A scenic landscape with rolling hills and olive trees in the foreground. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The olive trees in the foreground are dark green with small, silvery leaves. The hills in the background are a soft, hazy blue.

Start by doing  
what's necessary;  
then do what's  
possible; and  
suddenly you  
are doing the  
impossible.

—ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI



from the  
publisher

Thank you for reading the inaugural issue of *Franciscan Spirit*. All of us in the Franciscan Media community who worked together on this first issue have been touched in some manner by the life of St. Francis of Assisi. We are proud to offer you this free journal as a gift to help you grow in wisdom, love, and service—all in the spirit of our namesake.

St. Francis modeled what has come to define the Franciscan Spirit—a personal faith, a servant’s heart, and willing hands to help those in need. Like St. Francis, we seek to push the boundaries of what’s possible in bringing the Gospel to all who need it. Through this beautiful journal, which will be published each spring and fall, we hope to reach thousands of people each year with the liberating message of Jesus Christ.

Our work would not be possible without your generosity. Your prayers and your support enable Franciscan Media, a nonprofit ministry of the Franciscan Friars of St. John the Baptist Province, to provide a complement of spiritual resources in multiple formats—print, audio, video, and digital. Your participation in our ministry helps us continue to offer a robust, uplifting social media presence. Our aim is to cultivate an active, healthy spiritual environment wherever our followers need it most, whether on the go, at work, or in the home. With your help, we are confident that more and more people will be encountering the love of Jesus Christ.

St. Francis is often quoted as saying, “Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” Together, united by the mission of Christ and the spirit of St. Francis, we will do the impossible in the lives of people all over the world!

Peace and all good,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Kroger, OFM". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and personal.

Dan Kroger, OFM

Publisher

Franciscan Media

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## An interview with Father Richard Rohr, OFM

author of *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*

In many ways, *Eager to Love* has been my whole life in coming. It's the only book I've ever written about my own Franciscan tradition. I've alluded to it in all the other books, but this is *on* it as such.

I use the word “alternative” in the title because Francis of Assisi comes at things from a very different angle, which I believe is the angle of Jesus. Francis emphasizes lifestyle instead of dogma and doctrine. It's not that he's against

dogma and doctrine, but you have to remember that Francis is an Italian layman: he's not educated in formal theology, and that becomes his gift to us. He doesn't talk to us at a highly sophisticated level; he just talks to us about how to live a humble life imitating Jesus in this world. He doesn't get caught in theological abstractions, and that's what makes his way very alternative. Until that point, much of theology was written by bishops, priests, and theologians—highly educated people. Well, along comes a man who isn't highly educated and he gets right to the core of the Gospel. That's what's wonderful, that's what's alternative!

The home base for Francis is the Christian road. In fact, when I studied the Franciscan rule, my

professor said, “Really this is hardly a *rule*.” He said, “I’d call it, ‘Tips for the road.’” Tips for the road. Just a way to live in the middle of the world.

And we Franciscans were mendicants originally—until most European countries outlawed vagrancy, that is. We were much more like Buddhist monks, and we were called mendicants: beggars. In southern Germany and Switzerland and some parts of Austria, they still speak of some of our churches as *die barfuß*—the barefoot ones. Because we literally were barefoot in those days, but then we became well-established.

Up to Francis’s time, the home base of the Christian school was the academy or the desert or the monastery; but Francis moved it to the streets. That’s making sense to us right now because we have Pope Francis doing the very same thing—moving the papacy from the palace to the streets. It’s no accident that the pope took this name, Francis!

Nature itself—the natural world—was also Francis’s home base. Creation was his cathedral. He said, *The whole world is our cloister*. He didn’t want us to live in monasteries. He said, *Don’t speak to me of Benedict, don’t speak to me of Augustine*. Now he had nothing against these great saints, but they had established a very scheduled, organized form of religious life and he said, *That’s not my way. It’s going to be a different way*. So already, early on, you see Francis’s desire for an alternative structure. And the medium is finally the message, because how you’re formed is how you think.

I believe that living on the edge of the inside is the prophetic structural position. When you’re too co-opted by the center, or the top—when you’re made the bishop or the abbot or you’re the head of something—it’s very hard for you to say a whole bunch of things. That’s just true. It’s structurally true. Any of you who are a head of whatever, be careful when you’re at the top, because there are a whole lot of things you can’t see, and a whole lot of things you can’t say, without losing your job!

Francis gave us what I call a lightness of heart. In fact I have a quote in here of one scholar who dares to say—and any artist will love this—that he considers Francis the spiritual father of the Renaissance because art *changes* after Francis. Before Francis, all we can paint are icons. I have nothing against icons, but immediately after Francis—as is seen in Giotto’s art, for example—you have the painting of ordinary things. Little flowers. Little squirrels. And suddenly, so-called secular, unimportant and mundane things become holy. The artists picked that up, and they moved art into the full Renaissance where the so-called pagan world is no longer considered pagan. Some people might consider that dangerous thinking.

As many of you know who’ve listened to my stuff, most Christians were never told that when you believe in Jesus Christ, you believe in two different things. Jesus was born 2,000 years ago, but Christ has existed since God decided to materialize 14.6 billion years ago. The Christ mystery is the mystery of matter and spirit coming together. That’s the big bang. That’s the birth of the Christ.

In *Eager to Love*, I try to show that this is good theology. This is not heresy; but most Christians were never taught that. We have some physicists who could probably say this better than me, but at this time we’re discovering how big this universe is, and it’s probably just a matter of time until we discover life on other planets. If we don’t, that’s fine too; I don’t know if we will. But I do know that we are just a little speck in the universe, and the moment we discover life on another planet, guess what’s going to happen? A whole bunch of people are going to say, *Well, apparently, Jesus is not necessary, because Jesus appeared only on this planet*. But it’s going to be important to understand that the Christ mystery is coterminous with the universe itself. That’s why we speak of the cosmic Christ.

## Q & A with Richard Rohr

### **Why another book on St. Francis when there is already so much on him?**

Well, first of all it isn't a biography on St. Francis, and I don't really talk about him until one of the later chapters. I make that point at the beginning. My emphasis in the book is on what flowed from him, what was validated by him and then toward the end of the book I look at the source: Francis himself. Francis was not a theologian, much less a systematic theologian. But he was an intuitive genius, at least in terms of spiritual things and the Gospel.

### **Who are you writing for?**

I would say interested but sincere seekers. I don't care if they're in the Church or out of the Church. I would like to believe that interested but sincere seekers, probably with some degree of education, will read it. Some of the chapters are quite heavy; the one on contemplation is really central. People who haven't done a little homework in these fields will probably jump over some of these heavier chapters because it might be too much for the common reader. I worried about that a bit because I don't want to write for the elite, but neither do I want to make Francis into a lightweight as he's so often been portrayed. So I guess I'm shooting at the middle.

### **How would you describe your spirituality to someone who isn't familiar with it?**

You know, I've been asked that many times over the years, and I'm going to give two words which I hope don't sound too sophisticated. It's incarnational mysticism. Those are the two words that sum it all up. I believe the mystical understanding of Christianity is the only real one. You can't understand John's Gospel unless you move

to the mystical level. I think that's why a lot of Christians' eyes glaze over when they read John's Gospel. But incarnational mysticism is rooted in the physical, embodied, concrete, particular world that's right in front of us. And for me, that's the heart of Franciscanism. It's taking the incarnation absolutely seriously, and not just in the body of Jesus, but in all of creation. Brother Sun,

Sister Moon, my black Labrador, cats, all human beings and all species.

### **Your books have been extremely popular among Christian readers. Why is that?**

Oh God, I wish I knew! It still surprises me. Again, I think it's because I shoot at the middle. We were told in seminary that our job was to get the Gospel to the masses. That's why I'm sometimes ashamed of talking a little over some people's heads. But I do use psychology,

anthropology, history, and literature. So if someone isn't interested in any one of those, he or she is often intrigued by the other. Readers will stay with me because I quote poets or theologians. I'm not an academic. But, thank God, I have enough of an education that I know how to read the good Jesuits like Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. I can read them and then hopefully translate what they're saying in a way that the man or woman on the street can get the impact.

The question-and-answer portion of this interview was first published in *America* magazine.

Listen to more from Father Richard Rohr at [franciscanmedia.org/spirit](http://franciscanmedia.org/spirit)

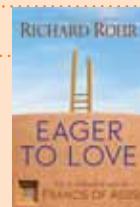
My  
spirituality  
is incar-  
national  
wisdom.

—Richard Rohr

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Francis was at once very traditional and entirely new in the ways of holiness.... He stood barefoot on the earth and yet touched the heavens.

## The Way of Love

An excerpt from  
*Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*  
BY RICHARD ROHR, OFM

The way of Francis of Assisi cannot be contained inside of formal Franciscanism, simply because it is nothing more than the Gospel itself—in very distilled and honest form.

I want to illustrate here what Francis clearly changed and did differently, and what flowed from his unique wholeness. We will see that Francis was at once very traditional and entirely new in the ways of holiness, and he is still such a standing paradox. He stood barefoot on the earth and yet touched the heavens. He was grounded in the Church and yet instinctively moved toward the cosmos. He lived happily inside the visible and yet both suffered and rejoiced in what others thought was invisible. Again and again, he was totally at home in two worlds at the same time, and thus he made them into one world.

He, like all saints, delighted in both his Absolute Littleness and his Absolute Connection in the

very same moment. Of course, they totally depend on one another. He and Clare *died into the life that they loved* instead of living in fear of any death that could end their life. They were both so very eager to love, and they somehow knew that dying to the old and unneeded was an essential part of living this love at any depth. Most of us do not seem to know that—and resist all change.

Yet Francis's holiness, like all holiness, was unique and never a copy or mere imitation. In his "Testament," he says, "No one told me what I ought to do," and then, at the very end of his life, he says, "I have done what was mine to do, now you must do yours." What permission, freedom, and space he thus gave to his followers! Bonaventure echoed that understanding of unique and intimate vocation when he taught, "We are each loved by God in a particular and incomparable way, as in the case of a bride and bridegroom." Francis and Clare knew that the love God has for each soul is unique and made to order, which is why any "saved" person always feels beloved, chosen, and even "God's favorite" like so many in the Bible. Divine intimacy is always and precisely particular and made to order—and thus "intimate."

# St. Anthony of Padua and Father Mychal Judge

An excerpt from  
*The Franciscan Saints*  
BY ROBERT ELLSBERG

St. Francis undoubtedly remains the world's most popular saint—honored in every land, even by the secular-minded and people of other faiths. This reflects, in part, his winsome qualities and the romantic gestures that sometimes encourage sentimentality. But beneath all that, St. Francis stands as one who made the way of Jesus



credible and concrete, both for those called to formal religious life and for men and women living in the ordinary world.

Jesus left no formal religious rule for his followers. The closest he came was his proclamation of the Beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers.... Francis took to heart this spiritual vision and translated it into a way of life. In various ways, other saints before and since have done the same. But for many men and women since the time of Francis, his particular example has offered a distinctive key to the Gospel—or, as Pope Francis might say, “a new way of seeing and interpreting

reality.” Among the central features of this key: the vision of a Church that is “poor and for the poor”; a resolve to take seriously Jesus’s example of self-emptying love; the way of mercy and compassion; above all, a determination to proclaim the Gospel not only with words but with one’s life.

The first followers of Francis joined him in walking into the unknown, improvising as they went along. Later, that path became more regularized and even institutionalized. Within years of the founder’s death, his order was buffeted between factions divided over how literally to adhere to the *Poverello*’s extreme ideal of poverty. There were those who leaned toward greater structure and discipline, while others favored Francis’s more spontaneous, charismatic style. Yet for all the diversity within the broad Franciscan movement, the figure of St. Francis remained the essential touchstone and guide.

ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA  
*Franciscan Friar, Doctor of the Church*  
(1195–1231)

St. Anthony, who was born in Lisbon, first entered religious life as an Augustinian canon in Coimbra. There one day he met a group of visiting Franciscans (St. Bernard and his companions) on their way to Morocco. He was greatly impressed by these courageous missionaries, the more so when news came of their subsequent martyrdom, followed by the return of their remains by way of his monastery. At once, he was inspired to join the Franciscans. He was accepted and was even granted his wish to follow in the footsteps of the martyrs. But no sooner had he arrived in Morocco than he became so ill that he was forced to turn around.

In 1221, he attended—along with three thousand other friars—a great Franciscan gathering, the last held in the lifetime of St. Francis. Afterward, he received a lowly assignment to a small hospice for lay brothers at Monte Paolo.





## The Third Order of Saint Francis: A Note

An excerpt from  
*Eight Whopping Lies and Other Stories  
of Bruised Grace*

BY BRIAN DOYLE

When I was perhaps ten years old my mother and father, devout Catholics who sought a deeper and more intimate spiritual experience than just their parish life, began attending meetings of the Third Order of Saint Francis, one of the many tertiary clans in the Church; the first two Orders being men and women who have sworn vows and belong to one of Catholicism's many congregations of priests, monks, brothers, and sisters.

As regards the actual tenets of the Third Order of Saint Francis, and the depth and length of my

parents' commitment to it, and exactly where and how long my younger brothers and I went with my mother and father to the meetings, I have not a clue, although I can guess that simplicity and service were the watchwords of the day, what with that most admirable man Francis's name engraved on the enterprise. But it is not the Order and its long history that fascinates me this morning; it is the fact that my mom and dad, then in their forties, working furiously to house and feed and protect and educate and elevate their many children, would happily add two or three hours to their duties every week or two, simply to go deeper into their faith.

We would drive to some unfamiliar church or school, two or three towns away, and make our way to the basement—always it was a basement, as if returning in spirit to the catacombs in which the Christian cult began so long ago—and there we would part, our parents into the meeting, and us

boys into the nether chambers of the unfamiliar school. Often we would be nominally stationed in the library, or a classroom, where we would wait decorously until we were sure the meeting was up and running, at which point we would slip away to explore; I suppose my brothers and I ranged more freely in Catholic schools on Long Island than any other boys we knew, voyaging through teachers' break rooms, and principals' offices, and janitorial storerooms, and fraught haunted chapels, and even the occasional low-ceilinged gymnasium, where the floors shone alluringly, and we skated hilariously and silently in our socks.

Those dusty school basements, with their ubiquitous scents of stale coffee and linoleum wax and unknown schoolchildren; the clank and clatter of metal folding chairs, ever so slightly rusted, and never to be oiled in this life; the fat plastic smell of day-old doughnuts and the big buttery boxes in which they rattled; the beam and heft of the occasional Franciscan friar, and the wisp and grin of the occasional Franciscan nun; the hat-racks on which the men hung their fedoras and Irish caps, and the coatracks on which the women carefully draped their raincoats and lovely pastel overcoats; the motley other Third Order children we studiously avoided, as we ranged about the unfamiliar school, free and independent for exactly as long as the meeting lasted; I remember this all now faintly and clearly at once, all vague and sepia and almost forgotten except for a sudden crisp detail—skating in our socks!

For many years the sort of writer I was would revel and relish in those details, and tease them out, and so defeat time, reclaim some of the existence we are so sure is lost with age; but now the sort of writer I am is staring not at the happy foot-loose boys but the weary gentle parents. A woman and a man in their forties, avid and energetic

members of their parish, with one small income between them, with four children in Catholic school and one more on the way, regularly surrender three hours of their weekend, so that they may more deeply explore a faith devoted to the revolutionary idea that Christ is resident in every heart, that miracles are not only possible but prevalent and accessible, that every living being is evidence of grace, and that every being, in a real sense, is potentially a priest, standing as awed witness and celebrant of divine love loose in

this world. They took their faith so seriously, so happily, so thoroughly, so deeply, not merely as religion, but as compass point and lodestar, that I find I cannot take it any less seriously, not if I love and revere them, as I do.

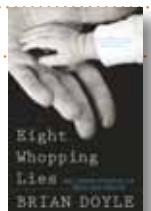
Whenever I grow dark about my Church, and go gray at the gills about its addiction to power and greed, its corporate smirk about the lost and helpless, the very souls it was created to succor, I remember my mother and father herding us three youngest boys into the station wagon, on a Sunday afternoon, when we would have rather done anything else in the world except drive two towns over to the Third Order of Saint Francis meeting. Perhaps they too drove to the meeting a bit reluctantly, half-wishing they could stay home and nap, or garden, or watch the game, or repair the storm windows, or read Ernie Pyle in the hammock, but they went. Probably the best lessons we teach our children are not the ones for which we use words; perhaps those are the lessons the children never forget. As you see.

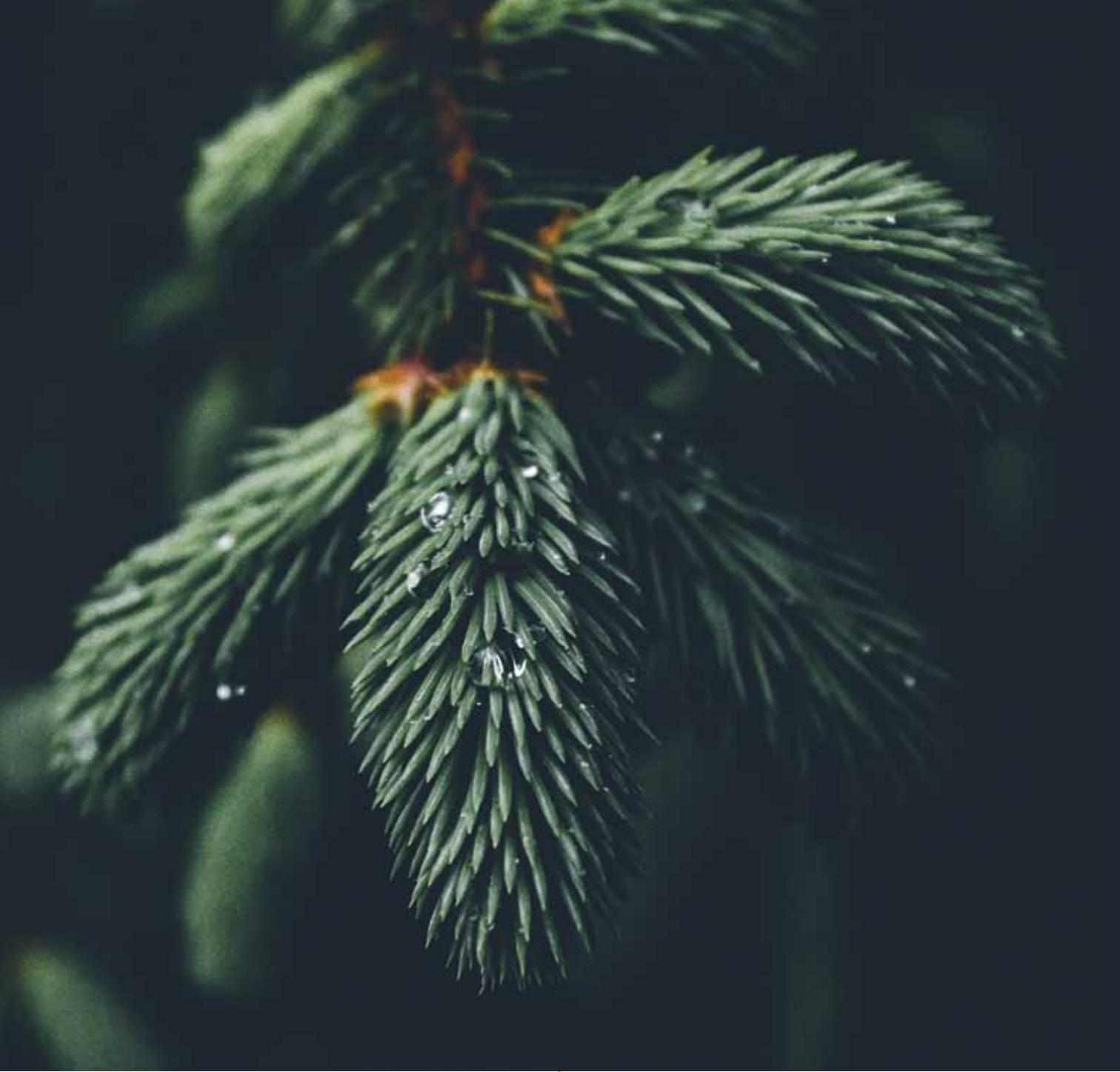
Every  
living  
being is  
evidence  
of grace.

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## The Twelve (or Forty) Days of Christmas

An excerpt from

*The Peace of Christmas: Quiet Reflections  
with Pope Francis*

BY DIANE M. HOUDEK

When is the Christmas season? Different groups will give different answers. Retailers, of course, would have us believe it begins as soon as the Halloween candy is whisked off the shelves. Religious tradition says that it begins on December 25 (with a vigil or eve the night before) and lasts through January 6, the source of the iconic Twelve Days of Christmas. In the liturgical calendar it lasts another week, ending on the Feast of Baptism of the Lord.

For most people, the reality falls somewhere in between. The long Thanksgiving weekend is often when they begin to put up decorations. Festive light displays at local parks and shopping districts begin around the last week in November. Neighborhoods glow with multicolored lights and decorations that range from tasteful to garish.

For all the stories of out-of-control shopping binges and fist fights in the aisles of Walmart over the season's hottest toys, most of us have found ways to balance the many sides of Christmas in our homes and families.

I love the Advent season. For most of my adult life I've lived alone, so it's easy for me to settle into the silence, the darkness, the candlelight, contemplative Advent music, the readings from the prophets of longing and anticipation. My time is my own and I can choose what activities to participate in. But it's somewhat churlish and inhospitable to say no to every Christmas party simply because the church calendar says it's still Advent. And I do enjoy decorating the house. Sometimes I begin early in December; other times I wait until shortly before Christmas Eve.

I grew up with a gradual movement toward Christmas through the month of December. A box of Christmas picture books came out of storage around Thanksgiving. We prayed around the Advent wreath as a family, but the feast of St. Nicholas on December sixth was a tiny foretaste of Christmas. Mom set up the nativity set on the dining room buffet and if I was good, I could add straw to the empty manger so Jesus would have a soft bed. The spruce tree mysteriously appeared on the porch in mid-December but wasn't decorated until one night a few days before Christmas. The week between Christmas and New Year was spent visiting family and friends.

Even the most faithful users of Advent devotionals can find themselves forgetting the readings for Christmas and the days after as routines

change with the holiday break. The wonder of the Christmas event itself can get lost in the celebration. Like his namesake St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis calls us to reflect on the central mystery of this season: Our God became one of us, came to dwell in our midst, and began life as we all do, as a tiny baby, needy and vulnerable and dependent on the people around him for his very survival.

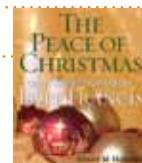
Pope Francis knows that Christmas is many things to many people, often changing with the times and circumstances, with our experiences in the months since last Christmas. Just as God chose to become one of us, entering into a life shaped by the time and place of his birth, so our lives are shaped and changed by the world around us. But Pope Francis also reminds us of what is eternal and unchanging about the incarnation: "On this day of joy, we are all called to contemplate the Child Jesus, who gives hope once again to every person on the face of the earth. By his grace, let us with our voices and our actions give witness to solidarity and peace."

More than anything else, for Pope Francis Christmas is about peace: in our heart, in our families, in our world. And he challenges us in this time of celebration and even excess to never forget the poor and the homeless, the refugees, the immigrants, and all who suffer from the ravages of war. His message is both gentle and insistent: Yes, celebrate this wonderful season of eating and drinking and gift-giving, but always make caring, sharing, and reaching out to those in need the true reflection of God's great gift to us of his Son.

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# The Herald of the Great King

BY THOMAS OF CELANO.

*The First Life of St. Francis*, written in the thirteenth century, gives us an early account of the saint's life.

He who once wore fine garments now went about clad only in scanty garments. As he went through a certain woods singing praises to the Lord in the French language, robbers suddenly rushed out upon him. When they asked him in a ferocious tone who he was, the man of God replied confidently in a loud voice: "I am the herald of the great King. What is that to you?"

But they struck him and cast him into a ditch filled with deep snow, saying: "Lie there, foolish herald of God!" But he rolled himself about and shook off the snow; and when they had gone away, he jumped out of the ditch, and, glad with great joy, he began to call out the praises of God in a loud voice throughout the grove.



Then the holy lover of complete humility went to the lepers and lived with them, serving them most diligently for God's sake; so greatly loathsome was the sight of lepers to him at one time, he used to say, that, in the days of his vanity, he would look at

their houses only from a distance of two miles and he would hold his nostrils with his hands.

But now, when by the grace and the power of the Most High he was beginning to think of holy and useful things, while he was still clad in secular garments, he met a leper one day and, made stronger than himself, he kissed him. From then on he began to despise himself more and more, until, by the mercy of the Redeemer, he came to perfect victory over himself.



Of other poor, too, while he yet remained in the world and still followed the world, he was the helper, stretching forth a hand of mercy to those who had nothing, and showing compassion to the afflicted. For when one day, contrary to his custom, for he was a most courteous person, he upbraided a certain poor man who had asked an alms of him, he was immediately sorry; and he began to say to himself that it was a great reproach and a shame to withhold what was asked from one who had asked in the name of so great a King. He therefore resolved in his heart never in the future to refuse any one, if at all possible, who asked for

the love of God. This he most diligently did and carried out, until he sacrificed himself entirely and in every way; and thus he became first a practitioner before he became a teacher of the evangelical counsel: To him who asks of thee, he said, give; and from him who would borrow of thee, do not turn away.



# Women and the Eden Instinct

An excerpt from  
*When We Were Eve: Uncovering the Woman God Made You to Be*

BY COLLEEN C. MITCHELL

When I was a small child, we lived just down the street from my grandmother. We went often to her house to play in her yard and savor the crispy goodness of the sugar cookies she kept in the freezer by the back door. But the spot we longed for most, the spot that belonged to us and was where we all belonged, was under the branches of the grandiose pecan tree whose presence filled her backyard.

I don't know if it is my personal memory of that pecan tree that drapes it in safety and goodness in my mind, or the collective family memory surrounding it that has dressed up my own foggy ones more beautifully than they deserve. But I know this, the smell of warm dirt and the prick of grass on the back of my thighs can bring me right back to the feeling of safety and joy—real, borrowed, or imagined—that I knew when I was tucked under the reaching arms of that tree.

It is the one memory that makes it make sense to me that God would have designed, before he breathed humanity into existence, a garden of goodness to be their dwelling place. And just as I

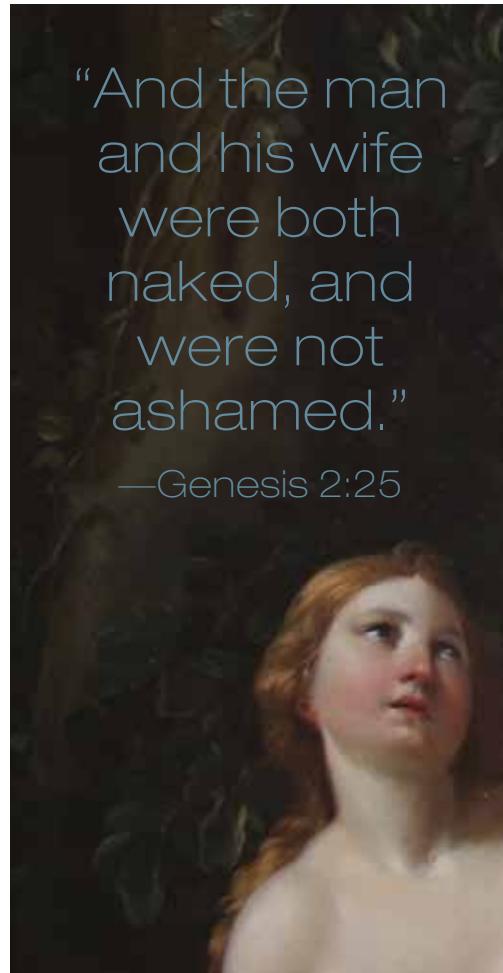
look back with foggy but curious wonder at that pecan tree in my grandmother's backyard, so I consider the Garden of Eden and her inhabitants.

The question of who Eve was has been haunting me for some time now, me trying to figure what I know of her in the same way I try to divine the truth of the unfamiliar familiarity I have with that pecan tree in my mind. How much of what I know of Eve is completely imagined, assumed, or created from blind feelings? And what, if

anything, that I know of Eve is real and unique to me, some instinct for the heart of the first woman that comes from the fact that she is imprinted on my spiritual and physical DNA? And if it turns out that most of what I know is simply a longing to know more of her, a female fancy to understand this “Mother of Life” who was all of us women at once at creation, is there something real in of itself in that?

I am certain I possess a kind of “Eden instinct” that draws me back to Eve, with a desire to understand what it means for me to be this being we call “woman” after her. I have come to think that all of us women might just be imbued with an innate sense that if we could somehow unfog the Eden memories and untangle

Eve from them in order to know her better, we might find we also know ourselves better too.

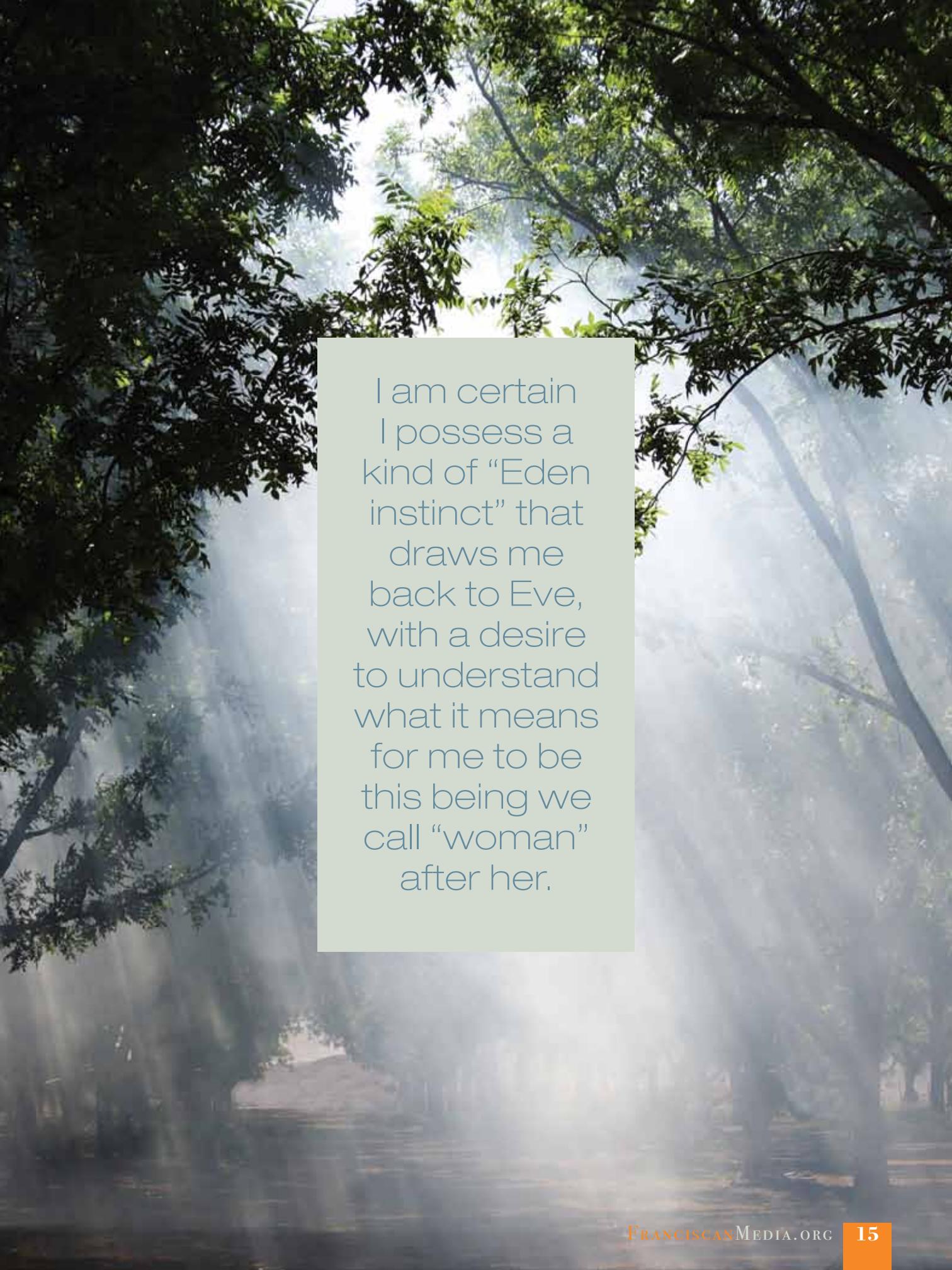


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A photograph of a misty forest path. Sunlight filters through the dense canopy of green trees, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The path is visible in the lower half of the frame, leading into the distance. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

I am certain  
I possess a  
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to understand  
what it means  
for me to be  
this being we  
call “woman”  
after her.



## Francis Before the Sultan

An excerpt from

*Francis: The Journey and the Dream*

BY MURRAY BODO, OFM

The upward lift of the sea breeze buoyed Francis's spirit, and he felt expanded, almost inflated with the anticipation of seeing his brothers again. He was feeling like Saint Paul returning from a great missionary journey to straighten out some misunderstanding that had developed during his absence.

As the boat bounced uncertainly on the choppy little waves, Francis caught the staccato rhythm, and he let himself relax in the forward bumping of the little boat. The beating of the waves reminded him of the thumping of his heart at the camp of

the Sultan. Now, his desire to meet the Sultan face to face seemed in retrospect rather foolish, but foolishness, after all, was the point of the whole trip. He had wanted as much to impress his brothers with Gospel foolishness as he had wanted to tell the Sultan about Jesus and about the peaceful inner cavern he had found.

He was terrified when he had finally been ushered into the Sultan's presence, and he wondered about all that equanimity stuff the saints were supposed to have had whenever a crisis arose. But he marched steadily forward, never dropping his eyes and staring openly into the Sultan's iron eyes. Francis was shaken by the scowl on the Sultan's face.

As Francis drew nearer, the Sultan's expression changed to one of mild amusement. Francis couldn't help returning the expression. This seemed to please the Sultan because when Francis stopped in front of him, the two were grinning

at each other. The sycophants around the Sultan were also grinning broadly until the Sultan turned and frowned; then they frowned back like little mirrors.

“Well, little man, I see you have courage. I watched your nervous walk and steady eyes, and I said to myself, him I would like at my court. He would tell me the truth, and not what I usually hear.”

He emphasized the last few words, his eyes roaming coldly over his own courtiers. Francis said nothing.

“I see you also have manners. I like that.”

There was a long pause, embarrassing only to the courtiers who shifted from foot to foot and coughed tensely.

“Well, holy man, what do you want of me?”

“Only to bring you peace, great one.” The Sultan smiled. “But I like war, little Italian. For Allah I am conquering the world. It is why I was born and why I am Allah’s instrument.”

“But, great Prince, I am not talking about peace as the opposite of war. I speak of peace in your heart, a deep satisfaction and joy that flows from within like a rich wine.”

“And what, to a warrior, can bring more inner peace than victory on the battlefield?”

“Prayer, O child of Allah.”

“Prayer? And do I not pray every day to Allah?”

“More, I am sure, great leader, than many Christians pray.”

“But I want to share with you a prayer I learned by fighting the great battle with myself, by conquering one by one the demons in my own heart. Your prayer is good, I am sure, but I want to teach you a new prayer.”

“Then pray it for me now, here in front of these dullards who infest my tent.”

Francis knelt down and lifted up his eyes, beyond the dais to a small opening in the tent that let the light in.

You are the Good,  
every good,  
the highest good, the Lord God, living and true.  
You are love, charity.  
You are wisdom.  
You are humility.  
You are patience.  
You are beauty.  
You are safety.  
You are rest.  
You are joy and gladness.  
You are our hope.  
You are our justice.  
You are temperance.  
You are all our treasure overflowing.  
You are beauty.  
You are meekness.  
You are our protector.  
You are our guardian and defender.  
You are strength.  
You are refreshment.  
You are our hope.  
You are our faith.  
You are our charity.  
You are all our sweetness.  
You are our eternal life,  
great and wondrous Lord,  
God All-Powerful,  
merciful Savior.

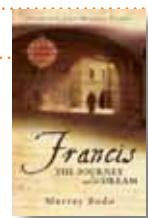
The Sultan said nothing. He seemed moved by what Francis had poured from his heart. Yes, it was like a good rich wine. It was reminiscent of the Ninety-Nine Names of Allah.

In a soft voice, so that only Francis could hear, he said. “Oh, little beggar and man of dreams. I wish in my heart that there were more gentle men like you to balance the hatred in the world.”

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## Francis: At Home in the Cosmos

An excerpt from  
*Care for Creation*  
BY ILIA DELIO, OSF

Francis of Assisi was at home in the cosmos. We know this because at the end of his life he composed the Canticle of the Creatures in which he sang of brotherhood and sisterhood in the family of creation: Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Sister Mother Earth. The cosmos became home to Francis because this is where he discovered love, the overflowing goodness of God. The brothers who lived with Francis remembered him as one who revered the Earth: When he washed his

hands, he chose a place where the water would not be trampled underfoot after the washing. Whenever he had to walk over rocks, he would walk with fear and reverence out of love for Him who is called “The Rock.” ...He also told the brother who cut the wood for fire not to cut down the whole tree, but to cut in such a way that one part remained while another was cut.... He used to tell the brother who took care of the garden not to cultivate all the ground in the garden for vegetables, but to leave a piece of ground that would produce wild plants that in their season would produce “Brother Flowers.” Moreover, he used to tell the brother gardener that he should make a beautiful flower bed in some part of the garden, planting and cultivating every variety of fragrant plants and those producing beautiful flowers.



Francis taught the brothers to accept the gifts of God’s goodness in creation and to respond with grateful hearts through bonds of love, care, concern and companionship. Francis valued the home of the earth not as his home alone but first and foremost as God’s home.

#### CREATION V. NATURE

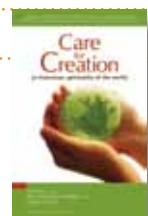
To speak of creation as our home is to speak of creation as relationship. The word creation implies relationship, unlike the word nature, which holds no inherent religious meaning. “Creation” points to a “Creator,” a God who creates. The distinction between creation and nature is an important one because when we discuss the integrity of nature, especially from the Franciscan tradition, we are really talking about creation, the relationship of the natural world, including humans, to the

Creator. “Creation,” therefore, means relationships between the human and nonhuman created order, the place of the human person within that order, and the response of the person to the created order in its relationship to God. In this respect, talk of an “environmental crisis” from a Franciscan perspective must immediately signal a “religious crisis” simply because environment is more than nature alone; rather, it is that realm of God’s goodness in the natural world that shares with us humans a deep longing for God.

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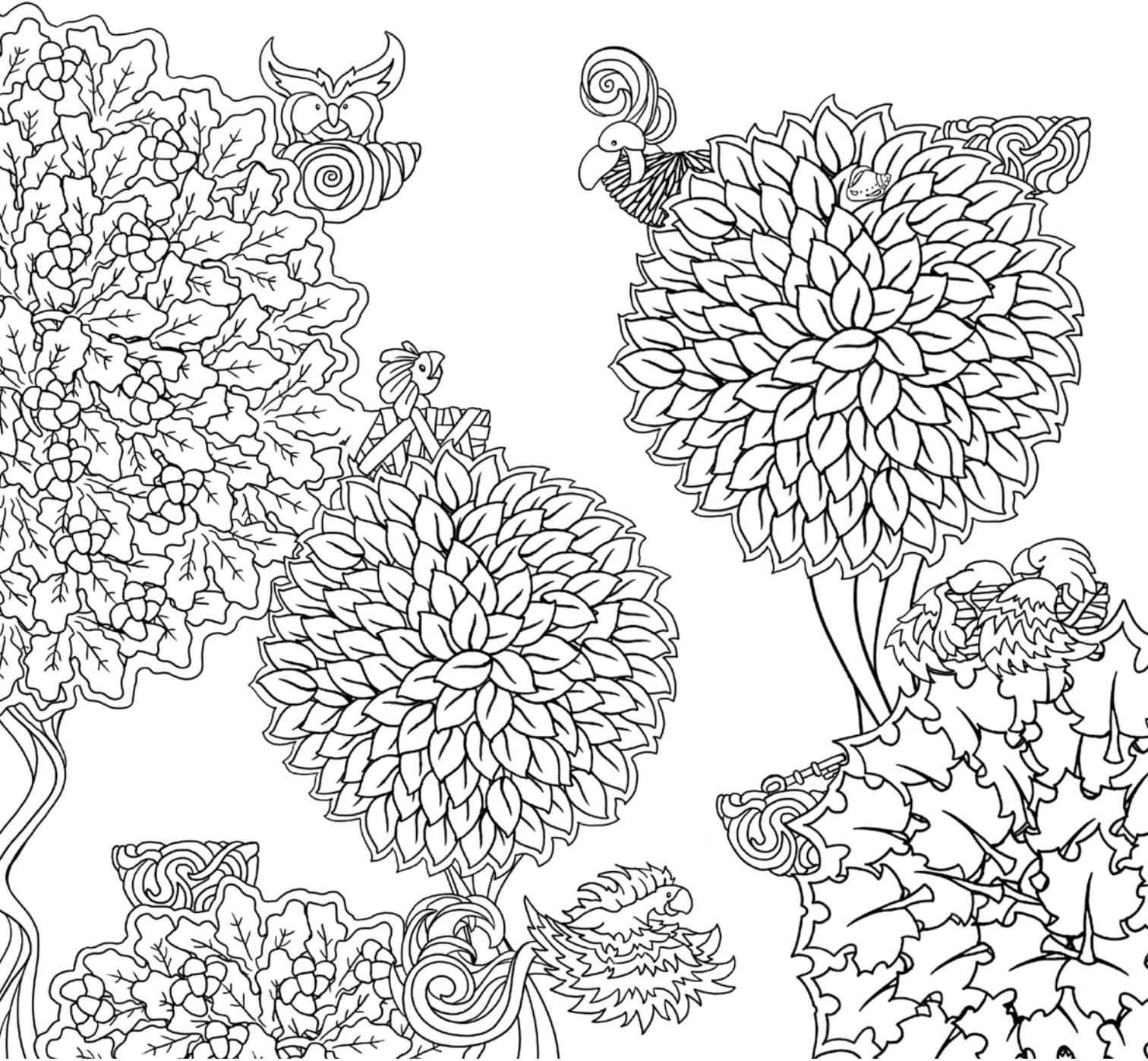
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Where do you need more peace?  
Draw in more doves or eggs in the empty nests.



“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.”  
— St. Francis of Assisi



from

*At Play in God's Creation*

*An Illuminating Coloring Book*

WRITTEN BY TARA M. OWENS

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL W. SORENSEN

# Michael Perry: Guiding the Worldwide Franciscans

An excerpt from  
*St. Anthony Messenger* magazine  
BY JOHN FEISTER

In his early days in Indianapolis, Indiana, Michael Perry dreamed of becoming a lawyer, but a trip to the missions changed all that. Mike, the law student, met the Franciscans and fell in love with the poor, then with the Franciscans themselves. They must have loved him, too. At age 61, Father Michael Perry, OFM, is general minister of the Order of Friars Minor, the 13,400-member-strong branch of the Franciscan family tree.

While in Chicago at a meeting of provincial leaders from across the United States, Brother Michael (as he likes to be called) carves an early-morning hour out of a packed schedule to talk with *St. Anthony Messenger*.

How each of us interacts with our faith and each other is a curiosity Brother Michael had from the beginning. He recalls an episode from Chicago to illustrate the point: “I had a chance when I was at Catholic Theological Union to do one week on the streets here in Chicago,” he recalls. “I went to the Wilson Men’s Club, up on the north side. It cost \$3 per night for the room. I had \$5 in my pocket. The first evening I met a young man who was there, roughly a little bit younger than me. He asked me what I was doing, if I wanted to get a beer. I didn’t have any money, so I said, ‘No, I only have \$3 that I paid and \$2 in my pocket.’ He said, ‘Don’t worry about it.’ He offered me two beers. The next day

he took me to work and, throughout the whole week, he took me under his wing and I came back to the house one week later with \$150 in my pocket!” Brother Michael relishes a good story.

He tells another story, one, he says, that “transformed my life.” This one occurred in the Congo, an encounter, time and again, over ten years, living among people who had very little—less than most of us could imagine. The women, especially, had a grueling routine—up before dawn, kids off to school, work in the fields with infants strapped to their backs, selling what they could find in the market, coming home to cook, and more.

If we're  
open to  
God, if  
we're  
open to  
surprise,  
God will  
surprise  
us!

“I remember asking three women once, ‘How is it possible for you to do this? Do you think that God abandoned you?’ And they started laughing. They said, ‘God never abandons us. God is always here. We just need to recognize his grace, and God’s going to take care of us.’” He learned faith from those women: “It taught me about the total dependence on God and also the total interdependence, the sharing that takes place when we care for each other.”

As he traverses the world of Franciscan ministry—OFM friars are present in 112, soon to be 113, countries—he sees his job not simply as encourager, or some contact with the broader community, though surely he is both. “I think one of the most challenging things is helping the brothers, the Franciscans, to remember who they are and to whom they belong,” he offers, admitting that it may sound a bit strange to say it that way. “But one of the things that has emerged throughout the history of the Franciscan movement is the need for us to never forget our Gospel roots, our Gospel identity to which we are called, our Gospel mission.”

He, and the nine other council members with whom he lives in Rome, “remind each other, then,



that we go out and remind the brothers of the central aspects of our identity, so that we can be energized and have passion for our life and for the world.”

He takes his cue from people he has served along the way. “When you have nothing,” he says, “when you have no guarantee of tomorrow or the next day for your food, for your lodging, for your health, you are forced to recognize the role and the dependence you have on God. Poor people know they cannot do this by themselves; they recognize God’s grace.” For wealthier people to serve our brothers and sisters who are poor, to step even briefly into their shoes, he says, is transformative. “This is something which I hope for,”

he says, and something he thinks Franciscans can facilitate. “We have a special privilege we could offer to people by inviting them to come into these places of grace. When we do that, people will never be the same.”

Visit [stanthonymessenger.org](http://stanthonymessenger.org) for information on subscribing to this award-winning national Catholic magazine.

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# A Portrait of Francis

An excerpt from  
*Peace and Good: Through the Year  
with Francis of Assisi*  
BY PAT McCLOSKEY, OFM

He was a most eloquent man, a man of cheerful countenance, of kindly aspect; he was immune to cowardice, free of insolence. He was of medium height, closer to shortness; his head was moderate in size and round, his face a bit long and prominent, his forehead smooth and low; his eyes were of moderate size, black and sound [Matthew 6:22]; his hair was black, his eyebrows straight, his nose symmetrical, thin and straight; his ears were upright, but small; his temples smooth. His speech was peaceable [Proverbs 15:4], fiery and sharp; his voice was strong, sweet, clear, and sonorous. His teeth were set close together, even, and white; his lips were small and thin; his beard black, but not bushy. His neck was slender, his shoulders straight, his arms short, his hands slender, his fingers long, his nails extended; his legs were thin, his feet small. His skin was delicate, his flesh very spare. He wore rough garments, he slept but very briefly, he gave most generously. (Celano, *First Life of St. Francis*, 83)

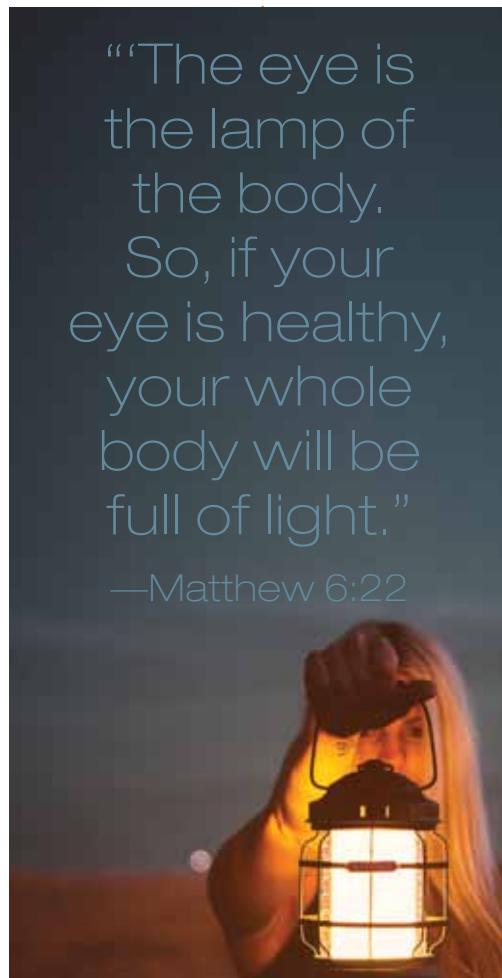
## LIVING AS FRANCIS DID

This is the earliest and most extensive physical description of St. Francis, a word portrait. His

peaceable speech, humility, and mildness flowed from his joy over being loved by God and his desire that all people might realize how much they are loved by God. We can most closely resemble Francis by living the virtues that characterized his life.

## GROWING WITH FRANCIS

Make sure your speech is peaceable today.  
—Reading for December 2, “Portrait of Francis”



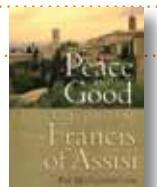
Although his spirit was one of poverty and lowliness, free from all pretense and devoid of life-giving powers, Francis had already attracted seven followers and he was anxious to invite the whole world to repent and give it new life in Christ. So he told his companions, “Go and bring to all men a message of peace and penance, that their sins may be forgiven. Be patient in trials, watchful in prayer, and never cease working. Be considerate in your speech, well-ordered in your actions, and grateful to your benefactors. remember that for all this an eternal kingdom is being made ready for you.” The friars humbly cast themselves on the ground before him and welcomed the command of obedience with

true spiritual joy. (Bonaventure, *Major Life of St. Francis*, III, 7)

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## The Mercy of St. Francis

An excerpt from  
*God Is Not Fair, and Other Reasons for Gratitude*  
BY DANIEL P. HORAN, OFM

Many people focus on characteristics such as voluntary poverty or care for creation when considering the life and model of St. Francis of Assisi. I often wish that, just as regularly, they would notice the theme of mercy that frequently appears in his writing. This is a theme that has become even more important as Pope Francis has dedicated much of his teaching and ministry to showing the compassionate and merciful face of God in the world.

So important was this theme in Francis's own conversion experience that he recalls the mercy he was able to show lepers as a key turning point for him. He opens his deathbed Testament with that recollection:

The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among

them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world. (Testament, 1:1-3)

While he previously embraced his social privilege to shun and despise the lepers and poor of his day, Francis came to discover the mercy of God in his own life alongside the showing of mercy to those whom he had earlier considered the least in society.

Mercy is one of the most central elements of Christian discipleship because it always begins with God's unconditional love for each of us. In Francis's life, the central place of mercy was not limited to his own conversion. He insisted that those who sought to live consecrated religious profession according to his "form of life" (*forma vitae*) would also adopt this sense of mercy in relating to one another. This was especially important for those who were placed in positions of responsibility and leadership within the community.

In one of the most profound passages from the writings of Francis, we see the *poverello* counsel a friar who had written to him for advice in dealing with another brother. Francis makes clear what

For Francis,  
mercy wasn't  
just an action or  
disposition, but the  
last and highest  
name for God.

the primary focus and priority of the minister should be:

I wish to know in this way if you love the Lord and me, His servant and yours: that there is not any brother in the world who has sinned—however much he could have sinned—who, after he has looked into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not looking for mercy, you would ask him if he wants mercy. (Letter to a Minister, 9-10)

It can be especially difficult in religious life to remember the importance of mercy in our interactions with one another. There is, of course, the close proximity in which we usually live with each other and share together in the life of community and ministry. This is equally true for those who are called to marriage and family life, as well as those who may live in some other form of intentional community. It may become difficult to step back and see each person apart from the little annoyances and habits that drive us crazy. Additionally, we Christians are conditioned by the broader culture and society as much as anybody else. This logic of the world does not often consider mercy a value, but a weakness. Therefore, so-called

blind justice or the mentality of an eye for an eye approach toward others tends to govern our interactions with those who have offended, hurt, or simply annoyed us.

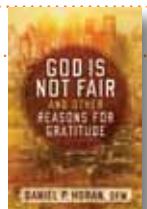
But Francis of Assisi calls us to resist that temptation, to see those within and outside our religious communities not according to this logic of the world, but with the eyes of Jesus Christ who has called us to show mercy in the way mercy has been shown to each of us. For Francis, mercy wasn't just an action or disposition, but the last and highest name for God. Written near the end of his life and said to be inspired by the ninety-nine names of God in Islam, Francis's *The Praises of God* concludes with the line: "You are all our sweetness, You are our eternal life: Great and wonderful Lord, Almighty God, Merciful Savior." In other words, the mercy of St. Francis is more than treating one another well; it is about living in a way more like God.

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For Francis of Assisi, all the magic and mystery of the faith was best summed up in the Incarnation.

# The Great Significance of the Humble Crèche

An excerpt from  
*Franciscan Christmas*

BY KATHLEEN M. CARROLL

Near the tiny Italian town of Assisi stands a giant, magnificent church, Santa Maria degli Angeli, St. Mary of the Angels. The people from around the world who make pilgrimage to this site are impressed by its many altars, with Mass being said almost constantly at one or more. The grandeur of the building is remarkable, even in a country rich with spectacular churches.

What truly sets this church apart is a small chapel, the Portiuncola. Many great cathedrals have chapels along their walls or on other levels of the building, but the Portiuncola is set in the center of the church, directly under the massive dome. This humble structure—too small to be a one-car garage—was the original St. Mary of the Angels, so named by the saint of Assisi, Francis. This is where he gathered his brothers, his minor friars, to worship in the early days of the Franciscan Order.

Just as the Portiuncola nestles quietly amid the magnificence of a huge basilica, the Christmas crèche occupies a similarly humble position in most homes. It may be found beneath a grand evergreen, decked in gold and lights. Perhaps it's on a mantle, barely noticeable above a roaring fire. Maybe it's even on a corner table, protected from tiny hands, but also obscured from view. But wherever it is found, however it seems to be outshined by grander decorations, it is the reason for the rest.

For Francis of Assisi, all the magic and mystery of the faith was best summed up in the Incarnation. The very fact of Jesus, of God become man, transformed all of creation. If Jesus

was wholly divine and wholly human, then human beings were indescribably elevated. If Jesus was a baby lying in a crib of straw, then straw, and cribs, and the animals surrounding him, and all the things of our world, were created anew. The world around us was no longer a land to which we were banished because of our sin; it was what it was always meant to be—the best of all possible worlds, crafted solely for our benefit. The animals, the rocks and trees, even the sun and moon, were our brothers and sisters.

This focus on the true meaning of things, on what we are rather than on what we do, is what the Christmas crèche—all of Christmas, in fact—is all about. Jesus was in a manger outside of Bethlehem sanctifying all of creation, not because of anything he did, but just because he was there, being who he was in that time and place.

The best Christmases of our lives have nothing to do with how big the tree is, or whether we have one at all. The best ornaments are not those priceless heirlooms we pack away with care each year and anxiously unwrap to see if they've survived another year in storage; they are the tattered handiwork of children and grandchildren, made with crayon, glitter, or toilet paper tubes and pasted with tiny photos of tiny faces we can barely remember. Their value is in the memories they stir, the stories told and retold over a score of holidays, the rediscovered closeness—or sometimes just the memory of that closeness—of those we love.

This Christmas, as you wrestle with tangled lights and strained finances, remember to put all that aside and focus on the true meaning of the day. It can be found in a tiny house and in the love of all those gathered there.

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# The Warming Breath of Animals

An excerpt from  
*The Soul of Christmas*  
BY THOMAS MOORE

Meditate on the manger and see yourself lying there in the straw. Whoever you are, whatever your beliefs, let this scene goad you on to another level, toward a greater self that belongs to the world. That baby honored by foreign visitors and angels is you, and if you don't realize that, you are missing out on the greatest secret of Christmas.

No one would choose to be born in a barn, or in a feeding trough on top of it. A spirit of poverty and humility are essential. You don't go after your own gain primarily but often have to sacrifice your needs for the greater good. You learn that people won't understand what you are trying to do. Even your most exalted aims may be misunderstood and criticized. You have no choice but to be humble and just go ahead with your life work. It all unfolds exactly as told in the story of Bethlehem, the shepherds, and the manger.

In the Gospel story of Jesus's birth you don't hear of animals, but tradition puts them there, probably because of the reference to a manger and shepherds. It's said that the animals breathing on the child kept him warm. But I imagine that, like many children, this precocious baby had an understanding with the animals. Today the Christmas crèche would be incomplete without them.

Among other things, the animals remind us of the cosmic destiny of this child, that he will become a spiritual leader with a message that will alter the way people live on the planet. His kingdom implies a different relation to the natural world and to animals, to the universe as a whole, and to all its particulars.

He was called "The Lamb of God" because he was sacrificed for the good of humankind, and at the mention in the story of shepherds we can easily imagine lambs at his birth. I would be sure to put lambs in my nativity scene. I remember them from childhood—puffs of wool with simple stick legs.

Perhaps the most important role of the animals is to show the intimate connection between the Jesus vision and the natural world. He became not just a social reformer but a complete visionary whose teachings affect every aspect of life, including the natural world in which we live. Christmas, with the images of the tree and the animals, marks the renewal of all life.

St. Francis of Assisi referred to animals as our brothers and sisters. We are all Earth beings, connected and mutually dependent. Actually, we are not on the planet, but of it. We grow out of the earth like trees and lambs, and it's a great mystery how our souls come into being. The appearance of the human soul, central to what happens in Bethlehem, is a mystery that only makes sense if we imagine the earth itself as a being with a soul. There is much more to the planet than meets the eye or can be measured, and that mystery lies deep within the narrative of Jesus's birth.

The joy we feel in Christmas parties and gift-giving and special dinners and reuniting families points to a different way of living here. We can understand that all who are born of this earth make up a family—not just humankind but all flora and fauna. If we were really to reunite at Christmas, we would bring along all the animals and plants that live around us. My little cotton-stick lambs and the shiny star on top of the tree teach us this.

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If we were really  
to reunite at  
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all the animals and  
plants that live  
around us.

# Solanus Casey: A Life of Gratitude

An excerpt from

*Thank God Ahead of Time: The Life and Spirituality of Solanus Casey*

By MICHAEL CROSBY, OFM CAP.

*Solanus Casey will be beatified in November 2017.*

On August 31, 1956, I met someone deeply gifted by God; so blessed by God that he would become the first man born in the United States to be declared “Venerable” by the Vatican (this represents the first major step in being declared a saint). I was at St. Bonaventure’s Friary in Detroit. My brother Dan had entered the Capuchin Franciscan Order. After his investiture with its habit he said: “Come and meet Solanus Casey; someday he’s going to be a saint.” Less than forty years later, on July 11, 1995, in the presence of Pope John Paul II, a decree about the sanctity of Casey’s life was promulgated: He could be called “Venerable.” It stated:

There is proven evidence that the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity toward God and neighbor and also the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude as well as other virtues have been exercised to a heroic degree by the Servant of God, Francis Solanus Casey, a professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin.

Earlier, on June 20, 1995, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints unanimously determined that the Wisconsin-born farm boy baptized “Bernard,” nicknamed “Barney,” who later entered the Capuchin Franciscans and received the name “Francis Solanus,” had cultivated “the theological virtues [and] other virtues to a heroic degree.” The Congregation deemed his life proved worthy of imitation. The events in Rome proved newsworthy enough that *The New York Times* featured

them in a story about Solanus Casey entitled: “One Man’s Life of Virtue Earns the Papal Spotlight.” Little did I know when I shook Solanus Casey’s frail hand in 1956 that I would become a significant contributor to the volumes accepted by the Congregation of Saints as the basis for its decision.

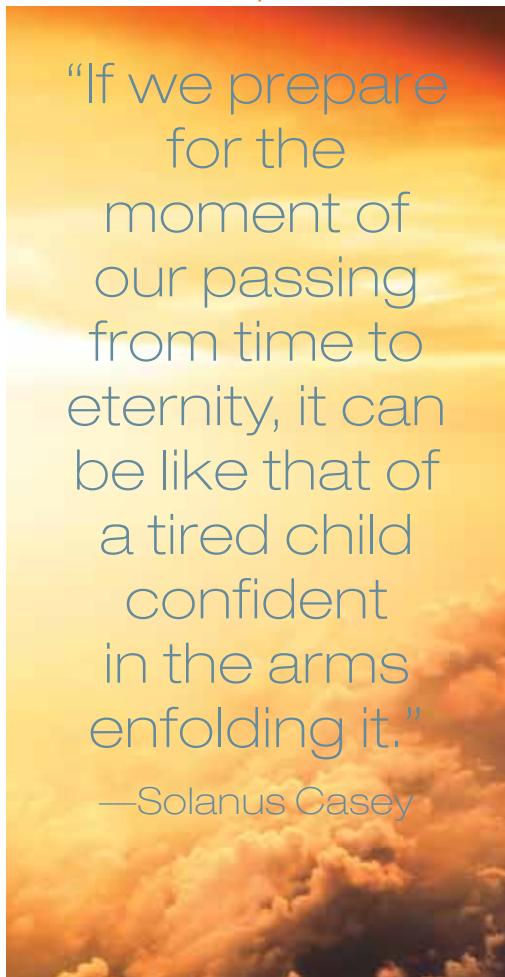
How did this happen?

In 1982 my superiors asked me to write the “official” biography of Solanus Casey. I began by reading all his writings and testimonies of people who knew him. Next I interviewed those who lived with him, ministered with him or came to him for help and inspiration. The more I listened to their stories, the more convinced I felt that Solanus Casey had a message for our increasingly

secular age that still yearns for meaning. His is a story of one person’s unswerving faith in God’s abiding presence continually calling us to cooperate with God in bringing about the unity of all.

\* \* \*

For Solanus, knowing God demanded a threefold response: appreciation, love and service. He wrote that everyone’s “purpose as a rational creature, is



to recognize and to know his Creator, so as to be able, intelligently to love him, confidently to hope in him, and gratefully to serve him.” Through knowledge, love, appreciation and service, Solanus found realized his definition of religion: the science of our happy relationship with and our providential dependence on God and our neighbor. In another elaboration on this theme he wrote: “Our Faith–Religion, is the science of our happy dependence upon God and our neighbor–of our living in his grace and dying in his love.”

An examination of Solanus’s definition of religion (or faith) reveals two equally important elements. First, it is the science of our happy relationship with God and our neighbor. Second, this religion reveals our providential dependence on God and our neighbor. Besides witnessing to these two poles of all spirituality (as well as in the testimony of those who knew him), these elements of the great commandment found their unique articulation in Solanus’s convictions regarding what he called thankfulness, gratefulness or appreciation. In his continual stress on the need for gratitude, Solanus indeed shows himself to be a mystic-in-action and, in the process, a living embodiment of the words of Meister Eckehart: “If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, ‘thank you,’ that would suffice.”

\* \* \*

What we have done on earth, the “vestibule of heaven,” will be the basis for our reward in heaven. Heaven, to Solanus, was “where love of God and our neighbor is the life and the very soul of society and association, where hopeful faith has merged into eternal charity.” Since these triune virtues of faith, hope and charity are the “trace of the Holy Trinity in our immortal souls,” and because the Trinity is the basis for our lives on earth, we should have no fear of passing over to fully experience God at the moment of our death. For him death was “the happy transition to the heavenly promised abode, where gratitude ripens

into perfect love of God and neighbor.” Thus he said, “if we prepare for the moment of our passing from time to eternity, it can be like that of a tired child confident in the arms enfolding it.” This attitude should be expected of all people at death’s door whose religiosity manifests a provident dependence on God and our neighbor. Yet the actual way Solanus prepared to die shows something more. While he died peacefully, turning his life consciously and rationally over to God, his last days reflected that preoccupation which often accompanies mystics as they prepare to pass over to the Lord. This preoccupation rests in their almost obsessive desire for unity for all people still on earth. Coming closer to that blessed vision of unity wherein one sees the Trinity face to face, that experience and understanding makes one preoccupied with all the forms of disunity which still exist on earth, especially among humans.

\* \* \*

He had lived a life of renunciation. Now at the point of death, Solanus was ready to renounce an immediate entrance into heaven, if only more people could experience that God to whom he was so united mystically. At the point of being one with God’s own being in a new and unimagined way, there is almost a bittersweet feeling; the work is not yet done. As long as a breath is available one’s efforts must be oriented to this goal of unity. However, even here and despite this bittersweet feeling, the feeling itself must be oriented to God’s will. To that goal all life must be directed. Thus at the point of entrance into final union with God, Solanus freely dedicated the depth of his being to be at one with his maker: “I give my soul to Jesus Christ.”

## KEEP GOING

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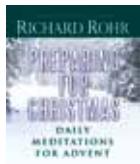


## Seasonal Favorites

### ***Preparing for Christmas***

#### *Daily Meditations for Advent*

RICHARD ROHR

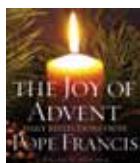


Richard Rohr's Scriptural reflections for Advent are the perfect preparation for the Christmas season. This beautiful redesign provides daily reflections for the Advent season, along with each day's Scripture readings and questions for reflection.

### ***The Joy of Advent***

#### *Daily Reflections from Pope Francis*

DIANE M. HOUDEK



With prayerful reflections drawn from the words of Pope Francis, this Advent companion helps you prepare for the Christmas season and lend a moment's meditation to even your busiest days.

### ***A Catholic Christmas***

KATHLEEN M. CARROLL



Fascinating stories of some favorite saints—such as Nicholas, Lucy, and Stephen—make their legends come alive, while the history and lore surrounding some of our most popular feasts—such as the Epiphany and the Immaculate Conception—will help you understand the importance of keeping the Mass in Christmas.

### ***A Mary Christmas***

KATHLEEN M. CARROLL



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## Franciscan Favorites

A collection to give you deeper insight into Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan spirit and vision that infuses everything we do at Franciscan Media.

### ***Perfect Joy***

#### *Thirty Days with Francis of Assisi*

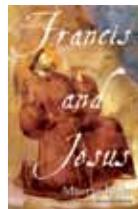
KERRY WALTERS



Experience thirty reflections about living joyfully, based on St. Francis's own life and writings. At the end of the month, you'll have a greater understanding of how to find true joy—the joy of living simply and with gratitude, of serving and coexisting with all of God's creatures; of being an instrument of God's peace.

### ***Francis and Jesus***

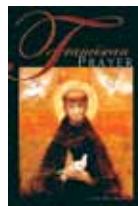
MURRAY BODO



Murray Bodo offers a maturing of his own spirituality in this dramatic storytelling of Francis's close connection and relationship with Jesus. Here we see a multidimensional, yet internal Francis as the ultimate disciple of Jesus: Francis as sufferer, in the wilderness, as itinerant, as misunderstood, in prayer, as teacher, as lover and protector of the poor, in authority while subject to God's authority, in community, as healer, as wounded.

### ***Franciscan Prayer***

ILIA DELIO

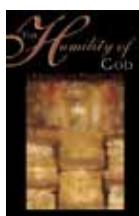


Masterfully written and intensely enlightening, this could very well be considered the essential handbook for all those seeking to pray and live the Franciscan way.

## ***The Humility of God***

*A Franciscan Perspective*

ILIA DELIO



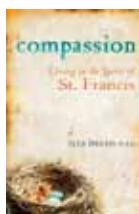
This is the first extensive treatment of a Franciscan theology of divine humility. Through the lens of St. Bonaventure's theology, Ilia Delio illustrates God's humility and his relationship to the world, while tack-

ling these tough questions: How can a God of love exist in such a time of turmoil and suffering? How can a well-educated Christian reconcile contemporary science with the central symbols of his or her faith?

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*Living in the Spirit of Francis of Assisi*

ILIA DELIO



Take a walk through the life of Francis, watching his growth from a selfish, materialistic young man to the humble, holy saint beloved by millions. With this book as your guide, you can do simple things every day to discover a more compassionate, open, fearless, and loving life—just as St. Francis did.

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*A Biography*

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abandoned his fortune and chose to live simply. His love for Jesus Christ, his love for animals, and his love for nature continue to inspire many to this day.

## ***Enter Assisi***

*An Invitation to Franciscan Spirituality*

MURRAY BODO

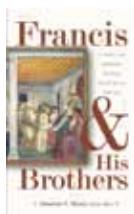


Go on a spiritual pilgrimage to Assisi with Fr. Murray Bodo. *Enter Assisi* takes you on a journey through the gates of the city, where you will discover in your own life the way to follow Jesus as St. Francis did.

## ***Francis and His Brothers***

*A Popular History of the Franciscan Friars*

DOMINIC V. MONTI, OFM

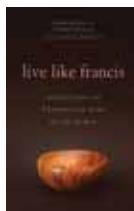


To celebrate the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Franciscan Order, Franciscan scholar and historian Dominic Monti tells us the beautiful and inspirational story of Francis of Assisi and his followers

from its beginnings to current times.

## ***Live Like Francis***

LEONARD FOLEY AND JOVIAN P. WEIGEL

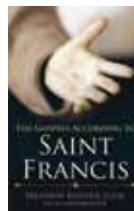


Whether you are a professed Franciscan of many years or someone just beginning to seek a spiritual understanding of Francis and Clare of Assisi, this book will give you the tools you need to live the Gospel—a

directive that remains as simple and, at times, confounding, today as it was eight hundred years ago during Francis's life.

## ***The Gospels According to St. Francis***

HILARION KISTNER, OFM



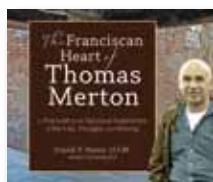
Kistner, a Franciscan priest, Scripture scholar, and teacher explores how Francis heard, lived, and proclaimed the Gospel. He considers Francis's profound love for the Gospel, the movement of the

Holy Spirit through the written word, the heart of the Gospels, and how Francis lived in the Gospel light.

## ***The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton***

(audiobook)

DANIEL P. HORAN, OFM



Daniel Horan, OFM, masterfully presents the untold story of how the most popular saint in Christian history inspired the most popular spiritual

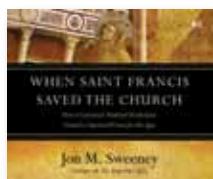
writer of the twentieth century, and how together they can inspire a new generation of Christians.

## ***When Saint Francis Saved the Church***

*How a Converted Medieval Troubadour Created a Spiritual Vision for the Ages*

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JON SWEENEY

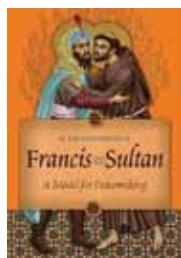


Francis himself became a conversion experience for all of Christian history, reviving the Church and revolutionizing how we think about the poor

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## ***In the Footprints of Francis and the Sultan***

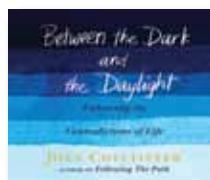
(DVD)



This two-part film explores a little-known thirteenth-century peace initiative in the Middle East involving Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malek al-Kamil. In 1219, during the Fifth Crusade, Francis took it upon himself to cross battle lines and reach out to the enemy.

## Inspirational Audios and Videos

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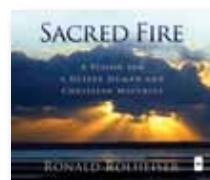
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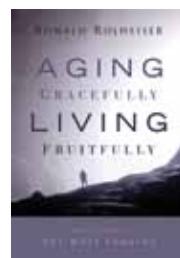
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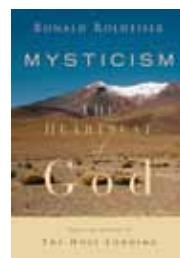
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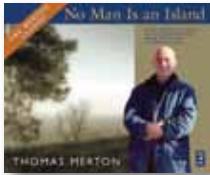
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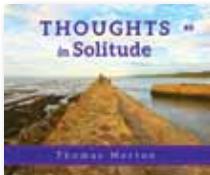
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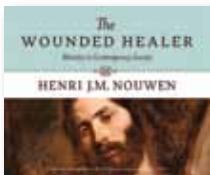
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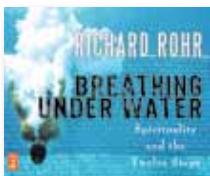
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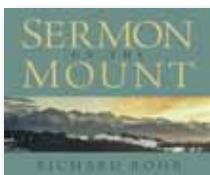
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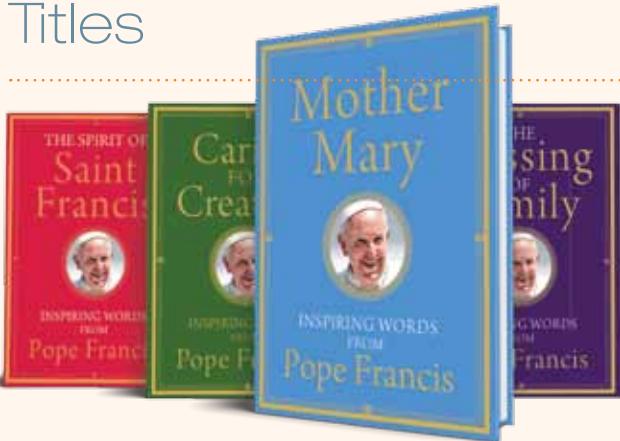
READ BY THE AUTHOR



Most High  
glorious God,  
enlighten the  
darkness  
of my heart.  
Give me right faith,  
sure hope  
and perfect charity.  
Fill me with  
understanding  
and knowledge  
that I may fulfill  
your command.

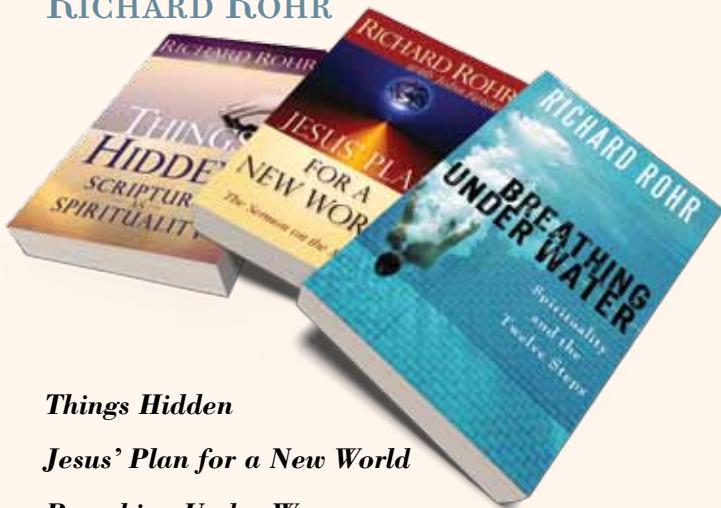
—St. Francis, prayer before the  
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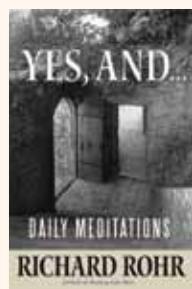


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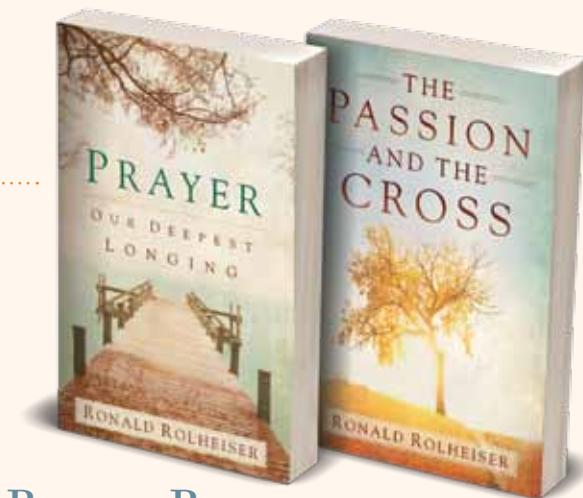
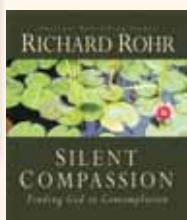
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***Jesus' Plan for a New World***  
***Breathing Under Water***



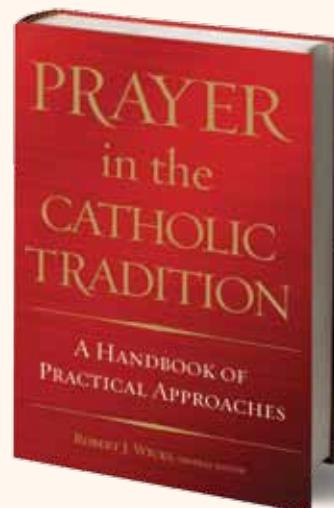
***Yes, And...***  
***Silent Compassion***



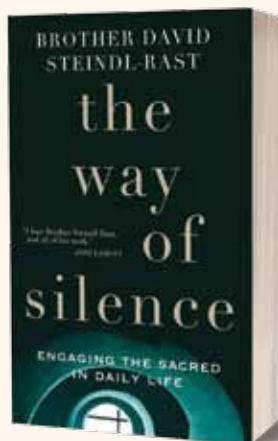
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***Our Deepest Longing***  
***The Passion and the Cross***

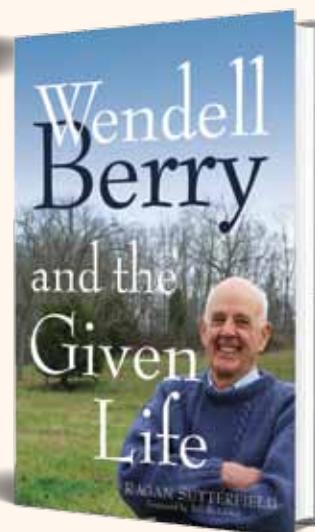
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 ROBERT J. WICKS,  
 GENERAL EDITOR



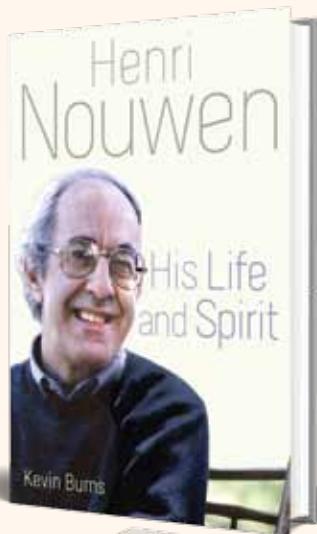
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***Engaging the Sacred in Daily Life***  
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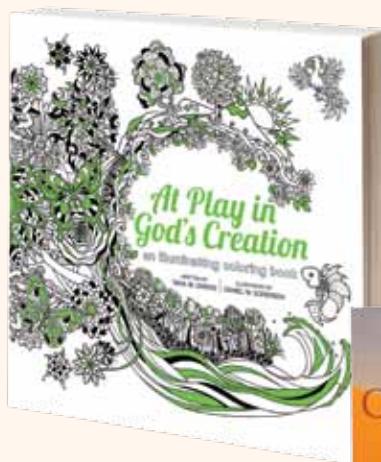
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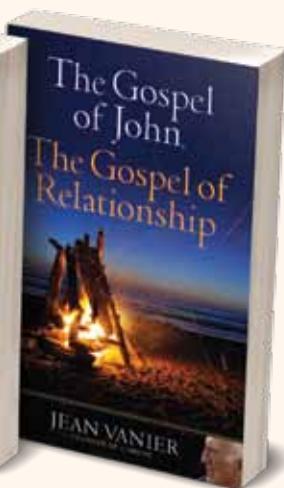
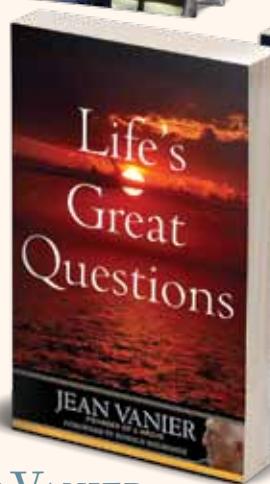
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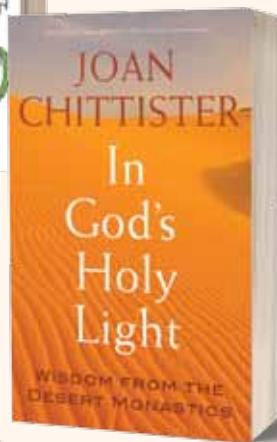
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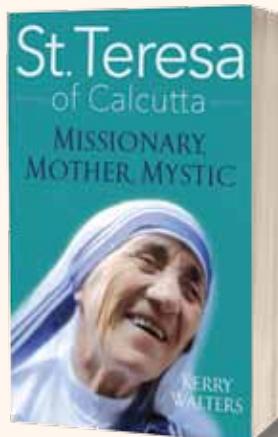


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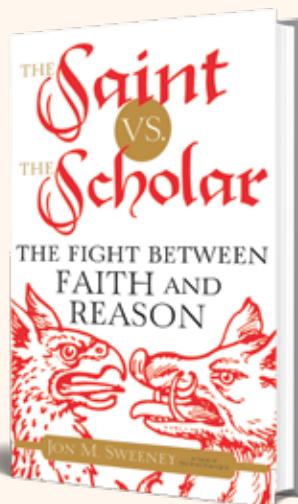
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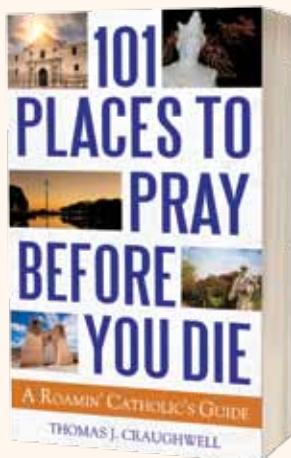


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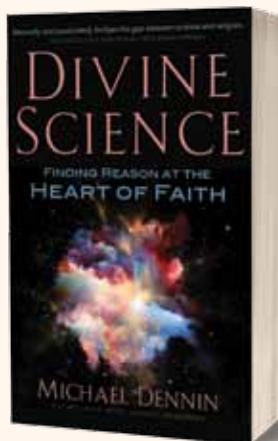
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PAULA D'ARCY



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*A Roamin' Catholic's Guide*  
THOMAS J. CRAUGHWELL



*Divine Science*  
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MICHAEL DENNIN

## Looking Ahead

We'll celebrate the Franciscan charism with Casey Cole, OFM, who writes about finding his vocation—the surprises, the challenges, and the joys—in a way that will get us all thinking about our own path in life. Father Murray Bodo, OFM, reflects upon his years as a friar and shares seven central teachings of St. Francis.

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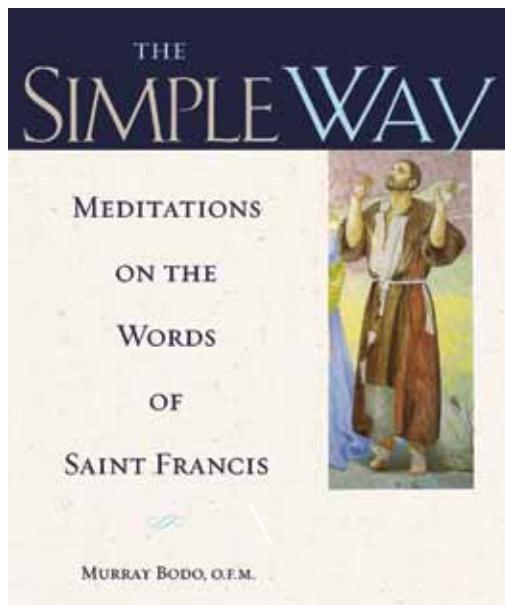
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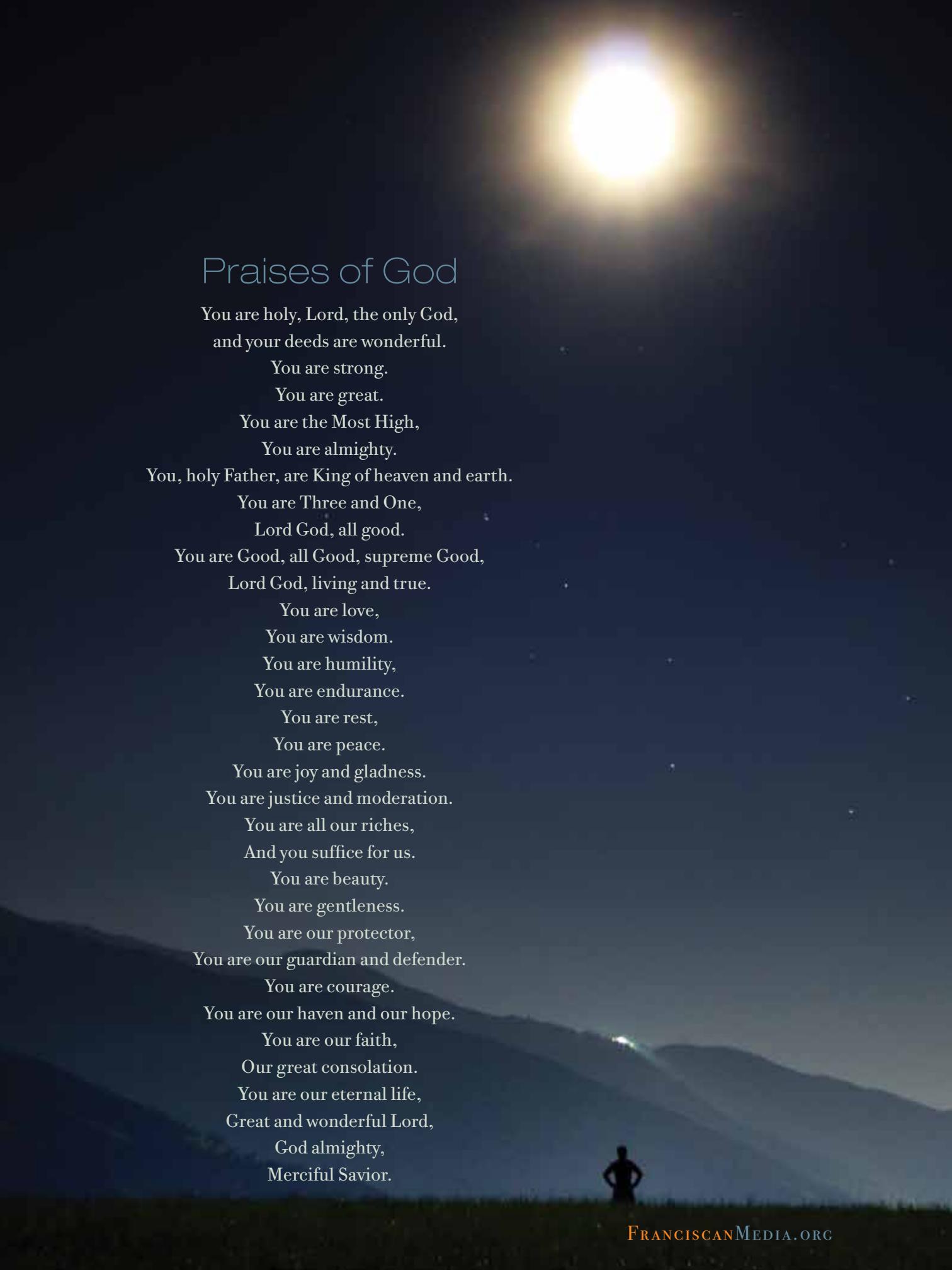


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## Praises of God

You are holy, Lord, the only God,  
and your deeds are wonderful.

You are strong.

You are great.

You are the Most High,

You are almighty.

You, holy Father, are King of heaven and earth.

You are Three and One,

Lord God, all good.

You are Good, all Good, supreme Good,

Lord God, living and true.

You are love,

You are wisdom.

You are humility,

You are endurance.

You are rest,

You are peace.

You are joy and gladness.

You are justice and moderation.

You are all our riches,

And you suffice for us.

You are beauty.

You are gentleness.

You are our protector,

You are our guardian and defender.

You are courage.

You are our haven and our hope.

You are our faith,

Our great consolation.

You are our eternal life,

Great and wonderful Lord,

God almighty,

Merciful Savior.

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