

# FMA FOCUS

JUNE 2024 | VOL 57 NO 4

Franciscan Mission Associates  
Mt. Vernon, NY 10551

Missions in Guatemala - Honduras - El Salvador, Central America

## VIRTUE: SILENCE



Silence is golden. That is a phrase we learned at an early age. But the benefits of silence in our noisy, media-blaring world are often overlooked. Many times, we don't even know how noisy it is because it is such a normal part of our lives. But we need silence. Jesus and many of the great saints went into the desert to pray in silence. In our 24-hour news cycle world, we are not used to silence, and often we are not comfortable with it. Why is that? It is something to think about this summer in our relaxing times. Listen to the rain on a roof or calming sea waves and allow them to speak to you about where the Lord is leading you. In silence you can truly hear and welcome our Lord into your heart. ■

## Silent Prayer: Your Resource Anywhere, Anytime



Silence is sometimes frightening. We are not used to listening only to the sound of our own thoughts and nothing else. Meditation, or silent prayer, is a way to shut off the noise inside your own mind. However, it takes practice. Meditation is most easily accomplished when you can be alone in Church or at home with a favorite prayer book or the Bible or a novena. But you can lift your heart and mind in a quick silent prayer even if you are at work or school or amid a group of people. These quick prayers are not proper meditation, but they provide a silence that is yours and God's alone.

While we may not be accustomed to silence, summer is the perfect time to begin a daily practice of silent prayer. This type of prayer is simply communicating with God without words, perhaps with an upward glance or with closed eyes. So many

of our Saints contemplated and communicated with our Lord this way. One of them, Saint Teresa of Avila, put it this way:

*Silent Prayer is, in my opinion, simply an intimate exchange of friendship where we speak often, one on one, with the One who we know loves us.*

That One is Jesus, our Lord, who made us and loves us no matter our faults.

Each person must find their own way to enter into silent prayer, but it isn't too hard to get started. Choose a specific time of day and a quiet place. This will help to cement the habit of prayer. It could be early in the morning, or at lunchtime during work, or in the car, or in the evening. It might be in our bedroom, or in our office, or even in a church. Learn to turn off the television, unplug from the phone and other electronics and spend some time with the Lord. Try to make sure that you can devote this time to prayer undisturbed. At first, you may make it simply a few minutes, but as you get used to the silence, the time will grow. Don't fill the time with words. Rather, simply lift your heart to God and listen to what He has to say. Remember, God is always with us, and always ready for us to reach

out to Him. Pope Francis gives us a good tip:

*Only if, through silence and prayer, we make space for Jesus, who is the Word of the Father, will we know how to be freed from the pollution of vain words and chatter.*

Ten short minutes is a great start. Once that becomes a habit, try extending the time. The joy and blessings you will feel will grow as your prayer grows. And be patient, with God and with yourself. It takes time for us to learn this wonderful form of prayer. God appreciates the time and the effort it takes for us to lift ourselves up to him. ■

## **Please Remember the Missions in Your Will**

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 10551-0598. If you wish additional information about how to do this, please feel free to contact:

Franciscan Mission Associates  
PO Box 598, Dept 4242  
Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598



*FMA Focus*, the official newsletter of Franciscan Mission Associates, is published in February, June, September and November.

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

Please address all correspondence to Father Robert, OFM, 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.

## JUNE WEDDINGS: SPECIAL DAYS

If you ask pastors, they will tell you that June is one of the most popular choices for weddings.

Weddings are generally family events. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament, a wedding sealed a covenant between families. This joyful covenant sometimes stopped a history of violence between those families or even whole tribes.

The wedding feast at Cana, the occasion of the first public miracle performed by Jesus, was indeed a joyous family affair. St. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus and his first group of disciples were invited, and that Mary, his mother, was with them:

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. (John 2:1-11)*

Today's weddings take but a few hours. But in the time of Jesus, attending a wedding often took more than one day. It is possible that Mary was related to one or both of the families since she displayed such great interest in the fact that "at a certain point, the wine ran out." Mary approached Jesus with this simple fact: "They have no more wine." Jesus claimed that His time had not yet come, but Mary instructed the waiters, "Do whatever He tells you." She believed. She knew her son, and she knew that overcoming this problem was not beyond His



abilities. Jesus performed the miracle without drawing attention to Himself, and the steward said that the wine produced was the finest that was served.

So, the Gospel tells us, "Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana of Galilee. Thus, did he reveal his glory, and his disciples believed in him."

June weddings, or any wedding for that matter, is an opportunity for couples to invite Jesus into their relationship. A marriage takes three; a wife, a husband, and God to guide them.

We might note that the little church in Cana is today a popular part of many Christian pilgrimages. In fact, many couples use the opportunity to renew their wedding vows. The abundance of wine that Jesus gave to the couple so long ago is a symbol of the abundant graces he gives to married couples every day. ■

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### 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 and are known as St. Anthony's Bread. Such offerings are also used to help educate priests and religious. We will gladly send you information explaining the origin and purpose of this centuries old devout practice. Please write:

St. Anthony's Bread, Franciscan Mission Associates,  
P.O. Box 598, Dept. 4243, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

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## A HELPER IN DIFFICULT TIMES

We read in both the Old and the New Testaments *“Nothing is impossible with God.”* The most obvious example is when the angel Gabriel appears to Mary at the Annunciation. Jesus even says, *“What is impossible for human beings is possible for God.”* (Luke 18:27; Mark 10:27)

These reminders of God’s power are a reminder to pray for that which we seek. And we tend to pray harder when the situation seems impossible. But we have a friend to help us in those times. It is St. Jude, a cousin of the Lord and one of the twelve Apostles. For hundreds of years, he has been known as the “saint of the impossible.”

The fact that St. Jude was one of the Apostles means that he was a unique witness to the life and teachings of Jesus, as well as to His miracles, His healings and His resurrection. He is often depicted with a flame above his head, representing his presence at Pentecost, when the Apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit. Flame is a symbol of light and of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit, which dispels darkness and brings about resolution to a seemingly impossible problem.

Not much is known about the life of St. Jude. It is believed he died a martyr in what is present day Iran. Despite his relative anonymity in the Gospels, St. Jude’s importance is not to be underestimated. His direct connection to the foundational events of Christianity underscores the significance of St. Jude in the early Christian community, and that significance continues today.



Many people invoke his intercession each day when things seem hopeless, and the faithful know that their prayers do not fall on deaf ears.

*Glorious St. Jude, with faith in your goodness, we ask for your help today. As one of Christ’s chosen Apostles, you remain a pillar and foundation of His Church on earth. You are counted, we know, among the elders who always stand before God’s throne.*

*From your place of glory, we know you do not forget the needs and difficulties of Christ’s little ones here, still struggling, like me, on the way home to God. Please intercede for us all, gracious St. Jude, and be with us in our daily toil and in all our necessities. In Christ’s name, we appeal to you again today. Amen.*

This novena prayer to St. Jude is used by many people and is generally prayed for a certain intention for nine days. Our Lord asks us not only to pray for ourselves but for others. So, this prayer could be used to intercede for those who seem desperate, perhaps teenage children or grandchildren who are struggling or for an elderly relative or friend who has nobody to pray for them. St. Jude will stand before God with us and, with his help, God’s will is done, no matter how desperate the situation seems. ■

# The Holy Spirit, Source of Unity

In the *Acts of the Apostles*, St. Luke's companion volume to his Gospel, we hear the story of the early Church. Acts takes us from Jesus' resurrection to St. Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Focusing mostly on the characters of Peter and Paul, we hear how the Church developed, beginning with the Apostles receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and then setting out on their mission to build the church and welcome believers.

It is helpful for Christians to read Acts yearly, preferably during the Easter Season, but perhaps also during our summer downtime. In it, we encounter people of faith who are much like us. They are from different backgrounds and cultures, but they come together to live and worship, we are told, in harmony. It is the Holy Spirit, moving in their hearts, that causes this unity.

Our world, and even our church, are often divided. This seems to be especially true at this point in history. Some of these divisions are stoked, encouraged and even rewarded. But our Catholic faith tells us that we must always strive for unity, and we rely on the Holy Spirit to help us attain it.

For instance, if a conversation at work, at a function, or even among our family gets heated, we can look to the Holy Spirit to help calm things down. The Spirit can give us the words, the patience, and the respect for others to settle disputes, or at least to agree to disagree. We preserve unity by listening to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit's presence can also help with wider conflicts. In these times of strife both abroad and here at home, we should pray that the Holy Spirit's power will bring about peace.

While it sometimes seems hopeless, God can do anything.

The Spirit must also operate in our parishes, for it is here that we welcome home those who have wandered from their faith or who come from another faith or no faith at all. Our love and care help to turn a disparate group of people into a community of faith. In the power of the Spirit, we also encourage those in our parish who might discern a call to a priestly or religious vocation.

Holy Communion is, of course, the greatest source of unity there is. Saint Augustine, a scholar, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, best expressed the vibrant Christian parish experience. In a commentary on the Gospel of St. John, he saw the heart of Christian life in the Eucharist, in our Sunday Assembly where Jesus promised to be with us. And he offered this beautiful blessing:

It has been good for us to share the common light, good to have enjoyed ourselves, good to have been glad together. When we part from one another, let us not depart from Him.

Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, will keep us united, for we are all one body in Christ. ■



## A VISION OF BEAUTY IN AUGUST

It was November 1, 1950, when Pope Pius XII declared that the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was a dogma of the Church, a belief that must be held by each and every Catholic. This proclamation confirmed one of the oldest beliefs about Mary, that at the end of her life, she was taken to heaven body and soul. The Feast of the Assumption is celebrated on August 15th, and it is a joyful highlight of the summer season.

As Catholics, we believe that Mary was singularly privileged to be conceived without original sin (which we celebrate on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception). This allowed her to remain sinless during her life and prepared her to become the Mother of God. However, we also know that Mary was completely human and experienced all the things that we do: she took care of her family, she worked at the tasks of everyday life, and she participated in Jewish worship and traditions. She also experienced both the joys and the sorrows of life, including being a widow and enduring the violent, inexplicable loss of her only Son.

Mary's assumption into heaven, accomplished by the hand of God, points to our own destiny. When we pass from this life, our souls will, we pray, be taken to heaven. When Jesus returns at the end of time, our bodies will rise as well and rejoin our souls. We will be like Mary and Jesus, unable to experience sorrow or pain any longer.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* sums up our belief in clearer language:

The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body. (CCC, 974)

In the Assumption, we see Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as the "image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come." Likewise, the official Church teaching continues, Mary "shines forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God." These quotations come from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, of the Second Vatican Council. (LG, #68)

There is a beautiful shrine to Mary in the chapel of the Franciscan Order's Generalate in Rome. It depicts Jesus enthroned in heaven, with His right hand reaching down to Mary. Her left hand grasps the hand of Jesus, and her right hand is extended to those reaching out to her. Mary helps to prepare our way, and she will be there when our time comes to go to heaven.

We could not be in better hands! ■

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### Donating Online is Simple and Secure

Each day families in the poorest and most dangerous nations see hope and light because of your donations. There are so many ways to contribute to ensure a better life for these families, including offering financial support online. The link below will direct you to our website. You can read about our work and see how a small sacrifice from you can make life-changing differences for so many.



<https://franciscanmissionassoc.org/become-a-supporter>

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# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

**Fr. Robert, OFM**

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TEL: 914 664-5604



Dear Friend of the Franciscans,

June is a month of transitions. The warmth of summer begins to envelop us, and amidst its gentle embrace, we often find ourselves contemplating the delicate balance between loss and new beginnings. As a priest, I have stood witness to the intertwining of these themes, particularly in the context of weddings.

In June, when God's earth is vibrant with life, couples often choose to embark on their journey together, exchanging vows of love and commitment. Yet, even during celebration, there lingers a bittersweet acknowledgment of those who are absent – loved ones who have passed on, whose presence is felt keenly in the quiet moments of reflection.

Loss, however, does not overshadow the joy of union. Instead, it serves as a poignant reminder of the fleeting nature of time and the importance of cherishing each moment we are given on earth before we join our Lord in heaven. Weddings become not just a celebration of love between two individuals, but a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, capable of finding hope and happiness even in the face of loss.

As I stand before couples, joining their lives together in matrimony, in the presence of our Lord, I am reminded of the beauty inherent in both joy and sorrow. For it is in acknowledging the depth of our emotions – the highs and the lows – that we truly embrace the richness of the human experience. And so, in June, amidst the blooming flowers and warm sunshine, we honor both the past and the future, finding solace in the promise of love enduring beyond the bounds of time.

May your summer be filled with God's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Robert, OFM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Robert, OFM

# KINDLES FOR KINDER: "THE IMPACT"

by Fr. Jack, OFM

In the September 2023 *FOCUS*, (Vol. 57 No. 1), I told you of our young people receiving Kindle tablets. They were ecstatic to have them in their hands. Our IT department at AGAPE was on hand to help with the configuration of each unit so that the children could begin to "surf" the web. The idea was not only to search for information, but to help them develop the positive usage of the technology. I'd like to share some of those positive results.

- It's a way to obtain information;
- It helps when working with mathematics;
- With the Kindle we have fun learning;
- We learn educational games;
- I am learning to be a better reader with the tablet; and
- I learn to add with the Kindle.

These comments are from children that range in age from very young to adolescents and are



This generation seems to be genetically programmed with the capacity to handle technology. They play, write, and even use the automatic spelling and grammar tools. I sometimes think that this lessens the learning process that older generations acquired, but technology, nonetheless, certainly has its perks. The children have sent some comments expressing the positive impact that they have experienced. Though their expressions are simple, I would like to share some of them with you. The children say:

- The tablets help us search for assignments;
- Thank you for the tablet. It helps me with my homework;
- It helps to strengthen me in my studies;
- It helps with homework for school;

regular members of our program called "Anzuelo de Dios" (literally the fishhook of God), a section of our Center for Professional Development in AGAPE. We work with school-age children up to the age of 14 who may have deficiencies in certain subjects, or who have no one at home when they leave school. Our staff provides tutoring, physical education and psychological evaluations if needed. With the Kindles, learning has become much more than just playing games. It feeds the mind with information which can aid in the children's complete development: intellectual and relational.

This program of AGAPE captures those young people at risk. The risks in their lives can be many. As I mentioned above, moms and dads may be working so there is nobody home

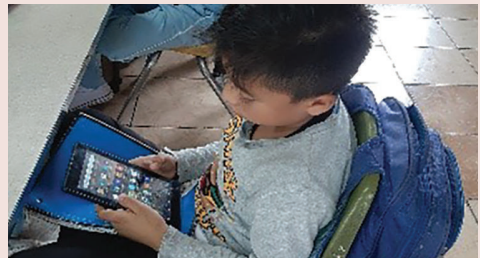




after school; if left alone, these youngsters are vulnerable to gangs or activity that comes from a false sense of freedom. Their individual choices may have negative effects on their ability to distinguish solid moral values.

Once again, I cannot begin to thank you, the readers of *FOCUS* and donors to the Franciscan Mission Associates, for your loyal and faithful contributions toward the success of the friar missionaries who represent the Province of the Immaculate Conception of New York in Central America. We know that the economy

has proven to be challenging for all of you, and yet every dollar you can spare has tremendous impact in our little country of El Salvador. We have been blessed because of you. And the people we serve have progressed enormously because of the programs funded by your gracious and generous donations. They, and we at AGAPE, are truly grateful. Be assured of our daily prayers. God bless. Peace and good, good people. ■



# TRANSFORMATION IN THE VALLEY

by Maybelin



Valley of the Angels (Guatemala) is a place of love, of angels that are full of dreams and purposes in life. I feel privileged to be part of it. Thanks to Valley I have learned that I am not limited and can accomplish the dreams I have in life.

A few years ago, I made the decision to be part of Valley of the Angels. It was a difficult, but not impossible, decision. It was difficult in the beginning since I did not have a good education. However, the teachers placed a high value on education and are willing to prepare us to achieve our goals.

Valley is a place that forms in us the values that will serve us well in daily life and make us productive members of society. The managers make sure that each child has a well-balanced diet so that they do not get ill. And if illness or injury occurs, there is a nurse on duty to make sure that the children recover and can return to their daily activities.

In addition to the children's physical well-being, there is a psychologist there to make sure that each child feels loved, appreciated and safe. In this way, they also guarantee that the children are happy. We also have groundskeepers and gardeners who help to ensure that our environment is clean and fresh, and who patiently work with the children, teaching them to sow seeds and care for them until they become mature crops that can be consumed. Those who run the Valley want all the children who live there to gain all the knowledge they can, and in doing so to prepare to take their place as adults in society.

I am so grateful to the teachers who exercise the role of mother that each child needs. They care for us, correct us, and demand that we work up to our ability. They make sure each of us is well cared for each day. And most importantly, they give us religious formation

which allows us to grow closer to God and recognize that He is always with us and loves us. Without Him, we are nothing.

Just as we have many people who help us at Valley so that we lack nothing, so too do we at Valley help by praying for each of them and for those who donate so that we might enjoy life. We have been taught to give back for what we have received.

Each child in Valley has dreams and goals that they strive each day to achieve. I entered Valley knowing nothing, with no purpose and no goal. Over time, I met people who taught me to love, to laugh, to forgive, and to accept all people no matter who they are.

During my time here, I have never lacked anything, nor have I ever felt uncared for. Our leaders are aware of every child, especially if something happens to them, and I am eternally grateful.

There are also extracurricular activities and classes here at Valley that help us to learn valuable skills like baking, tailoring, karate, and even etiquette. These classes will help open opportunities to us in the future.

Valley of the Angels is more than just a place, an orphanage, or an institution. It is a home, and we are a family in which love is given and received. Here we not only learn the basics of education, but values and spirituality as well. We learn to fight for our good and the good of others.

Valley and those who watch over us have taught us that we are plants that need to be watered or we will not bloom. We must flourish in the face of adversity. I have learned that you always have to be willing to do everything, no matter if it is easy or difficult, the important thing is that what we are willing to give, we give with our hearts. My time at Valley has indeed transformed me. ■

# Words Worth Noting



*Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.*

Mark Twain

*Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content.*

Helen Keller

*When love and skill work together expect a masterpiece.*

John Ruskin

*A man does not have to be an angel to be a saint.*

Albert Schweitzer

*Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any end may reveal a totally new landscape.*

C.S. Lewis

*Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

*The true measure of a man is how he treats someone who can do him absolutely no good.*

Samuel Johnson

*Hard work spotlights the character of people: some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don't turn up at all.*

Sam Ewing

*In order to hear the voice of God, one has to have silence in one's soul and to keep silence; not a gloomy silence, but an interior silence; that is to say, recollection in God.*

Saint Faustina

# Our Readers Gladly Write...

Dear Father,

I would like to publicly thank St. Jude and our Blessed Mother for the spiritual support for a life decision that was made in our home over the past year. The decision has made our family life more peaceful, and we know it is due to the guidance from Mary and the saints. I would also like to offer my prayers to you and your organization for all you do for those in need. God bless you.

Sincerely,  
B.B.  
Washington, D.C.



Dear Father,

God bless you and your ministry. Please keep in your thoughts a close family member whose daughter is now in the military. We know God is with her in times of danger or peril. Thank you for the good work you do for those in need.

M.S.  
Rutland, VT

Dear Franciscan Mission Associates,  
With joy I send you this greeting. Thank you for the beautiful gift and kind note. In gratitude I am enclosing \$25 for your use in the missions where it is so desperately needed. I value your work and pray for your souls each day. May God continue to watch over you and keep you safe to continue your life affirming vocations.

Sincerely,  
B.M.P.  
Fort Edward, NY

Dear Father Robert,

Thank you so much for remembering me at Mass and in your prayers on my birthday. Your card arrived when I was praying so hard for our daughter to get a job she had interviewed for and wanted badly. That same day she was hired. I feel the Good Lord blessed us in abundance and was smiling down on us.

J.M.  
Hilton Head, SC

Father Robert,

Thank you so much for sending the St. Peregrine medal and prayer folders. My friend is most grateful. God bless you and your work.

R.T.  
Winter Park, FL

# He Trusted God Enough to Chart Unknown Pathways

St. Anthony of Padua is one of our most honored patrons at FMA. He is celebrated not only for his deep spirituality and devotion but also for his intriguing journey through various roles during his lifetime. He was born Fernando Martins de Bulhões in Lisbon, Portugal, around 1195. His pathway to sainthood took him on a very diverse path.

Initially, St. Anthony entered the Augustinian Order, where he dedicated himself to a life of prayer and contemplation. However, his life took a turn when the relics of a group of Franciscan Friars who had been martyred in Morocco were brought to his monastery. Inspired by their sacrifice, St. Anthony felt a calling to join the Franciscan Order, a decision that would set the stage for his multifaceted vocation.

Upon joining the Franciscans, St. Anthony was appointed to teach theology to his fellow friars. His exceptional knowledge and eloquence soon attracted attention, and he began preaching to large crowds, earning a reputation as a powerful and persuasive speaker. This marked the beginning of his role as a preacher, a position that would become one of the defining aspects of his life.

St. Anthony's abilities as a preacher were so remarkable that he was sent to various cities across Italy and France to spread the teachings of the Catholic Church. His sermons were not only spiritually enriching but also practical, addressing the daily concerns of ordinary people. St. Anthony's skill in connecting with diverse audiences made him a beloved figure. His ability to "find" people where they were and bring them to deeper faith is part of the reason he is now recognized as the patron saint of finding lost things.

In addition to his role as a preacher, St. Anthony took on the responsibility of writing

theological works, contributing valuable insights to the understanding of Christian doctrine. His writings showcased his intellectual depth and further solidified his reputation as a scholar within the Franciscan community.

Despite his success as a preacher and writer, St. Anthony did not shy away from other roles. At times, he served as a nurse, tending to the sick and infirm with love and dedication. This compassionate side of St. Anthony endeared him to many, as he embodied the principles of selfless service and humility.

St. Anthony's life journey, marked by transitions from scholar to preacher, and from preacher to caregiver, illustrates the richness of his experiences and the versatility of his character. He died just outside Padua on June 13, 1231, at just 36 years old.

The diversity of Anthony's life shows us that God's plan for us often moves in different directions. It should remind us to pray for those who are seeking jobs. They may be fellow parishioners or family members or even the person in the mirror. Pray that they may be directed to the work that God wants them to do, and to remember that Jesus will be there waiting to help them in every new experience. ■



# Drop in on the Lord

The coming of summer allows us the opportunity to get out more. The cold of winter is over, and we can move about much more freely. One of the things we can do during these summer months is to make some visits to Catholic Churches and shrines. These stops will help us to cultivate our silent prayer and will support the development of our faith.

Churches are beautiful and serene, and they invite us to appreciate a blend of spirituality and cultural richness. The architectural splendor, the intricate stained-glass windows and the ornate sculptures nourish not only our minds but our souls.

Summer is a great time to also make pilgrimages to Catholic shrines. These shrines often have outdoor spaces for prayer and reflection, giving us another opportunity to commune with our God. There are shrines all over the country and the world, sometimes local, sometimes involving travel. The summer warmth allows for a more comfortable and enjoyable journey. Pilgrims often find solace and inspiration in visiting these revered places, greatly deepening their spiritual lives and coming to know their Catholic faith better.

The beauty of nature and of the buildings that we visit remind us not only of the beauty of creation but of the gifts that humans have been given to build magnificent works that honor God. We are also reminded of the beauty of our own souls. And the design and details of the churches and shrines give us insight into the communities of faith outside of our own parish.

A visit to a holy place doesn't need to wait for Sundays. It can be a trip of its own, or a part of a larger vacation experience. When you are planning an excursion, look around for a Church to attend Mass or a shrine to visit. You often don't have to go a long way. There are many churches and shrines throughout the country. For example, Washington D.C. isn't just the home to our government; it boasts many shrines and holy places for contemplation and prayer.

These visits will certainly strengthen us but can also help us to evangelize. When we return, we can talk about our experiences with friends, family and coworkers. If only one person asks, "Why did you visit a Church?" you will have an opportunity to share your faith with them. And who knows what benefit may come from that conversation. ■

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## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Father Robert includes a special remembrance for all Franciscan Mission Associates and their benefactors 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, OFM at Franciscan Mission Associates,  
P.O. Box 598, Dept. 4245, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

# Taking the First Step in Evangelization

We give a special name to the four men who wrote the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are known as the Four Evangelists. The Gospels (the word means Good News) that they gave us are God's Word, and they communicate to us the words and deeds of Jesus while He was on earth. They hold a privileged place, but we are called to be evangelists too. We can write a "gospel" of our own by sharing our faith with others. How do we do that? Here are some tips:

**Prayer:** Begin by praying for guidance and wisdom in your efforts to share the faith. Ask God to lead you to those who are open to hearing about Catholicism and to give you the words to speak.

**Educate Yourself:** Take the time to deepen your understanding of the Catholic faith. Read the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and other spiritual works. Attend seminars, workshops or classes offered by your parish to learn more about evangelization and apologetics. Use technology like podcasts to enhance your faith as well.

**Live Your Faith:** Let your life be a witness to the truth of the Gospel. Live out the teachings of the Church with love, joy and integrity. Your actions can speak volumes about the beauty and truth of Catholicism.

**Start Conversations:** Look for opportunities to talk about your faith with others. This could be with family, friends, colleagues or even

strangers you meet in daily life. Be respectful of others' beliefs and open to dialogue.

**Share Your Story:** Personal testimony is a powerful tool for evangelization. Share how your faith has impacted your life and how you've encountered God in your journey. Be honest and vulnerable and allow others to see the difference that faith has made for you.

**Use Social Media:** Utilize social media platforms to share Catholic content, such as inspirational quotes, articles, videos or personal reflections. Engage with others in online discussions about faith-related topics.

**Invite Others:** Invite people to Mass, parish events or prayer groups. Offer to pray with them or for them if they're going through a difficult time. Sometimes a simple invitation can be the first step for someone to encounter Christ.

**Be Patient and Persistent:** Evangelization is a process that takes time and often involves planting seeds that may not immediately bear fruit. Be patient with others and continue to pray for them, trusting in God's timing and grace.

Remember that evangelization is ultimately about leading others to encounter the love and mercy of Jesus Christ. We plant seeds, but God gives the growth. Stay rooted in prayer, trust in the Holy Spirit, and rely on the grace of God as you seek to share the Catholic faith with others. ■

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## 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 to:

Franciscan Mission Associates, P.O. Box 598, Dept. 4244, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

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# Special Novena Schedule

## Summer 2024

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 summer months, the Special Novena schedule is:

May 7 – May 15 and May 16 – May 24 .....	Feast of St. Dymphna (May 15)
May 9 – May 17 and May 18 – May 26 .....	Novena of the Holy Spirit
May 30 – June 7 .....	Feast of the Sacred Heart
June 5 – June 21 .....	Feast of St. Anthony (June 13)
June 22 – June 30 .....	St. Anthony for a safe summer
July 18 – July 26 .....	Feast of St. Anne
August 2 – August 19 .....	St. Anthony (in Padua)
August 7 – August 15 .....	Assumption of Our Lady
August 19 – August 27 .....	St. Monica Novena
Sept. 2 – to Sept. 19 .....	St. Jude Novena

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

**Fr. Robert, OFM at Franciscan Mission Associates**  
**P.O. Box 598, Dept. 4241, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598**



### MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE: BE A MONTHLY MISSION SPONSOR

Every small donation makes a significant impact on the lives of children, the elderly and the sick in our missions. Becoming a Monthly Mission Sponsor means joining a community committed to compassionate action.

Why Become a Franciscan Mission Sponsor?

- **Prayers and Support:** Your intentions are included in our friar missionaries' daily prayers and Masses.
- **Make a Difference:** Your gifts support our friars' vital work, allowing you to be an active part of their mission.
- **Flexibility:** Our program offers the freedom to modify or cancel your sponsorship at any time, with no obligation.

Join our mission of kindness. Contact us to start your impactful journey.

Fr. Robert, OFM at Franciscan Mission Associates  
PO Box 598, Dept. J, Mount Vernon, NY 10551-0598

<https://franciscanmissionassoc.org/franciscan-mission-sponsors>