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SPRING 2008

Caring for our Sick Brothers



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THE FRANCISCANS
ST. ANTHONY'S GUILD
4 Jersey Street, East Rutherford, NJ 07073-1012



Spring 2008

Dear Friends of St. Anthony,

*Extending his arms on the cross like wings,
Christ embraces all who come to him,
Sheltering them in his wounds.*

As we prepare to celebrate the great feast of Easter, I pray that these words of St. Anthony may become a reality for you and those you love. May the risen Lord always embrace you and shelter you in his love.

In this issue of *The Anthonian*, I am excited to share the story of Fr. Francis Soucy, the guardian and director of Holy Name Community in Ringwood, N.J. It is Fr. Francis and his staff who care for the Franciscan Friars who need skilled medical care. Because of your generosity, these men who devoted their lives to the Gospel are able to spend their final years in a community of their brothers.

We Franciscans know that it is the sacrifices of the members of St. Anthony's Guild that make our life and ministry possible, and we continue to be most grateful to you.

In St. Anthony,

Fr. John T. Piccione, OFM
Director of St. Anthony's Guild



COVER: Fr. Francis Soucy, OFM, talks with Fr. Arthur Murray, OFM, a resident of Holy Name Community in northern New Jersey.

PHOTO CREDITS:

Br. Octavio Duran, OFM, cover, pgs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 33.

THE ANTHONIAN (ISSN 1060-0345) (USPS 026-880) is published quarterly by THE FRANCISCANS (Holy Name Province), St. Anthony's Guild, 4 Jersey St., East Rutherford NJ 07073-1012. Copyright © 2008 by St. Anthony's Guild. All rights reserved. Volume 82, No. 1, Spring 2008. Member of the Catholic Press Association. Editorial and design ministry: Jocelyn Thomas, Phil Jacobs, Br. Octavio Duran, OFM, Fr. Cassian A. Miles, OFM, Fr. Russell Becker, OFM. Printing: R.K. Graphics. Membership in St. Anthony's Guild is ten dollars (\$10) annually and includes THE ANTHONIAN. Single copy price: \$1. Third Class Nonprofit Postage paid at Paterson, N.J. and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. Anthony's Guild, 4 Jersey St., East Rutherford NJ.

the Anthonian

Love at Work®

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Fr. Francis Soucy, OFM, for 21 years has ministered at Holy Name Community in Ringwood, N.J., which serves infirm friars needing short- or long-term care.

Francis House in Camden, N.J., is growing as a resource, providing meals, educational programs, arts and crafts, and other supportive services for many groups.



THE ANTHONIAN shows God's Love at Work® in today's world through the ministries of the Franciscan Friars of Holy Name Province supported by the generosity of the members of St. Anthony's Guild.



The First 50 Years for a Virginia Parish

By Mary Battista

Welcome to Triangle – A Place in History.” So reads the sign that welcomes visitors to Triangle, Va., as they exit Route 95 onto Joplin Road. Tucked away on a side road paralleling the entry to the famous Quantico Marine Corps Base sits St. Francis of Assisi Church and School, a community that has given much to the people of the area. It didn’t always have a place in

Triangle’s history. Fifty years ago, the Franciscan community didn’t exist. In 2007, the 1,880 registered families proudly celebrated where they’ve been and what they’ve accomplished since 1957. It was in 1954 that Rev. Daniel Meehan, a Navy chaplain at the Quantico Marine Corps Base, proposed to Bishop Peter Ireton of Richmond that a new parish be established adjacent to the base

in Triangle to serve the significant number of Catholic families there. Many of these young families wanted to have a Catholic school available for their children which could not be provided on the base. The bishop recognized the wisdom of Fr. Meehan’s proposal and purchased 20 acres of land on Fuller Heights Road. Knowing the Franciscan friars of Holy Name Province, who, at

the time, served a large mission territory in Southside Virginia, he approached Father Celsus Wheeler, OFM, Provincial Minister, requesting that the friars assume the pastoral care of the new parish. Fr. Celsus quickly accepted the bishop’s proposal. In May 1956, he named Father Gervase McMillen, OFM, who had just retired from many years of service as a Navy chaplain, as founding pastor.



The Triangle community was joined by other friars and clergy for the celebration. From left, Fr. Francis McHugh, OFM, Fr. Robert Menard, OFM, Fr. Charles Miller, OFM (pastor), Br. Christopher VanHaight, OFM, Most Rev. Paul Loverde, D.D., bishop of the Arlington, Va., Diocese, Provincial Minister John O'Connor, OFM, Fr. Robert Cilinski, Fr. Gene Pistacchio, OFM, and Fr. Louis Iasiello, OFM.

Fr. Gervase moved ahead, securing the services of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, N.Y. to staff the proposed school, which broke ground on Jan. 20, 1957. Soon after, however, Fr. Gervase had to resign his office due to illness; in April, he was replaced by Father Patrick Adams, OFM. Fr. Patrick leased a small house on Kerill Road, which was later purchased, for use as the parish rectory, as well as a duplex house for the Franciscan Sisters.

The new school building was completed by the fall, and Mass was offered for the first time in the auditorium on Sept. 8, 1957. The congregation, over 90 percent of which were Marine Corps families, had to stand during the services because chairs had not yet arrived. The new school opened at the same time, with 143 pupils registered for the first three grades. By 1960, the school had seven grades

in operation and 300 students. Unfortunately, just 10 years later, in June 1970, it was deemed financially impossible to keep the school open and it was closed.

Transformation in the 1970s

In the fall of 1973, Father Angelus DeMarco, OFM, arrived as the new pastor of the 112 registered families. A liturgist by training, Fr. Angelus moved quickly to create a more appropriate worship environment. Since the establishment of the parish, all church services had been held in a large, stark multi-purpose space that also served as the school gymnasium. Fr. Angelus suggested converting an unused room into a chapel for daily Mass; it had freshly painted walls, a wooden altar and pews, and a decorative mosaic on the wall behind the sanctuary.

All the work was done by the

parishioners. To quote the late Fr. Angelus, "Let's just say that Father had an idea and the parishioners took it from there. We never had a church, we just had a space. The enthusiasm, dedication and loyalty manifested by our people demonstrate their great desire for something they so richly deserved – a church where Christ could be brought to them and they to Christ." The result was one conducive to worship.

The vision of Fr. Angelus never faded. After he became pastor, his goal was to see the school become active again, providing a value-oriented academic environment for the children of the parish. Often frustrated, but never discouraged, he petitioned the diocese for permission to reopen the school. The tasks of renovating classrooms, hiring faculty, and ordering furniture and text books were a challenge. Once again, the members pulled together and made it happen. After having been closed for almost a decade, St. Francis of Assisi School reopened in 1979 and welcomed students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

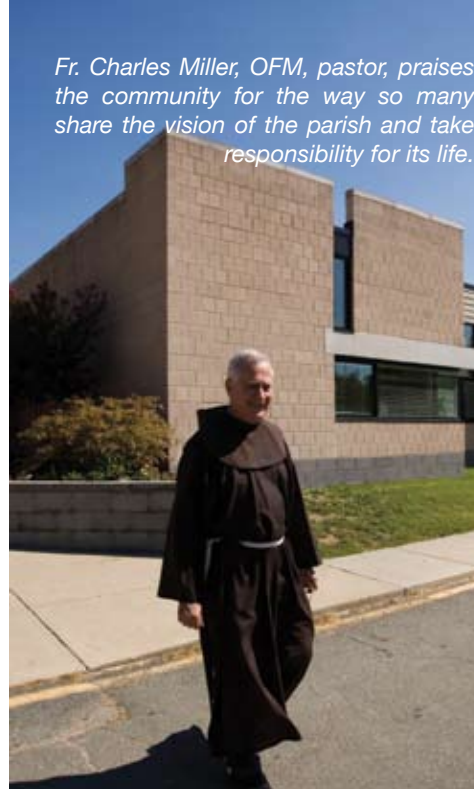
With the renovation of the church and the reopening of the school behind him, Fr. Angelus announced that the parish would build a church in honor of its patron saint. Plans were made for a three-year fundraising campaign. For a parish with a history of financial hardship, the response to the campaign was heartwarming and the new church was constructed. Stained glass windows for the sanctuary were purchased from another parish staffed by the Franciscans, St. Patrick's in Buffalo, N.Y., where the old Gothic church was being demolished as the result of a parish merger. Unfortunately, Fr. Angelus did not live to see the new church completed. He died in August, 1984; the dedication ceremony took place the following November.

Growth in the 1980s

With new housing developments sprouting up in the Triangle area, the parish began growing rapidly during the 1980s, becoming less dependent on the military community. In 1991, Father John O'Connor, OFM, was assigned pastor. Shortly



Fr. John O'Connor with Mary Battista, center, and friends.



Fr. Charles Miller, OFM, pastor, praises the community for the way so many share the vision of the parish and take responsibility for its life.

after his arrival, the newly-ordained Father Mark Reamer, OFM, and Brother Paul Santoro, OFM, joined the parish staff. This was the first time there were three friars living in the parish.

Except for the beautiful church completed in 1984, most of the parish facilities were outdated and in need of repair. Recognizing the projected growth in the Triangle area, Fr. John, who is now Holy Name's Provincial Minister, expanded the staff and established new programs to meet future needs of the parish community. During his tenure as pastor, the success of a capital campaign drive resulted in a new parish center that houses four classrooms, a full-service cafeteria/dining hall, gymnasium, library, and office space for school and faith formation personnel.

The parish council was reorganized and several committees were formed, including liturgy, art and environment, communications, finance, buildings and grounds, and

hospitality. In addition, school and religious education boards were formed.

According to Margaret Bruni, Director of Faith Formation, "this parish exemplifies what it means to be Church. The connection we share, grounded in a common belief that God is present among us, will carry us into a future of exploring new ways to be Church."

In 1991, Fr. John initiated a parish outreach program. The goals of the program included the creation of a hospital visitation ministry, a bereavement group, a "Come Home" program for alienated and inactive Catholics, Francis House, and a church nursery. Francis House was opened in the heart of Williamstown, a low-income, high-immigrant townhouse development in Dumfries, Va. Exemplifying the Franciscan charism, it was located in the midst of people — in the heart of a community.

The food pantry, stocked mostly from food donated by parishioners,

which is brought up by children during the offertory procession at every weekend Mass, allows for the distribution of food to needy families. Anne Tunney, Director of Outreach, said, "The strength of the program is that it is in a neighborhood that continues to have pressing needs in a county without extensive public transportation."

A program called "Mommy and Me" teaches mothers survival English, and basic living skills, including how to use unfamiliar foods from the pantry, create new recipes, and refill a prescription.

Fr. Robert Menard, OFM, exchanges greetings with parishioners.

Stability and Celebration

The school has seen a number of changes over Dr. Tricia Barber's 13-year tenure as principal. The curriculum has been enhanced in the areas of art, Spanish, physical education/health, and technology. St. Francis School was the first in the Arlington diocese to institute an organized middle school format, which has been used as a model for other schools.

"As a Franciscan Catholic School in our diocese, our families come from all over. Many outside the geographical parish boundaries are drawn to us by the experience of the liturgies and warm hospitality of our friars," said Dr. Barber.

Father Charles Miller, OFM, pastor since September 2006, praised the parish atmosphere.

"St. Francis Parish has a great spirit — the Spirit," he said, adding, "One can experience it in the enthusiasm and attention with which the Eucharist is celebrated, in the way we work together as partners, and in our concern for the whole community — especially the vulnerable and needy. It is easy and enjoyable to minister with these parishioners. They are lively, participative, and



multi-gifted. I especially like the way so many share the vision of the parish and take responsibility for its life.”

The parish’s year-long golden jubilee celebration concluded in November 2007 with a festive dinner attended by parishioners and friars affiliated with St. Francis Parish. A slide show presentation highlighted the 50 years of parish history.

At a special Sunday liturgy, the parish celebrated a half-century of journeying in love, faith and compassion guided by the vision of St. Francis. The presider, Bishop Paul Loverde of Arlington, stated: “Certainly here, with Christ, you, the parishioners, have been bringing God to our world. For these 50 years, you have been building up his house, the Church. You have been repairing, in that sense, this community of faith, because here, through the sacraments, preaching and your involvement, you are becoming more and more the

house of God. As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, only when God is present and acknowledged, is human dignity secure. Be light, hope, peace and life as you bring God into the waiting world.”

Who knows what the Catholic Church and St. Francis Parish will be like in 2057? Some of the younger people who celebrated this anniversary will be part of that 100th commemoration. Whatever new directions the Church and parish may take, this community will be centered on the Eucharist, strengthened through partnership in faith and ministry, and sent forth to renew the world in which they live.

— *Mary Battista, a member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish since 1968, has been involved in many ministries of the Triangle community.*

Information about the parish is available at www.stfrancis.org



Compassionate Care

The Ministry of Fr. Francis Soucy

By Br. Octavio Duran, OFM

Inspired by the missionary concept of serving God in foreign lands, 14-year-old Francis Soucy applied in 1954 to St. Joseph Seraphic Seminary in Callicoon, N.Y., about 90 miles north of New York City.

“Being a missionary was a romantic idea back in those days. I was hoping to go to the Orient, China in particular, but I never got there,” said Father Francis Soucy, OFM. (Our mission there ended with the communist invasion). He serves as guardian of Holy Name Friary in Ringwood, N.J., and also as the executive administrator of Holy Name

Community, a 29-bed skilled-nursing care facility for Franciscans located adjacent to scenic Ringwood Park. The two entities, friary and community, are only legally distinct because Holy Name is a licensed nursing home.

Fr. Francis did not go across the world to fulfill his mission. The Lord had other plans for him not far from his native Manchester, N.H. After a successful career as an English professor and chaplain at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pa., Fr. Francis faced a reality that transformed his ministerial life.

“I took a sabbatical year for



During the 2007 anniversary activities, the St. Francis Parish “time capsule” was opened and the parishioners got a glimpse of parish life in 1957.



Fr. Francis, left, greets Fr. Arthur Murray, OFM. Above, the friars gather in the chapel for daily Mass. Right, Fr. Francis and Fr. Finian Riley, OFM, discuss the luncheon menu.

research in Boston. During that time, my stepmother became ill with terminal cancer. Since she did not want to enter a nursing home, I provided daily home care for her. After that sabbatical year, I took a leave of absence to live at home with my stepmother during her final months. I learned much about the needs of a dying person,” said Fr. Francis, while walking through the halls of Holy Name Community.

“When my stepmother died, a French-Canadian religious group called the Sisters of St. Ann in nearby Boston needed a chaplain, and I applied for the position. I spent a lot of time with the infirm sisters during that year,” Fr. Francis said.

At the end of that year, in 1987, the newly-elected Provincial Minister, Father Anthony Carrozzo, OFM, asked Fr. Francis if he would be interested in assuming the responsibility of caring for the infirm friars for whom a new facility was being built. According to Fr. Anthony, Fr. Francis’ compassion for the sick and the dying combined with his administrative experience qualified him to serve in this ministry.



Comfort and Convenience

Surrounded by nature, yet conveniently located, the friary is only 40 miles from New York City and 15 minutes from both the New York State Thruway and Route 287. Licensed professionals monitor residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The dedicated and competent staff offers exceptional care for the friars who often develop loving relationships with the workers and their families.



Devoted staff members such as Lola Singh help Fr. Francis keep Holy Name Community functioning at its high level.

“Because sometimes there are empty beds in the friary,” said Fr. Francis, “it provides short-term and long-term care not only for friars of the Province but also for male religious of other Franciscan communities.”

The Province invited other Franciscan communities to send their sick members to Holy Name more than 10 years ago as an outreach ministry to other friars and to help the friary financially.

Capuchin friars of St. Mary’s Province and of the Province of the Sacred Stigmata, and Friars of the of the Atonement began using Holy Name for their sick members when the friary became licensed by the state of New Jersey.

For members of these Franciscan communities seeking temporary rehabilitation after a medical procedure, this facility has been helpful during their recovery. Rehabilitated friars are grateful for the compas-

sionate care they receive which enable them to return to ministry in other friaries.

“I have nothing but praise for the people who cared for me during the time of my rehabilitation,” said Father Felix McGrath, OFM, a staff member of St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City. He spent three months at Holy Name Community recovering from a broken shoulder.

Even though Fr. Francis’ father did not consider joining the Franciscans the best choice for his son, Holy Name Province would gently disagree. The now 46-years professed friar serves one of the most important internal ministries of the Province.

“I have two kinds of ministry. On the one hand, I am guardian to the friars, and, on the other, I am the chief executive officer of the nursing home. This latter responsibility is the most challenging for me. Deal-

ing with a large staff is not easy, nor is meeting the demands of the state and federal regulations,” said Fr. Francis, who depends on his qualified staff to make sure that the friars receive the best care possible.

“Our staff knows we differ from many nursing homes when making health decisions for the friars,” Fr. Francis said.

“This difference occurs because of the Catholic and Franciscan traditions that make us unique.” According to Fr. Francis, when a friar is approaching the end of his life, community members gather around his bed to pray the prayers for the dying and the rosary, to talk about his life, and to sing familiar songs.

“The staff joins us in that environment, so that fear of death begins to dissipate,” Fr. Francis said.

“What we are trying to do is to make an end of life beautiful, and I mean beautiful.”

Fr. Francis points out that friars are hospitalized only when it is absolutely necessary, and when a positive result from the hospitalization is expected.

“Our medical director and our medical specialist know and respect our views on healthcare and on dying. Rather than die in the hospital, friars come home to Holy Name for their last days to welcome Sister Death.”

“The community celebrates the Sacrament of the Sick four times a year, which brings comfort to those who, at one time, administered the sacraments to those in need.

Traditions and Activities

Holy Name Community is a place where friars help each other to live well in their infirm conditions.

Fr. Francis believes that the mission is never over.

“It is the day-to-day living with one another, trying to relinquish one’s own mind of self-caring, and turning it around into wanting to care for somebody else, that is important,” he said. “We try to redirect the natural self-interest instinct toward a Gospel self-less concern for the other sick friars.”

Although a director of activities provides organized programs, casual activities are more popular with Holy Name residents. One activity that all friars enjoy is the weekly visit to a local restaurant for dinner. The friars also attend programs offered by local libraries, go to theatrical and musical productions in the area, and regularly shop at a popular bookstore.

Each day, the friars gather for the Eucharist and evening prayer. Once a month on First Friday, they have a Holy Hour that closes with Benediction. They also pray the rosary communally, make the Stations of the Cross, and annually participate in the complete Holy Week services. Each month, a Mass is celebrated for the intentions of the benefactors of Holy Name Friary.

Unlike a regular friary, which holds house chapters, Holy Name Community holds a residence council meeting. During these meetings, the friars express their views and offer suggestions on matters that

affect their lives. Friars sometimes volunteer for light duties, such as lecturing at Mass, arranging books in the library, and collecting the concelebrant stoles after Mass. It is not a surprise to have a volunteer friar cutting the weeds outside during the summer.

"Sometimes friars want to help in simple ways that will benefit others and that will contribute to the smooth operation of the friary," Fr. Francis said.

Having served in responsible positions all their lives, they benefit from assuming some tasks for which they can be responsible.

"I love this place so much," said Father Peter Sheridan, OFM.

"I am thankful to all those who continue to make this way of life possible," said Fr. Peter, 94. He is the second oldest friar in the Province, and, ironically, was the novice master for five of the friars at Holy Name, including Fr. Francis.



Among the memories Fr. Francis has of his novice master one unfortunate memory looms. One morning when it was Fr. Francis' responsibility to arouse the community at 5 a.m., Fr. Peter summoned him to his office, and told Fr. Francis that he rang the wake-up bell late.

"According to my watch, I was on time, but not according to Fr. Peter's watch. He gave me a severe penance, and that was to miss Sunday night recreation, something all novices looked forward to, because of their observance of silence during most other times," Fr. Francis said.

When Fr. Peter was asked about that incident, he smiled.

"I can't remember that. There were so many novices at that time."

After many years in this ministry, Fr. Francis is happy that he accepted Fr. Anthony's request to minister to the sick friars many of whom have been world missionaries.

Maryknoll Bishop James Walsh defined a missionary as one who goes to a place where he is needed. If his definition is correct, then Fr. Francis has fulfilled his initial desire when he entered the Order. He has become a missionary.

—Br. Octavio is art director for The Anthonian.

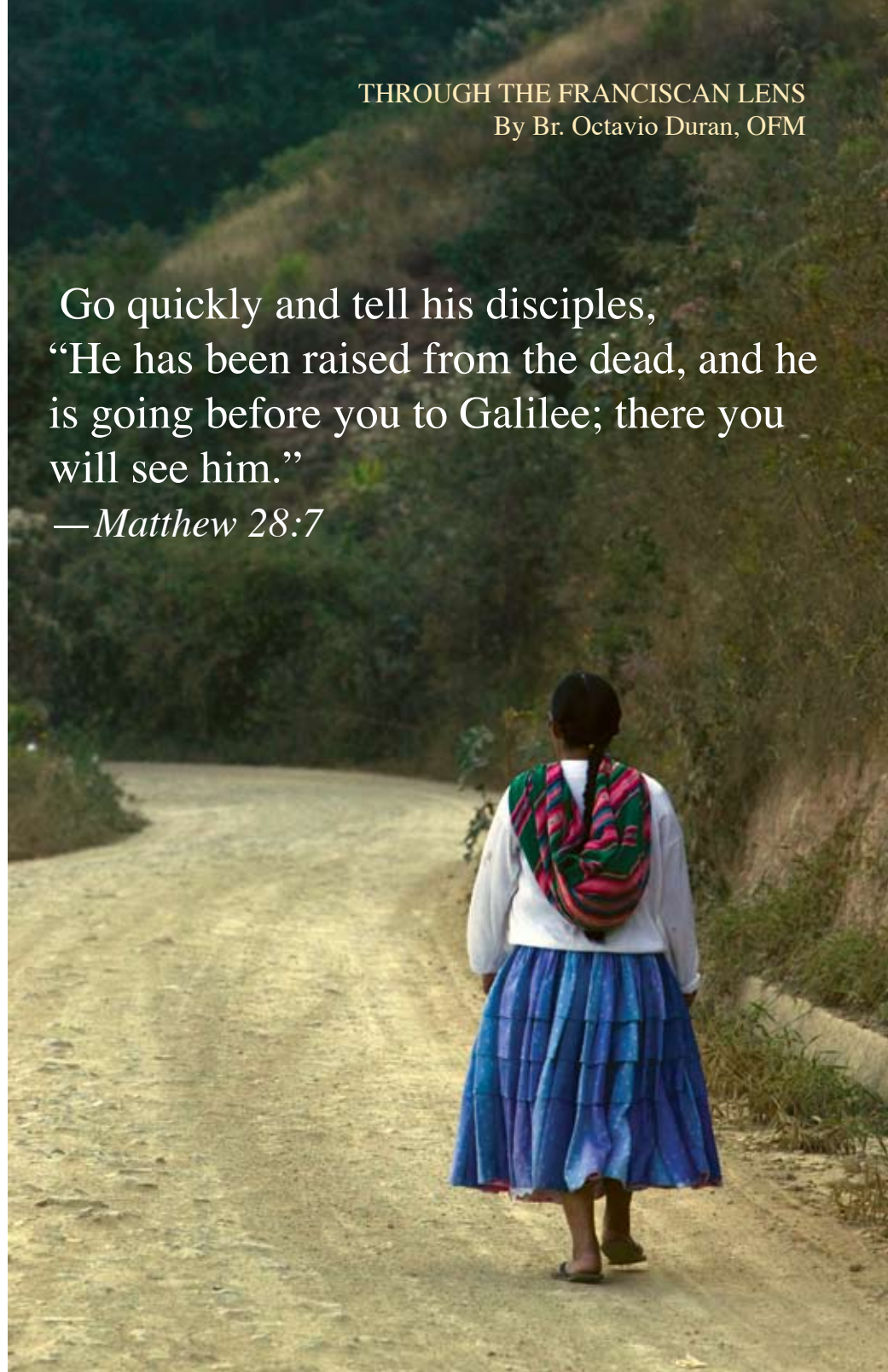
Fr. Conrad Loftus, OFM, and Fr. Francis share a moment in a sunny hallway just before Christmas 2007. Fr. Conrad, a professed friar for 58 years, died on Jan. 2 in Ringwood.

THROUGH THE FRANCISCAN LENS

By Br. Octavio Duran, OFM

Go quickly and tell his disciples,
"He has been raised from the dead, and he
is going before you to Galilee; there you
will see him."


—*Matthew 28:7*





“Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.”

—Mark 16:15



Alleluia,
the Lord is risen
as he foretold,
alleluia!

Christ Is Risen!

By Fr. Russell Becker, OFM

In the East, this is the way Christians say “hello” during Easter time. The response is: “He is truly risen!” In this very simple way, Christians proclaim Easter into their daily lives because they know it makes a big difference. It may seem difficult to keep up this Easter proclamation, but, wherever we go, we are charged with speaking the message of Easter. In good and happy times, in bad and sad times, we still say those words which remind us that God is with us and all things are possible, even rising from the dead: **Christ is risen! He is truly risen!** This is not always about exuberant proclamation, but it is always about confidence even in the most difficult of times, even in the face of every death-dealing experience that comes our way.



Easter renews our lives, we are called to share this message with the world. One of the most blessed gifts of Easter is the knowledge that we are constantly being given a second chance, a fresh start and that God is on our side.

Two very early images in Christian art, one from the East and one from the West, make this visible: the icon of the Resurrection and the image of the Good Shepherd.

He descended into hell. These words, which we speak when we profess the creed, are the subject of the icon of the Resurrection. Tradition says that Jesus went to the abode of the dead and freed all who were held

captive by death. The gates of death are broken open and lay in the form of a cross. The Risen Lord Jesus is lifting Adam and Eve from their graves, and bringing them redemption.

Since they are the parents of all human beings, the message is very clear: redemption is offered to each and every one of us as symbolized by our first parents (Note the other Old Testament figures who are also released). The broken locks and keys are reminders of the sins which have imprisoned us and have held us in the throes of death. So, we come to understand at Easter that if Adam and Eve can recover from their big mistake and sin, so can we. **Christ is risen from the dead, by death he conquered death and to those in the grave he granted life** (Byzantine Easter hymn)



I am the Good Shepherd.

This image of the young man holding a sheep on his shoulders was found on a wall in the catacombs in Rome. It is one of the earliest examples of Christian art. The early Church experienced some very difficult persecutions. Gathering each week was always dangerous and often filled with the sad news that members had been arrested and put to death. The bodies of the martyrs were buried with care in the catacombs.

The early Christians felt that the bond of love was not even broken in death. When they brought the bodies of the martyrs to lay them to rest, the first thing they would see was this image.

The words of Scripture were easily recalled: *I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be safe.* They could breathe a sigh of relief and know that the Good Shepherd would lovingly watch over their beloved deceased for he came *that we might have life and have it to the full.* After they prayed and buried the martyrs, it was time to go back out into the open where it could be dangerous. The last thing they saw was the image of the Good Shepherd and they knew that there was nothing to fear. The promise of the Good Shepherd gave them strength: *they shall never perish...no one shall ever snatch them from my hand.* The image reminds us that all are cared for, the weak are protected, and the lost will be brought back and brought back gently and lovingly. Remember how slaves were punished for running away and how animals were often beaten when they got lost? No such fear with the Good Shepherd! Every Easter this image is recalled to give us confidence and peace. **We ask you, Lord Jesus, that you the Good Shepherd, take care of us, your sheep, defend us from abandonment and harm, and crown us with eternal life in your kingdom. May you grant this who are blessed, glorious and worthy of praise for ever and ever. Let all humble sheep, all the faithful say: Amen, Alleluia!** (Easter Sermon of St. Anthony).

These images can help us to keep Easter faith alive in us and in those we meet. When it seems like the power of death looms very large and we have been brought low by our sins, other's sins or some awful problem, remember who reaches down to raise us up and give us new life: Christ the Risen Lord!

When we face difficult times, are lost, have strayed, are afraid, are tempted to give up and wonder if being a Christian is worth the effort, Christ the Good Shepherd still cares for us. Remember: **Christ is risen! He is truly risen!**

Reflection questions to consider:

1. How have you noticed the power of Easter in your life?
2. How have you shared that good news with others?

Christ as the Good Shepherd is found as a fresco in the Crypts of Lucina, ceiling of the Cubiculum of the Good Shepherd, catacomb of Callixtus in Rome (mid-third century)

— Fr. Russell is director of the Franciscan Missionary Union of Holy Name Province. His monthly meditation can be found at www.hnp.org/fmu

CAMDEN'S FRANCIS HOUSE

Serving the AIDS Community and Parish Ministries

by Jocelyn Thomas

What do you call it when a vibrant ministry meets a parish that desperately needs more space? In Camden, N.J., you call it an opportunity for a win-win situation.

At St. Anthony of Padua Church, in Camden, N.J., Francis House — a successful ministry for persons affected by HIV/AIDS — has brought new life to the parish.

The ministry was founded in 1996 by friars from Holy Name Province, some Franciscan sisters, and Secular Franciscans (SFO). Director Sue Piliro, SFO, who has been with Francis House since its founding, describes how the ministry began “around one table in the church basement. The premise was a simple meal centered around Jesus. Needless to say, we have grown over the years.”

After a short stay in that basement, the ministry moved across the parking lot into a former convent, and then became known as Francis House. As Piliro said, though it

may not grab the headlines it once did, “this virus is not going away. Every 14 seconds a child is made an orphan by HIV/AIDS.” New Jersey ranks fifth in the country with HIV/AIDS cases.

Francis House serves a five-county area, and is unique in the combination of services it provides. Last year, it was open 114 days, welcomed 259 guests and 179 volunteers, and served 3,776 meals. Countless Thanksgiving baskets and Christmas gifts were also distributed. As donations arrive, whether they are food, clothes, or personal care items, they are neatly arranged, and then made available to those in need.

Welcoming Programs

Francis House provides a place for support groups, educational pro-

grams, and arts and crafts. There is also a strong spiritual component to Francis House. Each meal begins with a prayer, with a circle of joined hands extending around the dining room. The former chapel serves as a place where people of all faiths come to pray. Piliro arranges for several retreats each year.

All of the programs are open to anyone who wishes to be part of the Francis House community — those who carry the HIV virus, and those who do not. Confidentiality is a key consideration at Francis House, and while many speak openly of their situation in life, no one is ever asked to disclose whether they have the virus.

Piliro, who lost two brothers to AIDS, addresses St. Anthony of Padua congregations each year on Francis House Sunday. She reminds the parish, “As long as there is one person that needs Francis House, we will be there for them. Do you know what they call that little piece of property over there? They call it *sacred ground*. It is one place where they can come and know they are welcome, they can be themselves, they can share, and they can also have their mind, body and soul nourished.”

That sense of a welcoming place is perhaps the most important aspect of Francis House. Food, healthcare information, and counseling can be found at other places

Sue Piliro, right, holds photos of her two brothers who succumbed to AIDS.

in the Camden area — but not in a setting where all feel like family. And it's a big family. There is a core group of regular guests and volunteers, including members of Camden's Franciscan Volunteer Ministry. In addition to the “regulars,” hundreds of high school, college and parish groups visit Francis House each year through the nearby Romero Center's Urban Challenge program.

As Francis House grew over the years, the parish relinquished oversight of the ministry in order to attract greater funding and institutional support. Unfortunately, with the support came some restrictions on how and when the space could be used.

Father William “Jud” Weiksna, OFM, arrived as pastor of St. Anthony's in the summer of 2005. He soon became an occasional visitor to Francis House. While impressed by the ministry, he did not understand some of the restrictions





Fr. John Coughlin, OFM, teaches an ESL (English as a second language) course at Francis House.

placed upon it. With the growth of many of the other ministries at St. Anthony's, and facing an acute shortage of meeting space in parish facilities, Fr. Jud approached Piliro about the possibility of moving Francis House to another location to give other parish ministries room to grow. A critical event took place in the summer of 2006 that would change his mind. Fr. Jud participated in a Romero Center Retreat for Priests, and one of the sites visited was Francis House.

Creative Collaboration

"As a retreatant, I was encouraged to spend quality time with Sue and the guests, instead of just rushing in for lunch and rushing back to my office," Fr. Jud said. "I was able to see Francis House from a new perspective and recognized the incredible gift that it is to the parish. I also realized that the ministry had become so identified with the space that a move could cause untold damage to the spirit of Francis House. I resolved that as

long as I'm pastor, Francis House will remain right where it is."

The challenge of how to accommodate the other parish ministries remained. Fr. Jud brought up the matter once again with Piliro, who was no stranger to the needs of the parish — not only was she a member of the parish council, a lector, a Eucharistic minister, and a former president of the PTA, but she also cooked dinner for the friars three days a week. This time, Fr. Jud started the dialogue by confirming that the traditional Francis House ministry was not moving out.

Being creative types, Piliro and Fr. Jud envisioned a Francis House that could be open for its HIV/AIDS ministry not just two but three days a week. They imagined how, on other days, the space could be used for meetings of the youth group, RCIA, and parish council so they

Right, Fr. "Jud" Weiksnar, OFM, pastor of St. Anthony of Padua in South Jersey, was instrumental in making the new Francis House a reality.

would no longer need to meet in the friary living room or basement. They liked the idea of using part of the building for offices for development, religious education, and youth ministry. They asked why space couldn't also be found for 12-step groups to meet.

Being practical types, too, Piliro and Fr. Jud realized they would need to find financial resources if the new Francis House were to become reality. In February 2007, they invited the director of St. Anthony's Guild, Father John Piccione, OFM, and members of the parish finance council to lunch at Francis House. Before Fr. John could finish his hoagie, Piliro and Fr. Jud had shared their dream for Francis House, and asked if the Guild and Holy Name Province could work together to help the parish retake responsibility for the Francis House building and the ministry. To their delight, Fr. John expressed cautious optimism, and even added his own hopes and dreams.



New Resources, New Space

Within the next few days, and after several prayers, phone calls and e-mails, an arrangement was worked out among all parties. On June 1, at the Friday meal, Piliro and Fr. Jud joyfully announced to the Francis House community that the ministry was again under the auspices of the parish and the Province, and that it would now be open three days a week. Piliro would be not only the full-time director for Francis House but would also oversee all aspects of the building, including the adding of new ministries.

Today, Francis House's second floor includes offices for youth ministry, development, and religious education, and for mentors of an organization specializing in caring for babies with HIV. The dining and living rooms are used for meetings of the youth group, development committee, parish council, and RCIA. Staff members of the parish and school also use the site for days of reflection.

Two guest rooms are even available for friars' guests. Most significantly, the traditional Francis House ministry now takes place three days a week.

Thanks to the generosity of St. Anthony's Guild, and the hard work of the local community, a time and space challenge was turned into a real win-win situation.

— Jocelyn Thomas is Director of Communications for Holy Name Province.

Two “P” Roles

By Br. Glenn Humphrey, OFM

A group of African-American teenagers gathered around me. Most were taller than I am, and they were certainly more agile and athletic. As they drew closer, one looked directly at me and said, “You’re not afraid of us, are you?” This statement certainly put a period — or maybe exclamation point — at the end of my first year at Rice High School in the Harlem section of New York City.

After having worked in Harlem for nine years at an outpatient mental health clinic associated with a small, private hospital, I had recently joined the school’s staff. I had felt frustrated and disappointed with what felt like a move away from good patient care toward an emphasis on paperwork.

Though I had been aware of Rice High School as a sort of icon in Harlem, I knew little about it. From my work at the hospital, however, I knew there were kids in the neighborhood needing a helping hand and an attentive ear because of abusive homes, drug abuse by parents, foster care, the loss of siblings and friends to street violence, and so on. I also knew that many kids in the area would never go near a mental health facility. So, after submitting my resume to several not-for-profit programs, my job at



Rice High School began.

How did I respond to the statement by this group of kids whose survival, it seems, often depends on engendering fear in those around them? “No, I’m not afraid,” and I went on to explain how I’d gotten to know each one of them over the course of the year. I spoke of situations we’d dealt with, recalled moments when we laughed together, and complimented them on positive things they had accomplished.

I was not afraid of any of them in this setting, but encountering these teenagers for the first time on the street, in their territory, where bravado is protective, would most likely have caused a different feeling in me.

Many people do not know a high school is inside the non-descript, beige building on the corner of 124th Street and Lenox Avenue. Rice, originally located in a building that is now home to the Franciscan Handmaids of Mary, opened in 1938 under the title of the founder of the Irish Christian Brothers, Blessed Edmund Rice. In 1940, the school

moved to its current location, a larger building that had been a YWCA.

The complexion of the student body has changed from Irish-American at its inception to African-American and Latino. Looking at the young men served by Rice, I cannot help but sense a connection between Edmund and Francis. I wonder if some of the same compassion and zeal that Francis felt once he saw beyond the brick-and-mortar church to feel the leper’s humanity didn’t also move Edmund. The rough street urchins that wandered the Waterford streets — stealing and fighting and annoying the gentry — were also seen as less than human.

I jokingly tell people that I have two jobs at the school and they both begin with “P.” Though I was hired as a psychologist, frequently one

will see me around school with a camera. My dad was a news photographer for the *Kansas City Star*, in the city where I grew up. Trying to walk in his footsteps, I spent my high school career taking photographs for the school newspaper and yearbook. This second P — photography — provides a comfortable entrée into the lives of these young men at sporting events, field trips, clubs, assemblies, and the like. The first P, then, is not so threatening when I approach a student and comment, “Looks like something is bothering you.”

So many stories! While school is in session, there is not much time to reflect. But when detention is over, basketball practice has finished, the corridors are quiet and only sirens from the streets break up the silence, I have a chance to think about the kids I have encountered



during the day. There is the boy who tolerates so much verbal abuse at home that his explosive anger is understandable. But his teachers don't know why he lashes out because he doesn't want to share his story. Understandably, these teachers have difficulty appreciating that what feels like a personal attack is really anger misdirected in a safe environment.

Then there is the youngster whose raucous, hollow laughter announces his presence before he is seen. "What you see is not me," he says. "I am trying to fit in and it is not working. I want to be myself and not some fake, but if I am loud and crack jokes, no one notices the nervous, uncomfortable me." And then I meet the kid who always seems so happy with a captivating grin on his face. But the big smile is really a wall that hides his deep sadness

over the loss of his father. Anger again pushes others away when they try to empathize. But gentle reassurance in a private space brings on a flood of tears.

There's also the young man pushed to consider suicide because of taunting over his assumed sexual orientation, and the boy who finally gets the courage to disclose years of physical and emotional abuse.

I thank God for somehow bringing me to Rice High School. What better place for a son of St. Francis of Assisi to be an instrument of peace, a sower of love, a bringer of pardon, a planter of hope, a whisperer of faith, a transmitter of light, an envoy of joy, and a sign of understanding.

— Br. Glenn lives at All Saints Friary in Harlem New York, N.Y.

My Franciscan Journey

Fr. William DeBiase, OFM

Any journey is composed of two time segments. The first is the path "to." This is the time of preparation for the journey. This ends. Like all endings, it is the beginning of something new.

Looking in the 20/20 rearview mirror, my first 24 years were the journey "to." I did not realize it until the panorama of life filled out.

The environment of a warm loving family, the education given by the Dominican Sisters of Amityville, N.Y., and the Marianist Brothers, the experience of the Korean War were all steps on the journey "to." The decisions that were made, and not made, went to make this part of the journey. During these years, I thought I was on a completely different journey. They were years of unfelt grace.

This part of the journey ended on the evening of Oct. 11, 1955 at approximately 6:45 p.m. It was then, standing on Broadway in lower Manhattan in front of the old downtown Fordham University, that everything came together. A voice said: I have let you travel other roads, I have let you dream other dreams, now do what you are supposed to do. The decision was made, no turning back.

It was the God moment. The journey "to" had ended.

On that evening on Broadway,



all the tugs and pulls disappeared. This was the dream. The next day, I called the Franciscan Vocation Office on 31st Street in midtown Manhattan.

I spent the next 10 years in the standard formation program of that time — seminary in Callicoon, N.Y., novitiate in Lafayette, N.J., Rye Beach, N.H., for philosophy, and four years at Holy Name College in Washington, D.C. An evolution took place during those years; when the journey began, my goal was to be a priest. Franciscan was the manner in which I would live this priesthood. Slowly, it became clear to me that it was no longer Priest-Franciscan but Franciscan-Priest. I was called to be first a Franciscan and the vocation to the priesthood would be *how* I lived that call. I was ordained on March 5, 1966. In September of that year, I left for Japan.

My 28 years in Japan were filled with all the things that go to make up life. Plenty of joy, and some disappointment, some success but quite a bit of failure, growth with the necessary means — pain.

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No matter what the case, the conviction that this was where I should be stayed firm. Thank God my years in Japan were colored by a variety of ministries including small parishes where the ordinary Sunday congregation was six (no misprint) to a medium parish of 250 families. For the last

18 years of my life in Japan, I was at the Franciscan Chapel Center.

The busyness and excitement of the Center was exhilarating. It took care of the foreign community in Tokyo and Japanese people who wished to come.

After nearly three decades in Japan, I asked for, and was granted, a sabbatical year. Part of the year was the fulfillment of a long-held dream, to work with people with leprosy. The original plan was for me to stay for about six months, but unfortunately I contracted some sort of bug. I lost a lot of weight in a short period of time, so my stay was cut short.

I returned to Japan and was given an opportunity to go to the Holy Land. The next two years, from 1994 to '96, were spent as a pilgrim guide, editor of the *Holy Land Review* and pastor of a small Filipino parish in Jerusalem.

A little sadness came into my life. For a lot of reasons, I returned to the States in 1996. It was, and still is, difficult to say that I am no longer part of Japan that had been so much a part of my life. In a sense it

will always be home.

From 1996 to 2002, I was at Siena College near Albany, N.Y. Once again, God blessed me with many hats. My main ministry was serving at the Wolf Road Chapel in Colonie, N.Y. This assignment was the best of several worlds. The

work at the Chapel was mainly sacramental, but on campus I was also the friar-in-residence at a dormitory.

There is nothing like working with young people to keep you young.

I also served as the chaplain for the Filipino community in Albany. All of these combined to make my almost six years at Siena gloriously joyful.

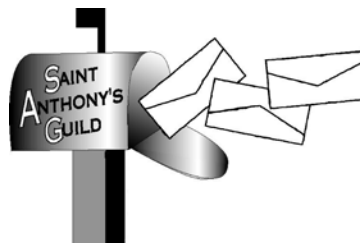
Finally, my journey has brought me to my present assignment in Philadelphia, Pa., working at St. Francis Inn, giving parish missions and retreats, and working as a part-time chaplain at a hospital. All of these are joyful ministries.

Perhaps in God's plan, all these stops I have made along the way are the continuing journey "to" that exists within the Franciscan journey — a journey within a journey.

I am sure that when I die and get before the Lord, he will say: Bill, you had such a good time while you were on earth, perhaps a few extra days in Purgatory are necessary.

—Fr. William is a member of Holy Name Province's Ministry of the Word.

My 28 years in Japan were filled with all the things that go to make up life.



... And Now From Our Readers

DID I LOSE A MEMORY?

Thank you, St. Anthony, for the many favors I have received when I have prayed and asked for your help! For months, I was looking for my late husband's war medals. I was afraid I may have given them away with one of his jackets, when we donated his clothes. I did not give up. I kept praying and, one day, I went back to our safe deposit box and looked again, even though I thought I had looked there before. They were there! How can I ever thank St. Anthony for this and all the help he has given me when I pray to him?

U.C., Canada

OUR DEAR PET

My husband and I had to go to see a doctor in Los Angeles because of his medical problems.

When we were getting ready to leave, we could not find our cat. We looked for about three hours and my husband did not want to leave. The cat is his constant companion. We were about to give up, when I prayed to St. Anthony. He helps me almost every day. Soon, we found the cat, who seems to sense when

we might go away and hides — this time he was in the bedroom. Thank God and St. Anthony we found her.

M. E., Nevada

WHERE ARE THOSE KEYS?

Please accept my offering for \$10 that I promised St. Anthony for the poor. I had lost a set of keys to my car. They were nowhere to be found. Right after I prayed, my daughter found the keys. Thank you, St. Anthony.

D. M., Clifton Park, N.Y.

FAITH CONFIRMED

I have always counted on St. Anthony. He has helped me in so many ways. I was always able to find things after I prayed to him, but even more, I think I helped my husband, who converted to the Faith four days before he died. At that time, when the priest asked him what name he would like for his confirmation, he said, "Anthony." Since I promised to donate to St. Anthony's Guild in gratitude, here is my first offering. Please pray for those in my family who have lost their faith. I desperately pray that they will come back.

E. W., Wabasha, Minn.

Tell us your story in 150 words or less, and it may be published in The Anthonian. Readers may also submit reactions to topics featured in the publication.

e-mail: communications@hnp.org

or write to: Fr. John Piccione, OFM, St. Anthony's Guild, 4 Jersey Street, East Rutherford NJ 07073-1012

CHECK THE BROWNIES

St. Anthony's help has brought us great joy. The gift my husband gave me on our 25th wedding anniversary was lost about two months ago. It was an engagement ring. He could not afford one when we first got married. It was such a touching surprise! We are now married 57 years, and I love it more than when he gave it to me.

I thought the ring fell off my finger in a parking lot. I was heartbroken and prayed that it would be found and returned. Then just the other day I found it. I went to the freezer to thaw some brownies and there was the ring in the pan. I have no idea how it got there, or what made me want brownies that day. We are so happy. Our trust in St. Anthony has only increased. We pray for his help and blessings every day. With our thanks, please accept this offering for your great work.

Mr. & Mrs. E., Canada

TEST RESULTS: NORMAL

I am sending this letter to tell you how wonderful St. Anthony helped me again. I pray to him daily; I love him so much. I think I keep him very busy, and I tell everyone about what a kind and great saint he is. I had a growth on my face that the doctors removed because it had changed color and started to bleed. The doctor was not sure what it was, or if it could be cancerous. I was afraid, and I prayed to my great friend. He always hears me and answers my prayers. This time I was really scared. I prayed that the tests

would come back negative, and for all my other health problems. Well, our wonderful saint came through again. I am so happy, everything came back normal! Our Lord really listens to this marvelous saint.

I would also like to say thank you for all the wonderful work the Guild does in spreading the news about the great saint's work. I hope this small donation will help in some way. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

K. S., Southhampton, Pa.

THE LIST GETS LONGER

St. Anthony came into my life six years ago. I was in church one Sunday, and an elderly lady began to speak to me and said that if I ever needed any help finding things, I should turn to St. Anthony. Two days later, my son called all upset. He had lost his wallet with all his ID. I told him about St. Anthony, but he did not believe. I did not give up though. I prayed really hard to St. Anthony. Later the same day, my son called and said he found his wallet. It must have fallen under the car. Since then, these are some of the things he has found for me: money, a prayer book, a coat, greeting cards, a purse, coupons and family pictures. I also believe that St. Anthony became a close friend of my son. I love them both very much!

A. B., Chicago, Ill.

Editor's Note: This magazine is now being identified by season rather than by month. This "Spring" issue was previously called the March issue.

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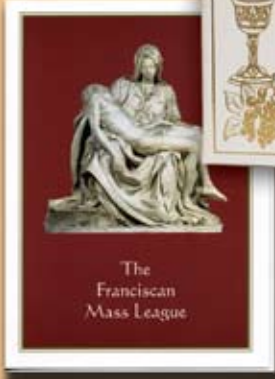
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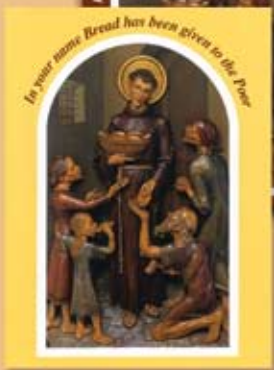
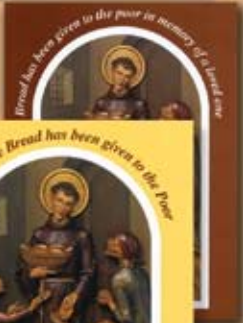
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