sends it out to missionaries who will, in turn, provide the beneficiaries with the priceless service and gift of love you have generated from your heart.

I have mentioned above only two of the children's programs which AGAPE administers to. Recently we have been asked to take charge of a third center based in the town of Ataco. This Center for Infant Attention, together with a more formal structure in our St. Francis of Assisi school where we have little ones from three years old, challenges us to care not only for their physical and spiritual needs, but also requires of us to be genuinely faithful to our institutional values of Solidarity, Integrity, Leadership, Efficiency and Transparency.

May you who support our Franciscan Missions always know of our gratitude and love for all which you sacrifice for us in our activities to bring the love of Jesus and the spirit of St. Francis to the Church's poor in El Salvador. ■



Words Worth Noting



It is not enough to love. People have to feel like they are loved.

St. John Bosco

It takes a lot of courage to show your dreams to someone else.

Erma Bombeck

You aspire to great things? Begin with little ones.

St. Augustine

It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.

Aristotle

Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

G.K. Chesterton

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

St. Clare of Assisi

Autumn, the year's last, loveliest smile.

William Cullen Bryant

It always seems impossible until it's done.

Nelson Mandela

Do not lose your courage because it brings with it a great reward.

Hebrews

Charity enters heaven when humility opens the door.

María Natividad Venegas de la Torre

Our Readers gladly write...



Dear Father Robert,

This thank you note is too long overdue. I wish to thank you for your beautiful letter. Your kind words and promise of prayers are very consoling. My family and I are very grateful to you. Eugene was a very kind and loving husband and father. It was a true privilege to have loved him. Now he is with Jesus! Thank you, Father.

Gratefully,
M.D.
Middletown, CT

Dear Father Robert,

“With special thanks and much appreciation!” for remembering me on your pilgrimage. It is very much appreciated.

My prayers are always with you and your work!! God bless you and all the Franciscans. The Lord be with you.

M.S.
Franklin, LA

Dear Fr. Robert,

I look forward to receiving the FOCUS magazine. I read every word of it. It is such a wonderful and inspiring magazine. Thank you for it and for all the good prayers, etc... that you and your mission do for our Lord and us.

Yours in Christ,
C.F.N.
Huntington Beach, CA

Dear Father Robert,

Thank you for all your prayers during this difficult last year. We lost two close family members, one in July and one in March. In our deep grief we are comforted to know they are safe with God in heaven. Please accept this financial gift for your Franciscans in formation as they grow in God's love in preparation to serve. May God bless you all.

E.B.
Lake George, NY

Dear Father Robert,

I just had to write to express my gratitude in receiving your “FOCUS” which means so very much to me.

I read it over and over and it gives me the strength to get through so many difficult times in my life. I am 91 years old.

God bless you,
M.P.
Elmont, NY

HAVE YOU BEEN IGNORING YOUR ANGEL?

Thus says the LORD:

“See, I am sending an angel before you, to guard you on the way and bring you to the place I have prepared. Be attentive to him and heed his voice.

Do not rebel against him, for he will not forgive your sin.

My authority resides in him.

If you heed his voice and carry out all I tell you,

I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

(Ex 23:20-23)

Each of us has a guardian angel. We might not hear much about angels these days because we have so many other things to talk about. But we know the importance of angels, which is why each year October 2 is set aside by Catholics to celebrate the Feast of Guardian Angels.

It was during the 11th century that the celebration of Guardian Angels began and by the 12th century it was part of our Catholic heritage. Pope Paul V authorized the first Feast of Guardian Angels in 1608. More than sixty years later, Pope Clement X, officially recognized October 2 as the Feast of the Guardian Angels. Many cultures and religions believe in some spiritual beings whose job it is to protect us and guide us during our time on earth.

While most of us will never see an angel as many of the biblical figures

did, still we have at one time or another been prompted to do something special or pulled back from a sharp work or evil act as if there were a hand on our arm. We have felt our angel reach out and touch us and perhaps save us from danger. These instances are talked about in literature, in conversations and even online. It is important always to reach out to our guardian angel. Their presence is purposeful; to keep us on the straight and narrow, and to make sure our choices are not made in haste or without proper contemplation and discernment. The following prayer can be made part of our daily routine, perhaps to start your day and to end it. We are so grateful for this added spiritual support. Life is so difficult; angels can steady us when we need it the most.

Guardian Angel Prayer

“Angel of God
my guardian
dear, to whom
God’s love com-
mits me here;
ever this day be
at my side; to
light and guard,
to rule and
guide. Amen. ■



Learn more by visiting online www.franciscanmissionassoc.org
or follow us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/FranciscanMissionAssoc

PERFORMING THE WORKS OF MERCY - EACH DAY!!

It doesn't take the Labor Day holiday for us to figure out that people can enjoy work. They find the disciplined application of their skills and talents to specific goals and services to be very satisfying.

Our Lord taught us that even God's work of Creation is ongoing. As we aid in it, we help to bring about God's Kingdom in this world. That's what discipleship is all about. To do God's work, we need not fear being over or under qualified. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will give us all the help we need; one way he does that is through the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

We often forget or overlook that these works flow from our baptism, confirmation, and yes, the reception of Holy Communion.

Once we are initiated as members of the Mystical Body, we can count on the Holy Spirit's help in building the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit provides our focus, our energy and our way. Linguists tell us that the word Mercy in these titles is better rendered as Compassion. A good point since none of the glaring needs can be addressed without compassion.

The Corporal Works:

Feed the Hungry
Give drink to the Thirsty
Clothe the Naked
Shelter the Homeless
Visit the Sick
Visit the Imprisoned (sometimes listed as Ransom the Captive)
Bury the Dead

The first four are clearly charitable works that each person in the community can eagerly attend to. The last, burying the dead, is woven into Catholic life, even in our sacraments and wake rituals. Attending to the dying and spending time with the terminally ill also fit well under this heading. Visiting the sick and the imprisoned frequently become parish ministries or family-life concerns.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are listed distinctly because motivation is spiritual. Prayer must be a part of our response to each compassionate need:

The Spiritual Works

Comfort the sorrowful
Instruct the Ignorant
Counsel the Doubtful
Admonish the Sinner
Bear Wrongs Patiently
Forgive Offenses
Pray for the living and the dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy must always be rooted in prayer, and because they can involve awkward or difficult conversations, may also require counsel before we undertake them.

When performing a work of mercy, whether Corporal or Spiritual, it is good to ask ourselves what Jesus would do and how He would want me to act. Coupled with prayer, the Holy Spirit will guide us to make the right decision and give us what we need to perform these compassionate works. ■

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 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. 1234, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

Alzheimer's disease and St. Dymphna

Over the past 50 years, we have seen an increase in diseases of the human brain. Known by different names – Alzheimer's, dementia, senility, or others, these diseases speak to a loss of brain function that used to define the freedom, creativity, and joy of human life. For most of us – even in an age of information overload – there is a deep sense of fear and anguish when a loved one is diagnosed with this type of ailment.

For some 1300 years now, people have come to St. Dymphna in prayer, because of her love of Our Savior, and the way she lived her faith, serving people others viewed as “outcasts.”

This persecuted 6th Century Celtic princess fled her home in Ireland and her father, a pagan king, who put her life in jeopardy. With her chaplain and a group of supporters, she was guided to exile. Once on land in Europe, she and her party might have sought asylum in

a Christian royal court.

But landing in what is today part of Belgium, she encountered an “outside the gates” population of men and women, all exiled from their villages and cities because they lived with diseases or disabilities.

Dymphna and her party refused to walk away – knowing that Jesus would not do so. Instead, grounded in a hermit lifestyle, she and her colleagues worked with the blind, and those with brain diseases they did not understand and often were not named, but shared the stigma of those no one wanted to treat.

As much as possible, Dymphna and her little band of refugees sought to provide hope for these marginalized people, a hope born of faith and the example of Gospel Living.

Dymphna's father ultimately tracked her down and she was martyred. Beginning soon after this, miracles attributed to her intercession abounded.

We must pray especially for those suffering from today's misunderstood diseases— those dreaded brain disorders of whatever name.

Pray for the patients, their loved ones, and the medical professionals who strive to help all those battling these frightening diseases. ■



Special Novena Schedule Fall 2023

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 Fall months the Special Novena schedule is:

September 2-10/11-19	St. Jude Novena
September 21-29	Feast of St. Michael
September 26-October 4	Feast of St. Francis
September 29-October 7	Feast of the Holy Rosary
October 7-October 15	Feast of the Holy Rosary
October 24 - December 19	Novena to St. Anthony on the nine Tuesdays before Christmas

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. Holy Mass is offered each day for all benefactors and for the intentions they request. Kindly forward your petitions for the Novenas scheduled to:

**Father Robert, O.F.M., Franciscan Mission Associates
PO Box 598, Dept 1231, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**

Each year, Franciscan Mission Associates extends an invitation to the faithful, inviting them to embark on a pilgrimage. In May, approximately 40 pilgrims journeyed with us to the land of Jesus, walking in His footsteps. Over the course of 10 days, they celebrated Mass and prayed in significant shrines of our faith in Nazareth, Cana, Galilee, Caesarea Philippi, Magdala, Mount Tabor, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. At each sacred place, the pilgrims offered prayers on behalf of all FMA benefactors and friends.



Renewal of Baptism at the River Jordan



Group Photo of the whole group with a view of Jerusalem



Mass at the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth



Boat ride on the Sea of Galilee