

FRANCISCAN SISTERS, T.O.R.  
*of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother*

from the desk of

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.

SEPTEMBER 2016



## Getting Prepared

*Dear Friends,*

As a Reverend Mother, I am responsible for several people's lives—their protection and well-being. So I've been pondering these past months, "Where do we go from here?" Now that we're back in *focus* (the theme of the last Reverend Mother letter), what is our direction?

The answer came from a priest's homily that I heard. The theme was on avoiding greed, and the priest referred to Joseph of the Old Testament. Joseph interpreted a dream from God who had indicated that there would be seven years of abundance and then seven years of famine. In response, Joseph, under Pharaoh's authority, stored up grain. When the famine came, Joseph was prepared, and he was able to feed his people plus the nations around them for the entire time of the famine.

As I reflected on Joseph, the Lord reminded me of Y2K. Do you remember that? Back in 1999, some people were purchasing property, storing up food, and building warehouses stocked with supplies. Why? They anticipated a world-wide computer crash that never happened. People were in a frenzy over what?... Nothing. January 1, 2000 came and went with no big shah-bang. Why were Joseph's preparations so prudent when those for Y2K were not? It was because Joseph listened to God's directives.

I am not telling anyone anything new. We Christians all know that hard times are coming. Like Joseph, we must be prepared—prepared according to God's directives. God said there would be a famine, so Joseph prepared for a famine. Similarly, we need to ask the Lord how we are to prepare. For each one of us, the answer may be different. For some of us, it may mean a job change. For others, it may mean a certain financial investment or paying off our debts. For others, it may mean moving or changing schools. No matter how we prepare our temporal affairs (according to God's directives), all of us must be prepared spiritually for what lies ahead.

As a nurse, I have walked with a number of people who have had very difficult life situations. Some were able to face those events with a strength and peace beyond description. They *conquered* their circumstances. For others, the circumstances conquered them. What was the difference? It was the depth of their relationship with God. Those who knew God on a deeper level won their battles. Those who did not have a vibrant faith in Him lost all they had.



*To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love*

So how is God directing us to grow deeper in our walk with Him? Have we had that nudge to be more attentive at Mass or maybe to go more frequently (if possible)? Have we been prompted to go to confession on a more regular basis? Have we been drawn to pray the rosary or to read a book about a saint? If we pay attention, we will begin to hear His directives. As a loving God, He is preparing us not only for the hard times ahead, but ultimately for our eternal happiness in heaven.

We have been so blessed as a community to have three young women profess first vows on August 6th, three enter into novitiate on August 13th, and three new women join our community on August 14th. It seems that *three* is our special number this year!

Thanks be to our Triune God, the community continues to grow. Thank you to each and every one of you for making our life possible through your financial resources, your time, and your talents. We could not build God's kingdom without you. Please consider continuing your support. The Lord will bless you a hundred-fold. Know that each of you and your special intentions are in our prayers.

*In Christ's Peace,*

*Mother Mary Ann Kessler, TOR*

MOTHER MARY ANN KESSLER, T.O.R.

## SEEKING SHEPHERDS' FIELDS: *Trusting Our Father in Disappointment*

BY SR. AGNES THÉRÈSE DAVIS, T.O.R.

**T**his past spring, I was blessed with the chance to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land with my parents. Shortly before I went, I had lunch with a local Methodist pastor who had been there a few years ago. Her favorite part was the Shepherds' Fields in Bethlehem, because it made the experience "real" for her: there were real shepherds who lived here. They spent the nights in these caves, or caves very like them. They saw this land – and maybe from this spot one of them saw the angels singing "Glory," announcing Christ's birth... It was a beautiful picture she painted, and I was excited to see these fields for myself.

So I was a little taken aback when I arrived at the "Shepherds' Fields" and found that it was a walled-in complex with a neon sign. There were chapels everywhere – a chapel in a cave, dedicated to the shepherds themselves; a chapel designed by the famous architect so-and-so; and a few outdoor chapels for good measure. I felt like there was just a lot of stuff everywhere, and I wanted some room, some space. As we were leaving the complex, the clock hit noon, so we stopped to pray the Angelus, and I laid down right in the narrow strip of grass along the pathway and tried to imagine that I was alone, in an actual field, preferably surrounded by sheep.

We spent several nights in Bethlehem, and as we drove to and from other sites, we often saw vast fields with shepherds herding their sheep. So I asked Isaac, our guide, to let us spend some time in one of these fields. As always, he said, "your wish is my command!" and assured me that I would have my shepherd experience that afternoon.

Again, things seemed to go wrong. Isaac did not stop at any of the lovely looking fields filled with sheep that we passed on our way to Bethlehem, but instead drove right into a neighborhood and pulled over. "How is this?" he queried, in the courtliest possible manner. Truthfully, it was not what I had in mind, but I didn't want to be ungrateful, so I started to get out of the car. At this point, a fellow pilgrim, Mike, said, "Are you kidding? There's a ton of trash out there! Can't we do a little better than this?" Sheepishly, I put my seatbelt back on and we proceeded to another neighborhood, another empty lot. This one was filled with nettles. Before anyone else could comment, I said, "Perfect! Let me just have one minute!"

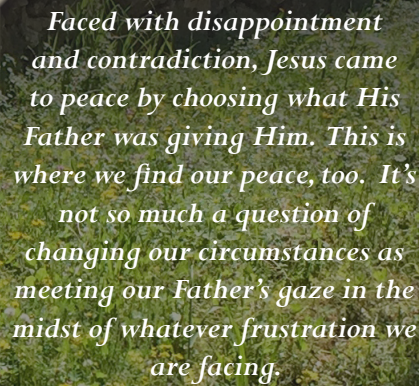
I climbed out of the van and stepped into a weedy, dusty empty lot in suburban, 21st century Bethlehem. My Mom, good sport that she is, came out with me. And I felt foolish, embarrassed, and fervently prayed that nobody would see us – or call the police on us for trespassing! Nothing about the experience matched my hopes or expectations. After standing out there for what seemed a suitable length of time, I turned to my Mom with a wry grin. She smiled,



put her arm around me, and said, “*This had better end up in a blog post.*”

The incident has been on my mind ever since, especially as I have been transitioning into a new job coordinating the kitchen at the motherhouse. Though I enjoy what I am doing and am happy to be here, there are moments when I feel like my life looks a lot more like a nettle-ridden empty lot than a picturesque field of sheep. My computer is slow, I find myself impatient and unkind, and to top it all off, my sisters can’t read my mind! As in Bethlehem, so now I find myself in a reality that does not match my dreams.

I think this is an experience we all have – and it is certainly one known by Jesus. Just think about how He must have felt, praying in



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the Garden! Things did not look the way He must have dreamed: His closest disciples were asleep, Judas was on his way to hand Him over to the authorities, and nobody really seemed to understand who He was or why He had come. He was about to die – and for what?

Faced with disappointment and contradiction, Jesus came to peace by choosing what His Father was giving Him. This is where we find our peace, too. It’s not so much a question of changing our circumstances as meeting our Father’s gaze in the midst of whatever frustration we are facing. Jesus was able to leave the Garden and undergo His passion and death in hope and confidence because He knew in whose hands His life was held. This is something we can all do. Every day, let us remember the God who makes us at every moment, and let us allow our questioning gaze to meet His tender eyes.

## SISTER SPOTLIGHT: *Sr. Faustina Sinnott, T.O.R.*

**Name:** *Sr. Faustina Sinnott, T.O.R.*

**City, State:** *Enfield, Connecticut*

**Home Parish:** *Holy Family*

**Years in the Community:** *25*

### **What you do in the community?**

Coordinator of Religious Articles, Laundry, and Local Liturgy.

### **What do you like most about your three assignments?**

*I just changed assignments this summer. I really enjoyed being involved in campus ministry, and now I am blessed in having more contemplative work. As I’m doing what at times can seem like monotonous types of work, it allows me to lift up others to Jesus. St. Faustina said in her diary, “O life so dull and monotonous, how many treasures you contain! When I look at everything with the eyes of faith, no two hours are alike, and the dullness and monotony disappear. The grace which is given me in this hour will not be repeated in the next... So every moment can be a treasure no matter what we do... O Most Holy Trinity dwelling in my heart. I beg You: grant the grace of conversion to as many souls as the [number of] stitches that I will make today with this crochet hook.’ Then I heard these words in my soul: **My daughter, too great are your demands... every conversion of a sinful soul demands sacrifice.** ‘Well, Jesus, I offer You this whole-hearted work of mine; this offering does not seem to me to be too small for such a large number of souls; You know, Jesus, that for thirty years You were saving souls by just this kind of work.’” *These things show me that everything a person does can have inestimable value! I pray that doing my little part is a means of bringing others to Jesus.**

### **What’s your favorite prayer/form of prayer?**

*To pray with Scripture. I love praying with Scripture because it is Truth. It is God speaking to me, to all of us. We are combating so many lies in the world, and I need to soak myself with Truth. God is feeding me, strengthening me with the Truth. It ministers to my spirit; it speaks to my spirit, to my heart... It’s God’s love letter to us.*

### **Describe a recent “God-incident” in your life.**

*When I was part of the women’s Scripture group in our study abroad program in Austria, I loved to hear how the women prayed with Scripture and to see how it impacted their lives in very specific ways. For example, a young woman was praying with Ephesians 5:31, 32 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak in reference to Christ and the church.” Her insight was that it is our wedding every time we go to Mass and receive Jesus! She started to ask her friends in the pew with her to be her bridesmaids!*

### **What’s your favorite form of recreation in the community?**

*I love games, any kind of games: board games, card games, just a relaxing, light time to be with one another.*



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## THREE NEW NOVICES

We are blessed to have had three women enter the novitiate on August 13th. Introducing, from left to right, Sr. Cecilia Marie, Sr. Josephine, and Sr. June Benedicta. Please join us in praying for our new novices.

CONTACT US! (740) 544-5542

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*"To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love"*

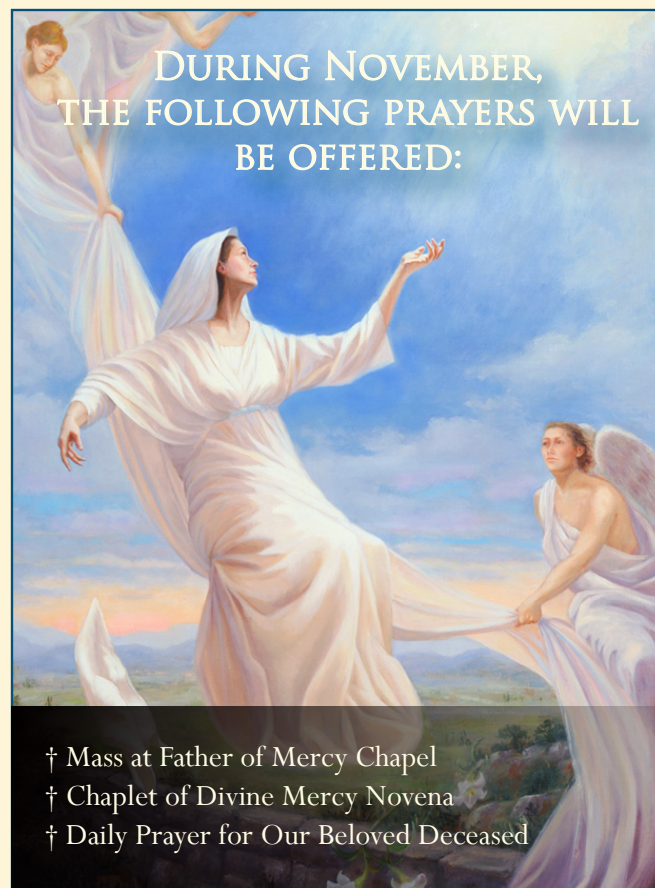


# Beloved Deceased Mass

Sunday, November 6, 2016  
at Father of Mercy Chapel  
Our Lady of Sorrows Monastery  
Mass time to be announced on the website.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send the names of your beloved deceased. They will be honored by lit candles during the Beloved Deceased Mass and remembered in prayers throughout the month.

Please send names by October 26 by mail or online @ [www.FranciscanSistersTOR.org](http://www.FranciscanSistersTOR.org).



DURING NOVEMBER,  
THE FOLLOWING PRAYERS WILL  
BE OFFERED:

- † Mass at Father of Mercy Chapel
- † Chaplet of Divine Mercy Novena
- † Daily Prayer for Our Beloved Deceased