

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

from the desk of

Mother Mary Ann

OCTOBER 2019



The Joy of the Lord is my Strength

Dear Friends,

The season of fall has always been a time of reflection for me. Since my life revolves around an academic year, I suppose the start of school tends to make me not only think of a new year, but also of the previous one as well. So I've been reflecting on these past several months, which, like for so many of us, were full of trials. I haven't met one person who wasn't impacted by a family, job, or church situation that demanded a deeper level of faith, humility, mercy and patient endurance this past year. Yet in all of it, I've become aware that it is precisely in those moments that we see God's blessings more clearly. For example, we don't realize how much we use our thumbs until we fracture them and can't use them. After six weeks of trying to get dressed with one hand,

we recognize the gift of a thumb. We take so much for granted. I am so blessed to live in an area where, when I can't make it to a Mass at one parish, I can go to another. This is not so everywhere. Where I go to visit my family, if there is no priest, there is no Mass. There is no other option. I have come to appreciate the gift of priests and the sacraments even more.

I once heard that joyful people are grateful people. In the midst of all the suffering around us, I have come to discover, however, that the real truth is that grateful people are joy-filled people. Even in the midst of seeming chaos and stress, the joy of the Lord is truly their strength. They count the Lord's blessings for them. They know His faithfulness and mercy and this reality gives them the strength to persevere through any trial.

A sister once shared with me that she takes time every day to thank the Lord for 10 different things, not repeating the same blessings from the day before. I

thought it was a great idea. I tried it myself. Wow! That transformed me! First, I realized how blessed I was. Second, I became aware of how much I took for granted. Third, it helped me to put my life struggles into proper perspective. It helped me to grow deeper in faith as I began to see more and more how big God is and I came to know, from my own personal experience, that God can handle all things, from the smallest to the biggest of life's challenges. That little ditty that I used to sing as a child—"The joy

To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love

of the Lord is my strength..." began to resonate within me. How true it is!

One of our popes from ages past had inscribed on his ring the words, "This, too, shall pass." It was a reminder to him that in good times, we should never forget that suffering will eventually come and that, in the midst of trials, we should remember our blessings. In his Rules for Discernment, St. Ignatius of Loyola would give the same advice to his directees. These men knew from personal experience that gratitude lightens burdens.

In Scripture, both the prophets and the psalms encourage the people to recall God's wondrous deeds. It is in the recollection that they find joy, strength, and courage in the midst of the struggles. Psalm 81 says, "Ring out your joy to God our strength..." King David expresses in Psalm 138: "I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with all my heart ... because of your kindness and your truth. When I called, you answered me; you built up strength within me. All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O Lord, when they hear the words of your mouth; and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord: 'Great is the glory of the Lord.'" Isaiah states, "I give you thanks, O Lord ... God indeed is my savior; I am confident

and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my savior. With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation, and say on that day: Give thanks to the Lord ... among the nations make known his deeds ... Sing praise to the Lord for his glorious achievement ..." (Isaiah 12:1-6).

As we continue in our day-to-day joys and sorrows, let us keep in mind the words that Jesus spoke: "Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). We believe in a God who keeps his promises. The joy of the Lord is truly our strength.

Thanks to each and all of you, who by your time, talent, and treasure have worked with us in building up Christ's kingdom. We cannot fulfill this mission without you. We are so grateful. Please consider continuing your support.

Fraternally in Christ,

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, TOR

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.

Reverend Mother



*Thank
You!*

"I regularly assist in writing thank-you notes to our benefactors, but I had a particularly blessed experience of this recently. As I wrote a personal note of thanks at the bottom of the typewritten page, I felt connected to each person. They were not just a name, but each one was a special, unique child of God."

-Sr. Grace Anne, T.O.R.

Please pray for us! GENERAL CHAPTER 2020

Our community gathers every 6 years to elect new leadership and to review our life in light of our spirituality and charisms. From May 28 to June 10, 2020, all of our perpetually professed sisters will meet as a Chapter body to discuss important business and to vote on a Reverend Mother and General Councilors. During this year before we meet, we will prepare through prayer and committee meetings. Please pray for us to follow wherever the Lord is leading our community!



Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of our hearts and give us, Lord, a correct faith, a certain hope, a perfect charity, sense and knowledge, so that we may carry out Your holy and true command.

-St. Francis' Prayer Before the Crucifix



(From left to right) Toni, Catherine, and Isabelle

MEET THE POSTULANTS!

Toni

- From: Richmond, Minnesota
- Before entering: Spent a year doing missionary work in Fairbanks, Alaska

Catherine

- From: Grand Haven, Michigan
- Before entering: Taught high school science and theology for 8 years in Traverse City, Michigan

Isabelle

- From: Hagerstown, Maryland
- Before entering: Worked as a missionary for 2 years with St. Paul's Outreach at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey

A SACRIFICE OF ENDURING LOVE: REFLECTIONS ON FINAL VOWS

Sr. Teresa Reyes, T.O.R.

The whole of my life in religious community has been a testament to the truth that “God cannot be outdone in generosity.” I have been amazed by God’s goodness and realized that Christ is everything I ever dreamed for in a husband and infinitely beyond my wildest imaginings. He has lavished His merciful love upon me with reckless abandon. In my Triune God, I have found the fullness of all that is true, good, and beautiful. My heart has found a home in His, where I am fully known and unconditionally accepted. In return, I want to live to love Him and console His Sacred Heart. I want to give Him my whole self and to conceive and form spiritual children through Him, with Him, and for Him.

Over a year ago, as I prayed about the decision to make my perpetual profession, my heart longed for a closer consecration to God, to concretize my love through a commitment of my total self. I knew that I cannot do this on my own and I need all that living in community with my sisters provides: emotional and spiritual support and encouragement as well as formation, guidance, correction, affirmation, accountability, a call to holiness, a sanctifying rhythm of life, and good relationships.

On July 6, the day of my final vows, I made my life-long

commitment to live chastity, poverty and obedience within my religious congregation. I was overcome with gratitude for all that God has done for me throughout my life’s journey and was bursting with joy and excitement.

More than 10 years ago, when I embarked on the journey of discerning religious life, I began praying for the grace of radical gratitude, to be completely given to God in thanksgiving for His goodness, His mercy and His love for me. My consecrated life is my thanksgiving, my return of love. I pray, with the help of God’s grace, to remain faithful to Him, persevering until the end in a sacrifice of enduring love.



Dear friends,

We are so thankful for all of you who have been part of meeting our needs through our Begging Box! As you may know, we are always in need of postage stamps.

Please visit our new website’s Begging Box page to find the links to our Amazon and Walmart “wish lists” for other items we currently need:

FranciscanSistersTOR.org/donate/begging-box

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SAME ADDRESS, NEW DESIGN!

Our website is now optimized for mobile devices! Check out our new look and new pages, and read our updated blog directly on the site!

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



UPCOMING EVENTS



ALL SOULS MASS *for our Beloved Deceased*

Saturday, November 2 at 4 p.m.
Father of Mercy Chapel

**Mass is open to anyone, regardless of Banquet attendance*

Please send us the names of your beloved deceased and we will pray for them throughout the month of November:
Mass on November 2, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy Novena, and a daily "Prayer for Our Beloved Deceased"

Submit the names of your beloved deceased by filling out and mailing in the enclosed envelope, or by filling out an online form:
franciscansisterstor.org/all-souls-mass-form

SHARE HIS MERCY BENEFIT BANQUET

Joy at the Cross

Saturday, November 2
4:00 PM

Mass for our Beloved Deceased at Father of Mercy Chapel in Toronto

5:30 - 8:30 PM

Banquet at St. Florian Hall in Wintersville

Once again, there is no cost for attendance, thanks to our generous sponsors! Go to our website to RSVP or to sponsor the banquet, our largest fundraiser of the year:
franciscansisterstor.org/events/benefit-banquet-2019

