

FRANCISCAN SISTERS, T.O.R.  
OF PENANCE OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER

*From the Desk of*  
MOTHER MARY ANN KESSLER, T.O.R.  
LENT 2016



## *My Grace is Enough*

DEAR FRIENDS,

Have you ever felt discouraged, overwhelmed, or afraid? There are days when it's hard not to feel this way. One day I went to confession feeling like I was always confessing the same sin. The priest suggested to me to begin thanking God throughout the day for the blessings He brings.

As I began doing this, I discovered how much the Lord used those very times of struggle, trials, weaknesses, and limitations to bring good. As Reverend Mother, I can say He has used my weaknesses more than the natural talents He has given me to bring about His kingdom. I can certainly identify with St. Paul, who, after asking the Lord to take away this "thorn in the flesh," heard Him reply, "My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection" (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Our struggles, trials, weaknesses and limitations come in many different forms. For some of us, it's the battle with cancer or some other serious illness. For others, it's the battle with depression or some kind of addiction. For still others, it's our insecurities, fear, and self-consciousness. The list could go on and on. In each situation, God says, "My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection."

Jesus came as a Suffering Servant, as Isaiah says (Chapters 52:13-53:12). Why? Because our Father in heaven knew when He sent His only begotten Son (John 3:16) that suffering and weakness are the common denominator for every human person. No one goes without suffering. No human being can escape from his or her mistakes, limitations, and weaknesses. Christ experienced everything we experience except sin. He was tired (Mark 4:38). He was sorrowful and distressed (Mark 14:33-34). He got angry (Mk 11:15-16). He cried (John 11:35). He got frustrated (Matt 17:17). He even felt abandoned (Mark 15:34). Why? The reason is so that each one of us could experience His inexhaustible, unfathomable love and mercy. God, who is almighty and all-powerful, chooses to suffer for us.

Wow! What love! What mercy and grace! I can say I have experienced this grace in my own weakness. I remember one of the first things I had to do as a Reverend Mother was to give a promulgation address. I didn't even know what a promulgation address entailed, let alone how to write or present one. I looked it up in Webster's dictionary to find out what it was. Okay. Now I knew what it was, but I still was not inspired. After a considerable amount of time, I gave up, discouraged. Finally, I said to the Lord, "Okay. I can't do this. You must." Well, that's exactly what He was waiting for—my surrender. When I gave it over to Jesus, I was suddenly inspired and within 30 minutes had the whole address written. I presented it to the sisters and received a lot of positive feedback. All I could say was: "It was all God."



MAKING KNOWN GOD'S MERCIFUL LOVE

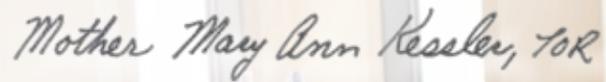
Another time I experienced God's sufficient grace was a number of years ago. My biopsy came back suspicious for cancer. I needed to have surgery. I was worried for days. Finally, I gave it to the Lord and a profound peace came over me. I knew no matter what the final outcome of the surgery would be, everything would be all right. And it was.

We all have our struggles, trials, and challenges: waiting for the results of a biopsy, wondering where to begin the search for a new job, struggling to overcome the temptation to view pornographic pictures, fighting the anxiety over the upcoming presentation to all the managers at work. In it all, God speaks to our hearts the same words he spoke to Paul—"My grace is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection." Jesus wants us to bring our struggles to Him. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus says, "I am with you always, until the end of the world!" Throughout the chapters of Isaiah, the Lord speaks, "... Fear not...when you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you" (Isaiah 43: 1-2).

Lent is a time to reflect on how we are doing. It's a time for transformation and conversion. Wouldn't it be life-changing if we each could give to Jesus all our worries, fears, frustrations, temptations, weaknesses, and limitations? Wouldn't we be filled with more peace and joy if we allowed Jesus' all-sufficient grace to operate in our lives? Let this Lent be a time of surrendering to the God who infinitely loves us and cares for each one of our concerns. Let this Lent be the first step to a new life.

I want to express my sincere thanks to each of you for so faithfully being an integral part of our life and mission. Your time, talent, prayers and financial assistance are important contributions to Christ's mission. Thank you again and please consider continuing your support.

In Christ's Peace,



*Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.*

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.



## *Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary*

For 33 days leading up to December 8, many of our sisters renewed their consecration to Jesus through Mary. After all, the feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates God's particular mercy for her: that of being conceived without sin. St. John Paul II wrote that Mary "is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price, she knows how great it is. In this sense, we call her the Mother of mercy" (*Dives in Misericordia*, 9).

As a motherhouse community, we celebrated the beginning of the Jubilee Year of Mercy with a procession of the image of Divine Mercy from our chapel down to our dining room, where it will remain on display through the year. It is a constant reminder to us that "Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy," as Pope Francis wrote in *Misericordia Vultus*.

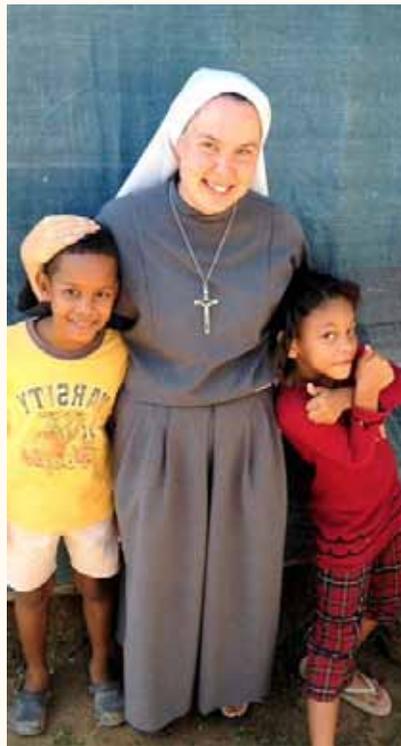


## *Celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy*



Sr. Rita Clare at "OneThing2015" with a fellow conference goer, Dr. Mary Healy, and Sr. Maria Clare. Sr. Rita Clare described her experience:

*"We saw bridges being built and walls coming down between denominations through the praise and worship that brings us all together."*



Just days after Christmas, Sr. Maria Clare and Sr. Rita Clare drove down to Kansas City, Missouri for "OneThing2015," a gathering of 20,000 Christians in worship and prayer. The sisters participated in the Catholic track at the Dec. 28-31 conference, but also had many beautiful experiences of witnessing a unity in the wider Body of Christ.

*"Love in any language is love."*

So said Fr. Carl Clarke, a priest from the Diocese of Montego Bay, while introducing a mission team of Franciscan University students to the culture of Jamaica. From January 6-16, Sr. Mary Gemma accompanied the group to the warm Caribbean country, doing door-to-door evangelization and preaching in the streets of poor country villages. "The mission was truly an experience of love within the Body of Christ," Sr. Mary Gemma said. "The people of Jamaica are so warm and welcoming, giving us all their best and celebrating our time together with joy."

## *Entering more deeply*

January 23 marked an important day for our postulants, Patricia Bell (left) and Theresa Stano (right). After 3 days of retreat, they received the Tau cross, joining their fellow postulant, Elise Chabot (center), who had received hers last year. They will wear the Tau for the rest of their postulancy and through novitiate. The Tau is a traditional Franciscan symbol and one which St. Francis used as his signature throughout his life. As she placed the cross around the neck of each postulant, Mother Mary Ann invited them to enter more deeply into the mystery of the passion of Jesus and into the heart of His sorrowful Mother.



FRANCISCAN SISTERS, T.O.R.  
OF PENANCE OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER  
369 LITTLE CHURCH RD.  
TORONTO, OHIO 43964  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Steubenville, OH  
Permit No. 26



### *T.O.R. Presence at Legatus*

Pam Kidwell shares a smile with Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R. at the 2016 Legatus Summit in Orlando, FL, January 28-30 where Mother Mary Ann and Sr. Mary Rose were guest-exhibitors.

CONTACT US! (740) 544-5542

[WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG](http://WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG)

[WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.BLOGSPOT.COM)

*Making Known God's Merciful Love*



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### LENTEN RETREAT:

*Immersed in the  
Father's Mercy*

**SATURDAY,  
MARCH 19**

*Our Lady of Sorrows  
Monastery*

**8:30 A.M. TO 4 P.M.**

**RSVP REQUIRED BY MARCH 7**

[WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG](http://WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG)

OR CALL (740) 544-5542 EXT. 112

SUGGESTED DONATION: \$15



ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE

SATURDAY, MAY 21, 2016

