

Community of Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal

Summer, 2012

“There’s nothing like being totally God’s!” - Fr. Walter Ciszek, SJ

Dearest Friends,

What could be more valuable to us than the precious gift of faith? Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI offers this consideration to us in the year ahead.

For each of our Sisters this most precious gift has become the heart of our life. Having been touched in a radical way by a personal encounter with Jesus, our lives can never be the same! Through growing daily in faith, each of us has discovered the Gospel life - a life of following Jesus which gives us peace, joy and true meaning. On June 2nd, five of our Sisters attested to the primacy of faith in their lives by taking final vows in our Community, becoming totally God’s for life! What a joyous moment that was for us all! However, this moment didn’t come overnight, but by making many acts of faith through the years.

We cannot deny that for each of us faith requires a commitment, a deliberate commitment to grow in relationship with God each day. God longs for everyone to respond in love to His enormous love for us. Our prayer is that each of us may become totally God’s by committing ourselves to grow in relationship with Him in this “Year of Faith” and by giving Him permission to fulfill His unique plan for our lives.

Sincerely in Jesus and Mary,
Sr. Lucille with All Your Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal



To be conformed to Christ is the purpose of religious life. Our five Sisters lay down their lives on the day of their Perpetual Profession of Vows. It is no figure of speech. The gift of self is total and all-encompassing. In poverty, they accept the loving care of the Father who will provide for them for the rest of their lives. In chastity, they possess Jesus Christ as a Spouse. In obedience, their will and the will of God become one. Sr. Francesca Sabo, Sr. Monica Ward, Sr. Mary Pieta Geier, Sr. Joseph van Munster and Sr. Maria Teresa Hellberg made their “yes” permanent and we give thanks to Almighty God!



“And I, in the name of the Church and the Community of Franciscan Sisters of the Renewal, receive your vows, and on the part of Almighty God, if you observe them, I promise you everlasting life.” These words were spoken by our beloved Cardinal as he received the vows of our five Sisters on June 2, 2012. Sr. Francesca is pictured here professing vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Franciscan Sister of the Renewal - for life - in the hands of Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York. Seated next to the Cardinal is Fr. Andrew Apostoli, Founder of the CFR Sisters.

When Mary of Bethany “wastes” a pound of costly ointment to anoint the feet of Jesus, Judas complains about such extravagance. “Let her alone!” was our Lord’s response (Jn. 12:7). The question of the relevance of the consecrated life is still asked by many wondering if our lives could be better spent. A life poured out in love is never a waste. Sr. Maria Grace Byars, one of our novices, is preparing with her classmates in the Novitiate to pour out her life like precious ointment through the profession of vows.



There is an unbreakable bond between the love of God and love of neighbor. If you love God, you will seek to serve others; if you serve others, you will see God; when you see God, you will be filled with joy. This joy is evident on the face of Sr. Kelly Francis as she stops long enough for a photo with one of the patrons of the Father Solanus Soup Kitchen in East Harlem.

(left) Sr. Lucille Cutrone, Community Servant and founding member, is pictured (center front) surrounded by a flock of joyful, professed Sisters. When she was a NYC public school teacher under the spiritual direction of Servant of God, Fr. Walter Ciszek, SJ, who could have guessed what God was up to? The Holy Spirit was beginning a new family in the Church: a Franciscan family of Sisters thrilled to be Catholic, honored to wear the habit, committed to personal conversion, dedicated to evangelization and serving the poorest. May God protect and preserve the work that He has begun!

“You Did It to Me.” (Mt. 25:40)

Our days are filled to the brim with encounters. From the first Sister whom I pass in the hall in the dark early morning, to the elderly lady who rings the bell saying simply, “nothing to eat,” and the teenage boy who stops by for a rosary—person after person the Lord sends opportunities to live out what I so easily profess.

Our faith is mere words, our creed an empty prayer, without works. With works, deeds of charity, our words become flesh. Jesus taught us that love of God and love of neighbor are one. In loving our neighbor we love Jesus; in loving Jesus we are loving God.

So many of us are afraid to approach God because He may ask too much of us. But God only wants one thing: He wants our love.

In the form of a smile for the Sister I pass by, in the form of a bag of groceries for the lady at the door, a rosary and a listening ear for the teenager—if I spend my love on others, I pour it out for God. Faith is activated by love.

May this Year of Faith be alive with works of love.

Sr. Clare



Heaven is filled with children and these children are filled with Heaven! Sr. Mary Pieta and Sr. Felicity are pictured here with some of the precious treasures of East Harlem. This year’s Harlem Summer Life theme was “Standing on the Rock of Faith.”



*“Life is no less beautiful when accompanied by illness or weakness, hunger or poverty, physical or mental diseases, loneliness or old age.” -Terence Cardinal Cooke
We might add: life is no less beautiful when it is unexpected. On any Saturday morning, the Sisters and Friars can be found praying in front of one of the many abortion clinics in New York City hoping that many will see that the gift of life is always a blessing.*



“For the first time in my life, I feel like I belong somewhere.” These were the words of our friend and neighbor Gamal Yates when he and his son, Gamal Jr., and his granddaughter, Sheri, were all baptized together on Pentecost. Part of the mission the Father has given us all is to help others find their home in the

Catholic Church. Sr. Felicity and Sr. Clare are pictured here with little Sheri and Gamal Jr. The more the merrier in the family of God! The Catholic Church is open for everyone!



Fr. Benedict Groeschel is known far and wide as author, teacher, preacher, and television personality. He’s also one of the eight founding members of the Friars’ Community although he prefers the term “instigator.” We prefer the term “inspiration” because that is what he is to us: a sure and steady voice proclaiming the truth in all seasons. Here Fr. Benedict signs a copy of his latest book, “The Saints in My Life,” for Angelina Corso, one of our

Postulants preparing to be invested and enter the Novitiate on August 2.



*“In every place and circumstance, consecrated persons should be zealous heralds of Jesus Christ...” -John Paul II
Our “zealous heralds” in our Mission to England are profoundly grateful to be part of the New Evangelization to which our Holy Father is calling us.(l-r) Sr. Cecilia, Sr. John Paul, Sr. Jacinta, Sr. Veronica, and Sr. Catherine.*



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