



Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity

Secular Franciscan Order

Website: <http://olrif-ofs.org/>

August 2020

Volume 7, Issue 3

Unity Day message from Fr. Chris Shorrock, OFM Conv

Our Regional Prayer — a Gift from St. Francis

Holy Virgin Mary, among all women born into the world, there is none like you. Daughter and Handmaid of the Most High, sovereign King, the heavenly Father, Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for us with St. Michael the Archangel and with all the powers of the heavens and with all the saints together with your most holy beloved Son, Lord and teacher.



St. Maximilian Kolbe OFM Conv (d. 1941 – Feast day August 14th) and the Blessed Virgin Mary

St. Maximilian was born Raymond Kolbe in Poland, January 8, 1894. In 1910, he entered the Conventual Franciscan Order. He was sent to study in Rome where he was ordained a priest in 1918.

While he was studying in Rome, he and several friars founded the Militia of the Immaculata movement on October 16, 1917.

Father Maximilian returned to Poland in 1919 and began spreading his Militia of the Immaculata movement of Marian consecration.

Maximilian's insights into the Immaculate Conception anticipated the Marian theology of the Second Vatican Council and further developed the Church's understanding of Mary as "Mediatrice" of all the graces of the Trinity, and as "Advocate" for God's people.

The Marian thought of St. Maximilian has a very doctrinal and pastoral orientation. He felt the immediacy of understanding the mystery of Mary and of sharing this knowledge with humanity.

It is not easy to summarize the Marian insights of St. Maximilian in such a sort amount of space and there is no better way to help us understand his Marian thoughts than by drawing extensively upon his own words. He was convinced that a true knowledge and devotion to Mary would in turn give birth to a dynamic Christian life, even to the level of sanctity.

This can be called true Marian spirituality. St. Maximilian stated:

When we reflect on these two truths: that all graces come from the Father by the Son and the Holy Spirit; and that our Holy Mother Mary is, so to speak, one with the Holy Spirit, we are driven to the conclusion that this Most Holy Mother is indeed the intermediary by whom all graces come to us. [Conference, September 25, 1937]

In the union of the Holy Spirit with her, not only does love united these two Beings, but the first one of them is all the love of the Most Holy Trinity, while the second is all the love of creation. Thus, in this union heaven meets earth, all of heaven with all of the earth, all Uncreated Love with all created loved; it is the highest expression of love. [1318 - February 17, 1941; II: 2302]

In regard to Mary's mediation, St. Maximilian does not think of it as a passage from Mary to Christ in which the Blessed Virgin would impede direct contact between Christ and humanity. Mary's mediation is a passage "with Mary to Christ."

It may seem that Jesus is something different from Our Lady; that Jesus is one object and Our Lady the other; that if one turns to Our Lady for everything he honours Jesus too little. This is an erroneous understanding since Jesus is God incarnate in her. . . . We know perfectly well that the object of all devotion is God. In the same way, the cult offered to the Immaculata is a direct means to this end. We should search for Jesus through her and not in another place but only in her. We pass with her to the Other. [Conference, April 25, 1937]

This is why he can declare with certainty:

The Immaculata left the earth, but her life has penetrated and grown ever more into souls. If all the souls who have already walked their earthly pilgrimage or who are currently living in this world could voice their views, we would be able to publish a countless number of large volumes testifying to the activity of the Immaculata, tender Mother of souls redeemed by the Most Sacred Blood of her divine Son. Even these volumes, however, would contain only what such souls may have recognised as special graces of the Immaculata, while every grace

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REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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"We, the Secular Franciscans of Our Lady of Indiana Regional Fraternity, are called by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation to holiness. We are committed by our Profession to living the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in our time according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi for the rebuilding of the Church.

With the help of Mary our Advocate, Protectress, and Patroness, we will foster prayer, vital fraternities, and communication. We will provide direction, support and resources to local fraternities for understanding and implementing the Rule, the General Constitutions, and the National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order, and our Regional Fraternity Guidelines."

To join OUR LADY OF INDIANA list
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We post Regional Fraternity news,
 prayer requests, formation material,
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comes to the soul from the hands of the Mediatrix of all graces, and there is no moment in which ever-new graces fail to flow into each soul; graces of light to the intelligence, of strengthening of the will, of incitement to good; ordinary and extraordinary graces, graces directly related to temporal life and to the sanctification of the soul. Only at the time of God's judgement in heaven shall we become aware of the solicitude that our tender Heavenly Mother has had for each of us, ever since the beginning, of the solicitude that she has toward every soul, her child, to shape it according to the pattern of Jesus, her firstborn Son, the prototype of holiness, God and man. [1313 – August 5-20, 1940; II: 2283f.]

St. Maximilian's thought is contained in this letter addressed to one of his brothers who questioned Mary's mediation and distribution of all graces:

The union between the Immaculata and the Holy Spirit is so inexpressible, yet so perfect that the Holy Spirit acts only by the Immaculata, his Spouse. This is why she is the Mediatrix of all graces given by the Holy Spirit. And since every grace is a gift of God the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit, it follows that there is no grace, which Mary cannot dispose of as her own and which is not given to her for this purpose. [634 - Letter, July 28, 1935; I:1178]

Since Mary is the only way to sanctity, St. Maximilian teaches we must belong ever more to her, and in and through her, to Jesus and to God the Father.

It is not easy to grasp the entire richness of St. Maximilian, however we must believe that his intercession, Mary's mediation, and the power of the Holy Spirit will lead us to that height of sanctity, which is proportionate to our attitudes of listening and responding generously.

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Fr. Chris is a native Australian, and currently lives at St. Bonaventure Friary in Chicago, IL. Father is assisting with classes to Postulants at the House of Formation, and is also an adjunct lecturer at Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology in Hales Corner, WI. Fr. Chris was a member of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants for Australia. He holds a doctorate in Theology, and has taught at Catholic Theological College in Melbourne, Australia and the Franciscan International Study Centre, Canterbury, UK. His academic interests are Franciscan Spirituality, Church history and Mariology. Father joins Fr. Christopher Panagoplos, TOR, Br. Alexander Escalera, OFM Cap., and Fr. Jerome Wolbert, OFM, making the USA Conference of National Spiritual Assistants fully representative of the four obediences of Friars.





Tim Short, OFS Regional Formation Director

Whenever I wish to investigate a topic in the Franciscan charism, I start with what I believe to be the three basic pillars of Secular Franciscan formation:

- The OFS Rule of Life
- The Gospels (as specified in article 4 of the Rule)
- The Franciscan Sources (I use the four-volume set, *Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents*)

Tasked with the need to write about the relationship between Mary and Francis, I started by looking through the *Index* to the Sources for references to Mary in the writings. As I reviewed the occurrences of Mary's name, I found two immediate themes I might reflect upon. (There are surely others.)

The first has to do with Mary as Advocate. In Chapter CL of *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Thomas of Celano records Francis' specific wish that Mary be "Advocate of the Order." He describes her selection for this role as "giving great joy." Later, Mary is also portrayed as Francis' personal advocate. At the beginning of Chapter Three of his *Major Legend*, Bonaventure tells us Francis "begged her to become his advocate" and that "through the merits of the Mother of Mercy, he conceived and brought to birth the spirit of Gospel truth."

Our Rule confirms Mary in this role in *Article Nine* as it names her "Protectress and Advocate" and calls on us to "express our ardent love" for her.

Mary was clearly instrumental in the founding of the Order that we, 800 years later, still seek to live out. As you will see, I do not wish to diminish her role as Advocate or as a primary focus of anyone's prayer life. But, at least for me, this is a theme of Mary that I am familiar with. Instead, I am choosing to concentrate on the other theme that struck me as I went through the Sources. This has to do with Mary as bearer of the virtue indicated by the title "Lady Holy Poverty" (to quote Francis from *A Salutation of the Virtues*).

Coming into this I had not drawn a distinct connection between Mary, Mother of God and the Lady Poverty that Francis sought as his bride. (I am not implying that Francis thought of Mary as his bride. Francis acknowledged Mary as the bride of the Holy Spirit so it does not follow that Francis would think of himself as wedding her.) I did not generally think of Mary, at least in Franciscan terms, as an archetype of virtue as Francis did. I thought of her in that role of Advocate. Thus I must admit to a disconnect between Mary and the concept of Poverty in my less than fully mature conception of Franciscan thought.

As I looked through the Sources, I found that disconnect challenged. The passage that really brought this home to me is something I do not recall hearing before. It occurs in Chapter CLI of *The Remembrance of the Desire of the Soul*, the chapter right after the reference to Mary as Advocate given above:

He (Francis) could not recall without tears the great want surrounding the little, poor Virgin on that day (Christmas). One day when he was sitting down to dinner a brother mentioned the poverty of the blessed Virgin, and reflected on the want of Christ her Son. No sooner had he heard this than he got up from the table, groaning with sobs of pain, and bathed in tears ate the rest of his bread on the naked ground.

Take a moment and place yourself in that scene. Picture yourself in the time of Francis, in a handmade lean-to lit only by daylight coming through a door open to the elements. See a brother in his habit mention the poverty of Mary and Jesus. Then see Francis get up, "groaning with sobs of pain," and move to the dirt floor to finish his meal.

Can you bring yourself to sob in response to the privation of Mary and Jesus? Not me. Relative to this, there is no way my commitment to Spiritual Poverty could ever be sufficient. The scene challenges everything about the way I live. How, as Francis' follower, can I hope to match the empathy he had for the Poverty of Mary and Jesus?

Article 11 of the Rule makes the task both more difficult and more urgent. The example of Francis is hard enough to follow, but this article tells us that "..... Christ chose for Himself and his Mother a poor and humble life." The Poverty of Mary and Jesus is not happenstance. It is a deliberate choice by Jesus. Acknowledging that choice is critical to all Franciscans as they "strive to purify their hearts as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father."

Remember that formation rests on three pillars. The third, the gospels, provides the foundation for this article of the Rule. The evidence of Mary and Jesus rejecting worldliness in their lives begins with the Christmas story (which is antecedent to Francis' sobbing as recounted above) and runs unchecked through the length of the gospels to His death on the Cross:

- Jesus could have chosen to be born under any circumstances. He chose a manger in Bethlehem.
- He could have chosen to be born anonymously, in complete safety. He chose to send the Magi to Herod and thus an early childhood in exile.
- He could have chosen to grow up anywhere. He chose the backwater of Nazareth instead of a palace in Jerusalem.
- He could have chosen a comfortable home as an adult. He chose an itinerant lifestyle, dependent on the charity of others, with "no place to lay his head."
- He could have chosen to live to an old age. He chose the Poverty of death on the Cross.

These are examples of lifestyle (there are many more), not quotes from His teaching. Jesus did not just teach Poverty, He personified it. Our decisions about how we implement Poverty in our own lives are not just attempts to follow theoretical instructions. They are attempts to follow the corporeal example of both Jesus and Francis, which makes them more urgent.

Because of our formation experiences, it is no surprise when we are reminded how literally Francis followed the example of Christ in choosing a poor and humble life. For me, unfortunately, it is also no surprise that when I reflect on my life, I find my emulation of the pattern of first Jesus and then Francis to be significantly wanting.

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Thank goodness, then, that I have Mary as my personal Advocate and Advocate of the Order. I crave her intercession in my prayer life as I desperately seek conversion to the ideals of Poverty that I know I must pursue more diligently. I also rely on her support for the OFS as it provides "the fraternal bonds of community that will always be my help" as I attempt to sincerely embrace a lifestyle that brings me into closer communion with the design of Jesus and Francis.

And further thank goodness that Mary is an Advocate who can identify precisely with my shortcomings. She lived a fruitful, human experience of Poverty under the guidance of her Son. Who better to present my prayers in pursuit of conversion than someone with personal experience living out the ideals that I am striving for so imperfectly?

Remarkable how Jesus worked that out!

- Volume 1, The Saint, The Writing of Francis of Assisi, The Office of the Passion, the Antiphon on page 141, "Holy Virgin Mary, among the women born into the world....."

- Volume 1, The Saint, The Writing of Francis of Assisi, A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a Salutation of the Virtues, pages 163-165. It would be important to include the introductory paragraphs, especially the note that indicates that Francis saw the virtues as being Mary's virtues. I am particularly interested in linking the virtues of Poverty and Simplicity to Mary for what I am considering.

- Volume 2, The Founder, The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul by Thomas Celano, Chapter CL (150), His Devotion to Our Lady To Whom He Especially Entrusted the Order, page 374. This establishes Mary as the advocate and protectress of the order.

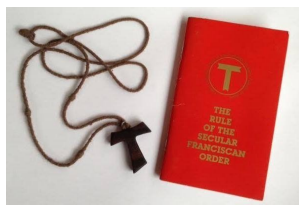
- Volume 2, The Founder, The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul by Thomas of Celano, Chapter CLI (151), page 375. The second paragraph on "the poverty of the blessed Virgin" that begins "*He could not recall.....*" This reinforces that idea of Jesus and Mary living their lives in Holy Poverty.

- Volume 2, The Founder, The Major Legend of Saint Francis by St. Bonaventure, Chapter Three, page 542. The indented and centered introduction to the chapter which begins with "*In the church of the Virgin Mother of God....*" and ends with "*.... the spirit of the Gospel truth.*" This establishes Mary as Francis' personal advocate as he began the establishment of his Order.

- Volume 2, The Founder, Related Documents, Dominican Hagiography and Sermons, Gerard de Frachet (1257-60), page 786-787. The full body of the story itself, beginning with "*A Lesser Brother.....*" and ending with "*.....foster this relationship for all time.*" This establishes Francis as a sort of champion for Mary.

- Rule, Article 9: The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

- Rule, Article 11: Trusting the Father, Christ chose for Himself and His mother a poor and humble life, even though He valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.



Sister Death has called home . . .

Harry Chmiel 8/29/19
Lady Clare Fraternity



Mary Drake 1/6/20
St Michael the Archangel Fraternity



Mary Kubsch 1/7/20
Queen of All Saints Fraternity



Brenda Maloney 3/15/20
St Boniface Fraternity



Jean Magnant 5/2/20
Sacred Heart Fraternity



Sr Norma Rocklage 6/22/20
People of Peace Fraternity



Jack Witucki 6/26/20
Immaculate Conception Fraternity



Mathew Fisher 7/17/20
St Anthony Fraternity

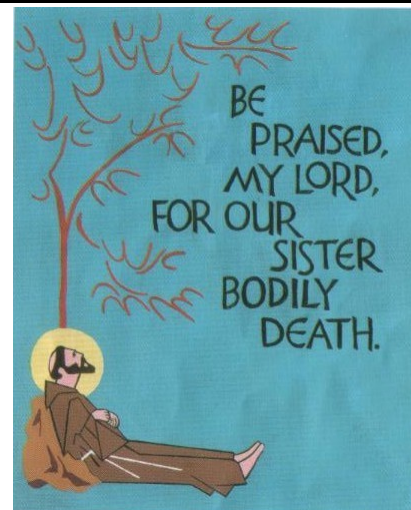


We traditionally pray the Office for the Dead at Unity Day, remembering those who have passed since last we gathered for this annual event.

Liturgy of the Hours 4 vol IV pg 1919
Christian Prayer 1 vol pg 1497

**We collect for the Poor Clares each Unity Day.
Since we are not meeting this year,
please consider a donation to our dear sisters:**

**Maria Regina Mater Monastery
1175 N 300 W - Kokomo IN 46901**

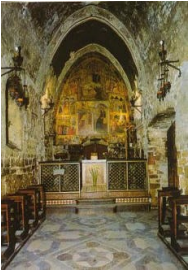


Sr. Agnes Marie offers this reflection: The **RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER SECULAR** says this: "The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family (**RULE**, Chap. 2, # 9)."



One of the first structures rebuilt by Francis after his conversion was the small chapel of Our Lady of the Angels down in the Spoleto Valley. After being evicted by a donkey from Rivo Torto, Francis and his companions "...moved to another place, which is called the "Portiuncula," where there stood a church of the Blessed Virgin mother of God built in ancient times (FA:ED, Vol. 1. p 201)." Like San Damiano, it had fallen into ruin, so Francis began to stay there and began its restoration as he had a very tender and warm devotion to Mary.

This holy place was the site of many important events in the life of Francis as well as the birth of the Franciscan Order. St. Bonaventure tells us, "This is the place where the Order of Lesser Brothers was begun by St. Francis under the prompting of divine revelation (FA:ED, Vol. II, p. 201.)"



Thomas of Celano recounts so poetically the indescribable love which Francis had for Mary and therefore, for the little church in the valley. He wrote: "[Francis] knew . . . that the place of the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula was especially full of grace and filled with visits of heavenly spirits. So he often told the brothers: "See to it, my sons, that you never abandon this place. If you are driven out from one side, go back in from the other, for this is truly a holy place and the dwelling place of God . . . hold this place, God's dwelling, as worthy of all honor and here praise God in cries of joy and praise with your whole heart (FA:ED Vol. 1, p. 275)."

This was also the place where Francis pleaded with the pope for the graced gift of the Portiuncula Indulgence for all who would visit there. Not only has it been a source of much grace throughout the past 800 years, but it was also the stimulus for the stunning painting in the sanctuary of the Portiuncula by Prete Ilaria da Viterbo depicting the Annunciation and the impartation by the Holy Father of the indulgence to St. Francis.



Finally, as Francis began his final journey home to the Father he was staying at the residence of the bishop of Assisi, but he asked the brothers to take him quickly to St. Mary of the Angels, where he could give his soul back to God where the journey had first begun. After the Gospel according to St. John was read, he asked that his body be covered with sackcloth and ashes . . . and his most holy soul "...fell asleep in the Lord (FA:ED Vol. 1, p.278)." From the sacred place he considered his earthly home dedicated to the Mother of the Jesus he loved so much, Francis went to his Heavenly and eternal home!

Thus, St. Mary of the Angels, the Portiuncula, has become for all Franciscans our "home away from home", and St. Francis has left us not only this beautiful small place of God's presence, but two wonderful prayers every Franciscan should treasure and pray often — if not daily: (1) "Holy Virgin Mary . . ." as found as the antiphon in the *Office of the Passion*, and (2) "A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary". There are, of course, many references to the Mother of Jesus in other of Francis' writings, but these two prayers are of special interest to us.



In the last few years, since our title here in the Midwest is "Our Lady of Indiana" we have worked on praying the antiphon "Holy Virgin Mary" at all our assemblies and gatherings. It's our mantra, our reminder of the Mother of Jesus who cares for us all.

"Holy Virgin Mary, there is no one like you born in the world among women. Daughter and Handmaid of the most high sovereign King, the heavenly Father, Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Holy Spirit. Pray for us with St. Michael the Archangel and with all the powers of the heavens and with all the saints, together with your most holy beloved Son, Lord, and Teacher."

We've been further gifted by a beautiful melodic version of this by Joe Higginbotham, OFS, who has shared his gifts of composition with the whole Franciscan family. Some fraternities have also mastered the art of singing this hymn with a spirit of Franciscan GUSTO!

I would like to share a beautiful thought from Fr. Roch Niemier, OFM, from one of his writings about St. Francis' devotion to Mary: "The way to allow the Spirit of God to pray within us and speak of God's love is to ponder, like Mary, to question, to search, like Mary, to reflect and ponder, to humbly stand in openness, listening and reflecting on the mystery that came into her life. If I pray *like* Mary, then the same things that happened to Mary can happen to me: Jesus is conceived within me, the Word becomes flesh, I become "full of grace," the will of God happens, I give birth to the Lord, and I am blessed ("In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare", Roch Niemier, OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, 2006, p.126)."



Barb Braley – Regional Minister

May the Lord give you peace!

“Hail, O Lady, Holy Queen, Mary, holy Mother of God, Who are the Virgin made Church, chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven whom he consecrated with His most holy beloved Son and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, in whom there was and is all fullness of grace and every good” (A Salutation of the

Blessed Virgin Mary, FA:ED, volume 1, page 163).

St. Francis uses an interesting description of Mary that is similar to what we typically hear regarding her, but it is, at the same time, very different. That phrase is “the Virgin made Church.” St. Ambrose wrote that Mary was a *type* of the Church, and others refer to her as a pattern or model of the Church (footnote *a* from the same page). St. Francis, says “Virgin *made* Church.” This phrase, according to the same footnote, is unique to Francis.

What might he mean by this?

He might mean that Mary was the dwelling of the Son of God. She carried him in her womb for nine months. Or he might mean that she is a house of prayer. Luke’s Gospel tells us that Mary “kept all these things in her heart” (2:51). Or that she could be found among those who prayed, as when she was in the upper room with the disciples after Jesus had ascended into heaven (Acts 1:13-14). Jesus himself referred to the Temple in Jerusalem as a house of prayer when he drove out the moneychangers (Matthew 21:13; see also Isaiah 56:7).

Dwelling, a house of prayer, community. These are the marks of the Church, all of which are touched, or consecrated, by Jesus.

Article 8 of our Rule instructs us that we are to “let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.” Isn’t it interesting that article 9 follows that by urging us to imitate Mary “by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.”

When we attend Mass, do we worship and pray attentively? When we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, do we pray confidently (or are we still unsure of how to “do” it)? Do we give ourselves completely to the service of the Church and of our fraternities? Are we also people who are “made Church” in and for the world?

Being the incorrigible teacher that I am, I’m giving you a homework assignment. Consider Mary as the “Virgin made Church” and put this idea in the lens of the first section of the Prologue to our Rule, especially the paragraphs 2-4. Then look again at yourself in the mirror of the above questions. (I’m not excusing myself from this assignment!)

Pax et Bonum!

Barb Braley, OFS

