



Under His Mercy

DECEMBER 2025

In this issue, our sisters reflect on God's presence in their lives. God gives us His only Son, Jesus, to reveal His tender love for us regardless of our situations, condition, background or walk of life.

Yoked Together

BY SR. SOPHIA GRACE HUSCHKA, T.O.R.

Weakness. Littleness. Poverty. Humility. Jesus lived these values and that's what St. Francis of Assisi loved about the Incarnation.

This summer I had the unique opportunity to do a walking pilgrimage to Assisi and was invited to learn firsthand about my own weakness and littleness. I arrived in Italy feeling incredibly frail on all levels - physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. But as we began our pilgrimage, I remembered a homily I had recently heard on Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-29, "*Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart.*" In that homily, I learned that in each yoke, a stronger ox was always paired with a smaller, weaker one. I immediately connected with this image and with each arduous step it became my prayer. I was constantly asking Jesus to be my strength and help carry my burdens - physical, emotional, and spiritual.



The strongest and the weakest yoked together

As we were walking up the last VERY steep hill into the walls of Assisi, my prayer was made incarnate before my eyes. Daniel, an incredibly strong young man, whom I often saw carrying two full hiking packs, took the large walking stick he was using and turned it horizontally offering the other end to a young woman who was struggling to keep up most of the pilgrimage. Tears welled up in my eyes. I was in shock and said out loud, "If that isn't a yoke, I don't know what is. You two don't know it but thank you for being my prayer right now."

Everything I had been praying with for the entire time of walking was there right before me, being lived out!!! The strongest and the weakest yoked together. I was keenly aware of my weakness but even more so of the Lord's strong yet tender care for me. I felt so seen, known, and loved by Him and, in that moment, I experienced His covenantal love in a deeper way.



Sr. Sophia Grace and Sr. Sarah Rose pose with the statue of St. Francis

Changing Perspective: An Invitation from the Christ Child

BY SR. AGNES THÉRÈSE DAVIS, T.O.R.

This year, I made my retreat in Assisi, St. Francis' hometown. My first morning there, I eagerly climbed up to "La Rocca's" ruins. This fortress is an icon of Francis' youthful ambitions: born in modest circumstances, he wanted to be high society, one of the great ones. Indeed, he was probably part of the uprising which destroyed the fortress in his late teens.

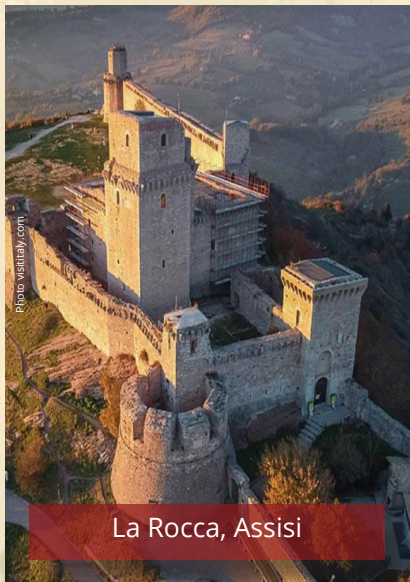
Looking down from La Rocca's height, I felt powerful. However, the perspective was also severely limited: clouds obscured much of the town and as well as the people below. After he began ascending the social ladder, St. Francis renounced power and privilege and identified

himself instead with those considered the lowest. He did this in imitation of and obedience to Christ.

Recently, Pope Leo exhorted us to heed Christ's "invitation to adopt a different perspective, to look at the world from a lower position: through the eyes of those who suffer

rather than the mighty." He referred to Jesus washing his disciples' feet, but really Christ's whole earthly life was lived from a "low" perspective. Consider Jesus in the manger at Bethlehem: who is needier, poorer than a baby?

The Pope's exhortation startled me, as it seemed to describe my life. In the course of a few days in late September, I went from thinking nothing of going out for a five-mile run to gasping for breath as I stood up for Morning Prayer. This led to the discovery of blood clots in my lungs, a hospital stay, and the opportunity to experience firsthand the perspective of weakness and dependence. Even after leaving the hospital, I was very weak because of the strain my heart had gone through. In this condition, my life was suddenly shaped by the kindness of others, rather than my own choice.



La Rocca, Assisi



The Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Italy

This experience of weakness made me realize how powerful I have been for most of my life (and how I've taken that for granted!). I don't think I've been so weak since I was in the cradle, myself! I may love to talk about the "Little Way" but actually experiencing loss, weakness, and failure are more unnerving than comfortable. It forces us to learn how much we trust God, really. Do we believe He is taking care of us?

One of my favorite photos is from my final vows. My nephew was still very small, and in the picture, his expression asks me a question: Am I safe with you? This is the way each of us stands before God. We are nothing but weakness before His strength and power. Yet He looks down on us with tenderest love and has joined us in our weakness by emptying himself of His divine prerogatives and coming in flesh like any other helpless baby.

As we approach the manger this Christmas, consider with me what perspective we live from; then let's beg God for the courage to follow Him into childhood, dependence, and trust knowing that this is what is needed for Christ's kingdom to come into the world.



Am I safe with you?

The Journey There

BY SR. SARAH ROSE DENT, T.O.R.

The last hill into the city of Assisi. Almost there. Sr. Sophia Grace and I journeyed with a priest friend and thirty young people, coming to the end of our six-day backpacking trip – culminating at the tomb of St. Francis of Assisi.

As we pushed up the last hill, I found myself getting ahead of the group in my eagerness to be done, along with one other pilgrim. We backed up when someone called us back to the group. The slow drudge up the hill was getting to me and I again started speeding up. To my chagrin, a couple pilgrims went ahead and slowed us down. Humbled, I backed up and stayed toward the middle of the group for the rest of the trek.

But it ended up being so much more of a communal experience from this position. Father pulled out the guitar and played songs we had sung together often, motivating us. Pilgrims encouraged and helped each other up. I could hear us all breathing heavily through our singing. I was reminded in this moment that it wasn't only about the destination and arriving, but about the journey there. I found pride (too much of it!!) in my abilities, speed, and stamina on the hike – could I let these go for the sake of the communal experience?

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we meditate on Jesus' pilgrimage of hope: His coming to us, bringing us a message of hope and joy. This life is a response to His coming. I can live my life as a pilgrimage back to Him – keeping in mind the destiny of heaven as well as the journey. Can I live my daily life not isolated in my pursuit of (usually worthy) achievements, but dwelling in and pressing into the communal pilgrimage of life?

We finally (together!) reached the piazza of the Basilica of St. Francis, our hearts bursting with joy, song, and even some dancing! We then trekked solemnly – walking poles, packs, dirt, and all – down to the crypt where St. Francis' body lay. The silence, interior joy, and contentment I felt by being there with my pilgrim family were a small foreshadowing of the contentment to come for us all at the end of our pilgrimage.



We reached the piazza of the Basilica of St. Francis



Sr. Sarah Rose shares a reflection with the pilgrims



The Journey there

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Advent HEALING RETREAT SATURDAY | DECEMBER 13 | 8:30 AM EST

Our Advent Healing Retreat will be held at our Motherhouse and also be livestreamed. The retreat will begin with registration at 8:00 am EST and will end at about 12:30 pm EST. The day will include Mass with Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR, a talk on Healing by Sr. Rita Clare, TOR, and adoration with guided Healing Prayer by Sr. Sarah Rose, TOR, music, and healing prayer ministry. The retreat is FREE, there is no cost to attend. Registration is encouraged beforehand, but not required. Learn more on our Advent Healing Retreat webpage under the "Events" dropdown.

SCAN ME
 FOR ADVENT
 RETREAT INFO!



Ignatian Silent Retreat JANUARY 16-19, 2026

The retreat will be hosted on our Motherhouse property and will be a time for silent imaginative prayer according to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Retreatants will be guided through several "prayer hours" each day and will be given a few prayer exercises to pray with during the weeks prior to arrival. Daily spiritual direction by the sisters will also be offered. To find out more information (including the suggested donation amount) and to sign up, contact Sr. Sarah Rose, TOR at 740-544-6287.

LENTEN RETREAT SATURDAY MARCH 14, 2026



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