

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



from the desk of  
*Mother Katherine Caldwell T.O.R.*  
August 2013



## *Journey of Surrender: Pilgrimage of Love*

Dear Family and Friends:

***Love is not loved. Life is not lived. Today disappears into tomorrow.*** These words could easily describe our lives if we let ourselves slide into the fast-paced, superficial culture that surrounds us. Throughout the ages men and women have stepped out of the distractions of ordinary life to experience life anew as a pilgrim. While a pilgrimage entails travel from one physical place to another, the true journey is through the uncharted depths of the soul. Unlike the culture of our times, the pilgrim's purpose or end is depth not distance; grace not accomplishment; wisdom not knowledge.

### ***Depth Not Distance***

As a society we tend to focus on the externals of life. The pilgrim, on the other hand, focuses on the internal and on realities that really matter. Who is God and who am I? What is my God-given purpose in life? How is God inviting me toward interior transformation, toward my true identity and eternal destiny? How am I loving and being loved? As a pilgrim makes his journey, the external sites and circumstances become important means for encountering the deeper internal realities. The beauty of the sunset, the flowers, and the landscape all speak to the pilgrim of the beauty of the Divine Artist and His masterpiece—the human soul. The joys, the challenges, and the dangers—devoid of distractions—put the pilgrim face to face with his inner desires, frustrations and fears, providing him the opportunity to step beyond these into God.

### ***Grace Not Accomplishments—Surrender Not Pride***

The pilgrim leaves behind riches, marks of distinction, and all that is familiar. Having nothing or no one to lean upon, the pilgrim discovers new depths and heights of the loving God who made him. The realization of one's own powerlessness becomes a door to grace and an entryway into profound surrender. The pilgrim is left face to face with his inner poverty and dependence upon God. He is stripped of his false identity, his many garments of pride, such as self-reliance, ambition, and the like. What once was avoided now is embraced. The paradox of the Christian life: To be little and dependent is to become great. To know in one's depths the joy of being loved by the One who has made all cannot be earned or bought, for it is the gratuitous grace of God, a gift beyond price.

### ***Wisdom Not Knowledge***

The pilgrim's road map is the Beatitudes, which requires him to let go of everything he has known and leads him to the Heart of Calvary. Learning from Him, Who is meek and humble of heart, the pilgrim finds true wisdom—Divine Love—hung upon the Cross. Gazing upon the marred face of Christ and His torn and bleeding side, he learns that the secret of true love comes through a total surrender of self and reliance upon God. He enters freely into the paschal mystery of life, the dying and rising with Christ. This new freedom in Christ enables one to cherish each day as a new opportunity to love and to be loved. What at first was a painful stripping has become a beautiful journey of self-gift, the highest expression of love.

***May each of you find ways to surrender more fully to God's love, allowing His grace to guide you in loving and living life to the full!*** I hope you enjoy reading the rest of my letter, especially about Deacon Lou's journey of surrender and Sr. Agnes Thérèse's pilgrimage of love. Please know my love and prayers are with you and your loved ones.

Trusting in the Father's Love,

*Mother Katherine Caldwell, T.O.R.*

# Deacon Lou's Journey of Surrender: Becoming Empty to Be Filled

I first met Deacon Lou about three years ago when a mutual friend asked him if he could help us fundraise for our growing needs. Over these years Deacon Lou has been a wonderful model for me of living life to the full, knowing how to prioritize what really matters in the midst of the demands of family, business, and ministry. Lou is a devoted husband and father. Lou and Antoinette have been married since 1978, and they have two adult children; Briana who is engaged to be married in October and is a lawyer in California, and Louis who works in the healthcare industry and is pursuing a master's degree in business administration.

I am grateful for the ways Deacon Lou has invested his time and resources to help make our life and mission possible. He has been instrumental in introducing us to many of our beloved friends and benefactors in the Cleveland area. Just a few months after we met, he organized a benefit dinner for our community at his home near Cleveland. Around sixty people gathered on that beautiful May evening. It was not the number, however, rather the goodness of those present and the love and respect that they all shared for Deacon Lou that made it beautiful. This has been a consistent experience over these past three years. Deacon Lou is an exceptional person. He is open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and he will go the extra mile so that others know they are loved and cared for by God. One of many stories is how the Holy Spirit used him as an instrument of healing for the parishioners from the closed parish of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Barberton, Ohio, where our marble altars came from. Deacon Lou arranged a special pilgrimage for them to visit Father of Mercy Chapel, and he presided as Deacon in a prayer service of healing for them who felt profoundly the loss of their parish church.



In my opening letter, I shared about what really matters in life—loving and being loved. Over these past three years, I have met many people who have been blessed by Deacon Lou's caring heart and prudent advice. As a deacon he has many opportunities to touch lives through this ministry. And yet, as a businessman, his love goes far beyond the borders of St. Basil the Great Church. He is currently the founder and President/CEO of Orion Solutions, which specializes in management consulting, business process services and outsourcing, and mergers/acquisitions. As a businessman he brings Christ into the market place. His pilgrimages are not from one holy place to another, but from one business meeting to another. It is on this side that the most important meetings happen—the meeting of hearts—where his colleagues share their desire to find God in the midst of their busy lives and in the midst of life's trials.

In a recent conversation with Deacon Lou, I came to understand his secret—his surrender so as to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Deacon Lou was ordained as a permanent deacon in 2005. While his formal education and training began at St. Mary Seminary in 2001, the formation of his heart began ten years prior. He expressed to me that these ten years were a time when he was emptied of self. As he was lying prostrate during his ordination ceremony, he experienced in a profound way what it meant to be emptied so as to receive more of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit and the Spirit's role as Advocate came alive for him. I have personally witnessed how Deacon Lou is a man filled with the Holy Spirit, for the fruits of love, prudence, and wisdom are evident in his life.

## JOIN IN THE JOY OF THE JUNIOR SISTERS BY SUPPORTING THEIR VOCATIONS

Thank you for your faithful contributions which help to make the formation of our sisters possible. Please include your prayer intentions on the enclosed envelope or by visiting our website at [www.franciscansisterstor.org](http://www.franciscansisterstor.org)



# *Pilgrimage of Love:* *The Vows: My "little way" of dependence* *St. Agnes Therèse*

Catholic spirituality abounds in "little ways." Ever since St. Thérèse first coined the term, they have been shooting up like weeds. And I am beginning to think that this is exactly what Thérèse had in mind when she articulated her little way; I suspect she wanted each person to have his own little way of following Jesus. In other words, we must each find a way to relish our dependence on God while simultaneously learning from Him how to nourish and care for those whom He entrusts to us. It seems crazy but there it is: we are all helpless babes called upon to remain helpless and needy and somehow minister God's own love and care and presence from that place of need.

As I have been preparing more intensively for my first vows, God has brought this theme of dependence to my mind and heart time and again. And He has been showing me how vowed life in community is my little way of dependence. When it comes right down to it, one way you could interpret the vows is that they keep before us our absolute need – all the time! It is as though they were designed to make us realize our limits! One example regarding poverty may illustrate this point. Before entering community, I was free to dispose of my income as I wished. I was no millionaire, but I could at least tithe to my parish and send the occasional check to Catholic Charities. I now have no money to give away. I am, in fact, the recipient of other people's generosity! When the collection basket is passed around at church, I have no money to put in, no matter how magnanimous my mood! This doesn't always feel very good. I have gone from a life of relative independence to one of sometimes humiliating dependence. And that is exactly the point. The vows are my little way of dependence because they take away those things that used to make me feel self-sufficient, which effectively forces me to rely on God. The vows nail and bind me to Christ's own apparent helplessness on the cross, and in so doing they free me to be a creature, a child of God – and free Him to be my Savior. I think that before entering community, I was sort of treating God like Catholic Charities. I'd "send Him checks," but I wasn't always available to Him. The vows deprive me of some of my ability to give God my talents and treasure but free me to give Him myself in all my weakness, need, and poverty.

Mary is the perfect model for this trustful dependence, especially as we see her at the foot of the cross. It is hard to imagine how futile she must have felt in the events leading to the Crucifixion. Knowing who Jesus was more deeply than anyone else, her pain and confusion at the appalling treatment her cherished Son received must have been absolutely unfathomable. But there she was, standing at the foot of the cross, knowing her frailty, her weakness, her utter need of God and trusting "that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Lk 1:45).

The really beautiful thing in all of this is that in each life God provides a little way of dependence which teaches us how to let Him save us. So you don't have to profess vows to enter into this beautiful helplessness! Some are given sickness, pain, or handicaps. Others have crippling family situations, frustrating jobs, or unemployment. Precisely those things which seem to make us useless to God are often the means He uses to draw us to Himself. In 2 Corinthians 1:9-10, St. Paul says, "We felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again." At the end of the day, God doesn't need our good works, our alms, or our tidy lives of piety. He accepts those things as tokens of our good will, but they're not the objects of his love, not the desire of his heart. What He wants is us, our very selves. We are the one thing that He has surrendered control of by giving us free will. Anybody else could do the things we do, give the time or money we give, but nobody can give our yes to God but ourselves; only you can surrender your heart in loving confidence to God. Do not be afraid of the claims He makes on your life! Instead, ask the Lord to show you what your little way is, and beg for the grace to accept it with joy.



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## *Religious Profession: Journey of Self-Gift with Christ*

On August 6th, the Feast of the Transfiguration, Sr. Agnes Thérèse made her first profession of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as a response of love to God. Blessed John Paul II in reflecting upon the Transfiguration of Jesus in light of religious consecration, expresses this response of love beautifully: *In the countenance of Jesus, the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) and the reflection of the Father's glory (cf. Heb 1:3), we glimpse the depths of an eternal and infinite love which is at the root of our being. Those who let themselves be seized by this love cannot help abandoning everything to follow him.* As Bishop Monforton expressed, the feast of the Transfiguration, depicting Christ aglow with the light of the Father's glory and in preparation for His ultimate gift of Self, is a perfect feast for a religious profession. Sr. Agnes Thérèse in making religious profession desires to follow Christ, and like Christ to reflect the Father's light and love as she makes a gift of self through prayer and service to those in need. Sr. Agnes Thérèse will be serving the people in downtown Steubenville at Samaritan House, a thrift store and emergency food bank; LAMP, a breakfast and lunch program, and Franciscan University of Steubenville, as an assistant for the formation of students preparing to serve those in need. Please read Sr. Agnes Thérèse's personal reflection inside.

