

# Franciscan Sisters, Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother



from the desk of  
*Mother Katherine Caldwell TOR.*  
Summer 2013



Dear Family and Friends:

Over this past month of June, in anticipation of Father's Day, I have been reflecting upon God the Father and the fatherly love that we have received from our family, friends, and benefactors. **Thank you for the ways you have reflected God the Father's love and goodness to us.**

**I felt it was providential that our new painting, "The Prodigal's Return," was blessed at our 25th Anniversary Open House Celebration.** This painting captures not only the conversion of the son, but also the mercy and restorative strength of the Father. The son, after being embraced and receiving the new garment, leans upon the outstretched, steady arm of the father to stand upright. Lisa Andrews created an amazing work of art in the way she symbolized and beautifully expressed the spiritual richness of Jesus' parable (*for a full description please see <http://www.franciscansisterstor.org/chapel/artwork/>*). It could not have been better timing to bless this painting for this Gospel parable depicts what we have received over these past twenty-five years—**God's abundant mercy.**

I want to share about two people who were **God the Father's merciful heart and steady arm** for me. The first is the major benefactor, who chooses to remain anonymous, for our motherhouse and Father of Mercy Chapel. What stands out in my experience was the way he assisted us. He knew, like a father would, that we were too young and relatively unknown to accomplish such a big task. We needed extra help to get started, like a child needing their father's help to ride a bike. He sensed that once we built the monastery then others would come to know us and want to participate in supporting our life and mission. As we began building in 2009, the economy took a fall. Our benefactor could not have been more gracious when the additional funds were not coming in as we had hoped. I truly felt his outstretched arm as a particular expression of God the Father's love, knowing how to give in such a way that upholds the dignity of the one in need.

The other person was Dad McKeown, Sr. Carrie Ann's father. I can still remember the day I received a small box in the mail. When I opened the package, to my surprise, I found a baseball. I love to play sports, but I am no baseball fan. What could this mean? As I read the enclosed letter, tears began to fall. This was one of the most encouraging letters that I have ever received. On the baseball was written, **"If you build it, they will come,"** and **"Go the distance,"** quotes from his favorite movie, "Field of Dreams."

**Both of these fathers believed in us, sensing God's work in and through us.** They knew how to assist and how to empower. By God's goodness, we have been getting more vocations since our motherhouse and chapel has been built, and an awareness of our community is growing. **Below are the five candidates that plan to join us this August.** Our initial formation (training) program, similar to a seminary but for sisters, takes about eight years. It is a significant investment, but one which is really priceless. **We continue to need financial support to sustain our current ministries, run our motherhouse and formation program, provide for our sisters, and to support our life of prayer for the Church and the world. Please consider continuing and possibly increasing your support of our sisters and our mission to make known God's merciful love.**



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I thought you would appreciate the following reflection written by one of our second year novices, Sr. Mary Gemma. To read her vocation story visit our website: [www.franciscansisterstor.org/about-us/meet-the-sisters](http://www.franciscansisterstor.org/about-us/meet-the-sisters)

## *The Arms of the Father* *Luke 15:11-32*

*Our human means of measuring are all finite, limited—a foot, an inch, a cup, a tablespoon, a meter, a mile. We tend to impose those limits on human love as well, limiting in our minds our own ability to love, and, perhaps worse, the love of which others are capable. We even put a cap on the immeasurable love of God.*

*The problem with the prodigal son is not that he expected too much of the Father, demanding his inheritance. The problem is that he expected too little. He only wanted his due, “the share of property that falls to me.” But his due was the least of what the Father had to give him. The elder son, also, demands mere fairness: repayment for his many years of service. While he is busy counting pennies, though, the Father is opening wide His treasuries—treasuries of mercy. “The Arms of the Father” might be a better title for this parable, because it is the Father’s generosity to his small-minded sons that dominates the story.*

*When the younger son was empty-handed in a foreign country, Jesus says, “He began to be in want.” In his Father’s house, he wanted for nothing. And this same abundant love is there to welcome him home after he had rejected it. The Father’s arms are opened wide to receive His younger son and lavish gifts upon him, undeserved though they may be, and they are opened wide to entreat His elder son to enter into the joy.*

*In this parable we don’t find out the final reaction of either of the sons to his Father’s merciful love. Does the younger son finally see that it is not a question of his worthiness? Does the elder son ever realize that he need not earn his Father’s love? Perhaps we are not given the answer because we must choose for ourselves, so that we can say with St. Thérèse, “To me He has manifested His infinite Mercy and in this resplendent mirror I contemplate His other attributes. There, each appears radiant with love—His Justice perhaps more than the rest.”*

*May we always hear the Father speak His words of illimitable love to us: “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.”*

I believe her words capture the abundance of God the Father’s love for each of us. Please know our prayers that you may know God the Father’s particular love for you as you continue to love with His love.

With Grateful Hearts,

*Mother Katherine Caldwell, TOR*

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**P.S. Thank you for the ways you reflect God the Father’s love in the ways you support our life and mission. Please know our love and prayers are with you.**

*\* To learn more about Lisa Andrews and to view her art, please visit her website at [www.lsandrews.com](http://www.lsandrews.com).*

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Sr. Mary Gemma at the Open House Celebration attended by 400-500 friends, old and new, who enjoyed a day full of fun and spiritual fellowship.