



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

from the desk of

*Mother Mary Ann*

FEBRUARY 2020



*The Battle for Freedom*

*Dear Friends,*


**H**ave you ever made a New Year's resolution and then later found yourself waning in your resolve? Whether it's losing weight, quitting smoking, curbing a foul tongue, or stopping the critical thoughts, we all have experienced not meeting our goals or even going backwards at times. Why? Because the transition from slavery to enduring freedom is a battle. The Lord has taught me this tremendous lesson in my own life.

In prayer, He led me to Exodus 17:8-16, when the Amalekites attacked the Israelites. This was the first battle after the Hebrew people left the land of Egypt, the place of bondage. Now free, the Israelites had to fight to keep their freedom. As long as Moses kept his hands raised to heaven, the Israelites had the better of the fight, but when Moses grew tired and put his arms down, the Amalekites began to win. Aaron and Hur, seeing Moses' weakness, moved a rock over for Moses to sit down and, positioning themselves on either side, they held Moses' arms up. By the end of the day, the Israelites had won the battle.

The Lord used this story to show me my own journey. Egypt was that part of my life that was in sin and needed transformation. Through grace, God led me through the Red Sea (my "old" self) to the other side, into freedom. The Amalekites represented the Evil One, who continually tries to snatch my freedom away. While doing a Bible study, I learned that the Amalekites' strategy was to strike the weakest point of their enemy's forces. God revealed to me that I needed to shore up my weak areas so Satan would not attack me. However, if he did, I needed to be ready to fight.

The battle, as with the Israelites, can be painful at times. I have experienced that the worst of these battles seem to be the internal ones—struggling to overcome the obstacles to virtue within my soul. I realized that my tendency is to try to fight my battles with my own strength, which, of course, never works. This enlightened me to another tactic of the Evil One—deception. Satan wants me and us all to think God cannot possibly love us or we have to earn His love. Letting lies like these stick around has caused me to do things on my own strength.

As I interact with many people and hear their stories, I know I am not the only one who has experienced this. Like Moses, we need



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*To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love*

to lift our arms to heaven and invoke God's aid. When we get tired, we need to make sure we have an "Aaron" and a "Hur" around to encourage us. We need to ask God to increase our faith in His desire to use His power on our behalf and to renounce the lies that prevent us from living in freedom. Finally, we need to surrender to an all-loving God who became one of us in order to be with us in all our struggles and battles.

As we continue, already a month into 2020, I pray that the Lord will empower each of you not to give up on your New Year's resolutions. I pray that He will fill you with His Spirit, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17).

I have much gratitude for each and every one of you for contributing your time, talent, and financial resources. You are an important part of carrying out our mission in building up the kingdom of Christ. Please consider continuing your support.

Fraternally in Christ,

*Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.*

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.

Reverend Mother

## Parish Mission Report

In September, October and December, our sisters brought a message of ongoing conversion to four parishes. More missions are planned for the spring. Please keep the parishioners of St. Patrick, St. Francis, St. Ann, St. Joseph the Worker and all our future missions in prayer!

**Word on the Street:** We asked people to share their experience of the missions. Here's what they said.

*Sr. Agnes Therese and Sr. Monica brought such joy to me and my community; it was quite contagious. They shared their talents of music, laughter, and powerful insight which gave lasting impact to all who attended ... it is very evident the sisters love Christ and that is powerful.*  
-Fr. Don Roszkowski, St. Ann's in Peoria, IL



*I am personally most grateful for the witness provided by the T.O.R. Sisters, the Parish Mission, their involvement in our parishes and the many ways they interact with our parishioners.* -Fr. Thomas Vennitti, St. Francis' in Toronto, OH

*It was such a pleasure to have Sr. Agnes & Sr. Monica come to St. Patrick's ... They also talked about convent life and shared with us personal experiences. It was insightful. Such a blessing having them visit our parish. Would be awesome to welcome them back anytime.* -Cyndee, St. Patrick's in Pelham, NH



*So many of the parishioners, too many to count, mentioned to me how inspired they are to SEE religious sisters, in habit, giving themselves completely to God. ... I can't think of any better experience to wish for my parishioners than to have them inspired to move towards a deeper communion with God.*  
-Fr. Dennis Schuelkens, St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton, WV

# Sister Spotlight



*Sr. Elizabeth  
Beussink, T.O.R.*



*Above: At the Sea of Galilee; Below left: Sr. Elizabeth with students dressed in traditional Austrian garb in Gaming, Austria; Below right: Sister riding in Missouri with her niece*

**Hometown:** Jackson, Missouri

**Years in the Community:** 12.5

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

I work at Franciscan University's Study Abroad Campus in Gaming, Austria doing campus ministry, which includes Women's Ministry, Scripture groups, Spiritual Direction, and traveling with the students on school trips and pilgrimages.

**What do you like most about your community position?**

Campus ministry!! I love journeying with people and I love college-age young adults, so it's a perfect mix of the two! Living in a beautiful country and getting to travel to other beautiful countries is not so bad either! :)



**What is a recent pilgrimage that really impacted you?**

Recently, I was blessed to accompany 26 Franciscan University students to the Holy Land. One particularly powerful yet simple experience happened on the Mount of Beatitudes. It was a really hot and sunny day. We were preparing to have Mass under a small tree and I was sitting on a rock looking out over the Sea of Galilee. It was so peaceful and so beautiful. I was overcome with gratitude for being there, when I felt Jesus, my Bridegroom, sit down next to me on the rock and look out over the Sea with me. I felt like He particularly loved that spot and felt His joy exuding from Him that He had that opportunity to share it with me. In that moment I experienced my Spouse revealing His human heart to me in a deeper way and my heart filled with gratitude beyond words.

**What is your family like?**

I am the youngest of three siblings. I have an older sister who is

married with three children and an older brother who is also married with one son. I am also a very prolific godmother - I have eight godchildren! I am blessed to come from a strong family unit. I grew up going to my paternal grandparents' house every Sunday evening, where all my aunts and uncles (my dad has 7 siblings) and cousins would gather for a Sunday dinner meal. I have so many memories of those Sunday gatherings - soccer games in the field with my cousins and uncles, catching lightning bugs in the backyard, putting on plays and dances as cousins, playing hide and seek, talking, laughing, fishing, watching "America's Funniest Home Videos" together, and eating really good food!

**You've received some training in Theology of the Body. Why is this a passion of yours?**

I love women's ministry and would consider it a personal call of mine. I love forming women and educating them in what it means to live authentically as women of God. I love learning and discovering more and more about the feminine genius as I read Edith Stein and Pope St. John Paul II's works on femininity. The more I learn, the more it unlocks the beautiful mystery of who we are as women. It unlocks parts of myself to myself! I am currently in the certification program with the Theology of the Body Institute, hoping to get certified in that great work of JP II's. Our culture is so lost in the area of identity and gender and in need of the star of Truth to lead us back to God's original plan for us. I believe JP II's Theology of the Body has an instrumental role in this.

**What is your favorite hobby?**

I love horses. My family purchased horses when I was around 11 years old. In the summer months, my mom and sister and I would take "cowgirl weekends" and drive to Kentucky to a campground with miles of trails designed specifically for camping with your horses. I loved riding and working with and being around horses so much that I dreamed of making a career out of horses in some way, but obviously God had other plans for me! :) I still get to ride when I go home to visit my family in the summer.



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Sr. Rita Clare with some of our  
downtown friends at LAMP Christmas  
December 21 in Steubenville -  
Thank you for making our way of life  
and mission possible!

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



## UPCOMING EVENT

LENTEN RETREAT  
SATURDAY, MARCH 28

*Tree of Life:  
The Cross and its Fruits*

*Our Lady of Sorrows Monastery  
8:30 AM - 4 PM*

*Mass, Adoration, Confession, talks, prayer time, music,  
homemade lunch and more!*

*To register, fill out the form on  
[www.franciscansisterstor.org/events/lenten-retreat-2020](http://www.franciscansisterstor.org/events/lenten-retreat-2020)  
or call (740) 544-5542 ext. 115  
or email [mission@torsisters.org](mailto:mission@torsisters.org)  
REGISTRATION IS DUE BY MONDAY, MARCH 16  
SUGGESTED DONATION: \$25*

