



Conventual Franciscan Life

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Special Feature

Many people wonder: *How can God love someone like me?*

We asked the Friars how they would answer that question. Find their responses inside.



Come & See*
(John 1:38-39)



Franciscan Hospitality
Peace and Justice



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Conventual Franciscan Life
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Come Follow Me . . .



Toward Joyful Chaos



Top Photo: L to R Friar Alberto Bravo, guest, Friar Calin Vidaurri, and Friar Jaime Zaragoza
Second Photo: Fr. Andy Martinez celebrating Mass in the Formation House Chapel.

Do you know someone who would make a great Friar?

These retreats are open to single men, 18 to 40 years old. There is no fee for the weekend, which includes lodging and meals.

For more information -
www.Franciscans.org

Friar John Bamman -
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Friar Andy Martinez
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San Antonio, Texas, was the setting for a Come & See Vocation Retreat in February. Six men came to discern and look at our Conventual Franciscan life. It is always a risk to take Jesus' invitation in John 1:38-39 literally and to "Come and See." San Damiano Friary serves a great example of Franciscan community living, and a perfect friary to ***come and see.***

The bustling house of formation has 15 friars, both solemnly professed (life-long vows) and simply professed (usually a 3-year commitment.) On any given day there are friars traveling in all directions to keep up with college classes, engage in ministry, and reach out to the people of God. Friars Paul, Ivan, Tim, Bryan, Peter Lee, and Phil make up the core of year-round friars, while the simply-professed student friars round out the community.

Being in the friary in San Antonio is like being part of a "big family of joyful chaos."

We had great contributions from the student-friars who made presentations to the discerning prospects. Calin Vidaurri and Jaime Zaragoza talked about the "Franciscan Joy Ministry," performed with local Capuchin Franciscan Friars. On Saturday mornings they hit the streets to feed the hungry with breakfast burritos. Pedro Lopez, who has his degree in bilingual elementary education and now is studying philosophy, shared his personal story of Jesus in the Eucharist inviting him to "Come follow me." Alberto Bravo, the youngest friar of the province at 23, told the group of his academic plans to be a medical doctor, that is until he met Friar Andy Martinez at his home parish.

Thanks for sharing all your joyful chaos.

Peace and all good, Friar John Bamman

Come and See Retreat Dates

June 15-17

Prior Lake, MN

September 28-30

Carey, OH

October 19-21

Mesilla Park, NM

How Can God Love Someone Like Me? *Friar Symposium*

We asked our Friars how they respond when they hear this question. Here are excerpts from some of their replies. For the complete symposium, please visit www.FranciscansUSA.org

Fr. Richard Kaley



Whether or not God loves us is not up to us. God is love and what God does is love. God just loves us and there is nothing we can do about it. **If we think our sins can make God stop**

loving us, that would be to say that we think our sins are greater than God, and we believe that no one and no thing is greater than God. God just loves us as we are; he isn't waiting around until we get better. Knowing that God loves us can make us better, being better isn't a requirement to be loved.

The power of God's love is shown in Jesus Christ: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."* (Jn. 3:16.) It isn't something we can earn because it is freely given; it isn't something we can lose because it is freely given. God's love is unconditional, there are no ifs about it.

If we don't believe God loves us it may be because we have not been loved unconditionally by any human being, or it may be because we don't love ourselves (perhaps because of things we have done wrong). It means that God has not yet been successful in getting through to us that he loves us as we are. If we want to know God's love we need to be open to the reality of his love and let God show us that it is true.

Fr. Tom Smith

The Joy of the Gospel

We can choose how we respond to the various aspects of life. We can focus on the loss, the pain, the disappointments, the ugliness around us, or we can see beauty and joy and goodness in the simple and struggling aspects of each day. God has assured us that we are not alone. God is with us, in the Spirit and in the lives of those around us. The Gospel is the Good News of how the universe and all within it was created in love. We are not masters, we are part of that creation. We can bring joy to others by our approach to each person, to each day, even in the midst of sadness. We can be hope in the wilderness, and a living sign of The Joy of the Gospel.

The photo below was taken during the baptism of a Cuban named José. He came to the parish of St. Rita in Louisville with his wife seeking God. This image during the Easter Vigil is for me a sign of the joy of the moment! The power of Christ flowing through the water and into his life! Let us choose to be messengers of that same joy for all.



Fr. Paul Schloemer



One of the greatest privileges of being a priest is being able to enter into someone's pain and bring healing through the Sacraments. When someone has committed some great sin (and sometimes minor ones), there is an immediate sense of guilt. But if they have enough of a relationship with God to come to Confession, that alone tells me that their sin is not mortal, because the relationship with their All-Merciful God is not completely broken.

Worse still is the feeling of shame, which tells us that we are not even worthy of God's forgiveness. This, I believe, is from the devil, the Prince of Lies, and leads to true mortal sin, the complete division of ourselves from God. It is a lie because **there can be no limit to God's mercy**—by definition! And yet, we are all susceptible to that little nagging thought in our heads: "I am not worthy."

How do we believe that we are? Of course the greatest theological response is simply the person of Jesus Christ himself. Why would God enter into our weakness, if there wasn't something there worthy of redemption? . . .

Remember when you were little and had a scrape or bruise and your Mom would kiss it to make it better? There is no scientific reason why it should, but somehow the magic of motherhood did, in fact, make it better. It was the magic of Love that told our physical bodies that we would survive this wound; that the pain was temporary, that all was well.

In a way, the magic of the Sacraments (also a manifestation of Love) works the same way. It's not a spiritual concept of a God that brings the "feeling" of forgiveness and acceptance; it is the physical experience of another human being, in effect, kissing the wounds and making them better. I know God loves you, because I love you!

The challenge is, of course, all our broken brothers and sisters who do not come into the Confessional. To you who may be reading this in that situation, please come, if not to confess, at least to talk. For everyone else, we, the entire Body of Christ, need to remember how God has granted us love and forgiveness and compels us to seek out the lost. ...

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Br. Bob Roddy



When I encounter retreatants who are going through a rough patch in feeling God's love, I usually ask them to recall a moment when they experienced the love of another person: a parent, a grandparent, or a friend. I ask for as much detail as possible, though most people quickly become energized in sharing these stories. Their faces soften, their body language relaxes a bit, and as the memories flood back to them I then ask if they can see the hand of God in this relationship. **I remind them that God sees in us so much more than we can see in ourselves, similar to the way in which those who love us see gifts and qualities that we gloss over.** Yes, those who love us—especially our loving God—see our not-so-good qualities as well, but that doesn't stop them from loving us or wanting to be a part of our journey. This latter lesson can be the most challenging for any of us to learn and to embrace.

This realization, that we are loved and accepted by God despite our shortcomings, gives us reason to rejoice. I have grown to believe that Joy is rooted in the many challenges and triumphs of our lives. I think that we can genuinely rejoice during these very polarizing times when we open

our eyes and hearts to the incredible goodness of the people in our world, as well as the many moments of joy that weave their way through our day. Perhaps a good question to ask oneself before one retires for the evening would be, “Where and how and through whom did Joy cross my path today?”

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Br. Dennis Moses



It can be a very difficult thing to believe that God could love us if we were raised on fear. Is our image of God the guy with the huge ledger book writing down every rotten thing we have ever done? Ready to strike us down, once He gets a hold of us? It could be, for some of us, that we have trouble thinking of a loving Father if our own earthly father-figure was not loving but harsh and cruel. **Some people in twelve step spirituality learn the idea of “firing our God.” The need here is to replace the harsh and cruel “God figure”**

we may have grown up with and replace it with someone who loves us.

For some it is hard to think of a loving God because we cannot think of ourselves as lovable. Ernest Becker, in his 1973 book *The Denial of Death*, says that our problem is that we are gods who have to use the bathroom. We have all this potential but there is no escaping the reality of our humanness, our death. We then make the leap into assuming we are worthless. Or perhaps we had family members who were only too happy (in the name of “kidding” sometimes) to tell us we were worthless. How difficult it is to think of love when we don’t think it is possible. It is no wonder we turn to drugs, or food, or sex to fill this void. Some of us have something in our wiring that always sees the bad in things—and sometimes need the help of medication to deal with that faulty wiring.

Fr. Vincent Petersen

It is so sad today to hear of the many people who question God’s love for them. Perhaps much of it comes from our society’s stress on materialism and the subtle and not so subtle messages from the free market economy. This new world ‘religion’ is based on scarcity and tells us that ‘we do not have enough’ and that ‘WE are not enough.’

As an artist I see myself as a co-creator with an abundant God. A painting does not get signed by me - or even leave the studio if it does not meet with my final approval. I spend a great deal of time on all of my paintings; they are like my children. I love them unconditionally and I want



them to give delight to others. At some point I have to let go of them, even though their images remain in my heart. It will be up to the beholder to love them into completion.

God is the master artist who has placed his indelible mark on each one of us. We are God’s work of art - each one of us is unique in our beauty and character. I cannot imagine God not cherishing and not finding delight in the work of his hands. Psalm #139 comes to mind here: *“I give you thanks O God, that I am fearfully and wonderfully made - wonderful are your works.”*

For more Friar answers to this and other questions, please visit our website and click on the button
Friar Symposium

Holy Cross Retreat Center by Fr. Tom Smith

Extending Franciscan Hospitality



Jorge Taborda shares his story with retreatants.

The Holy Cross Retreat Center, a ministry of the Province of Our Lady of Consolation, assisted in welcoming 150 members of refugee families from Central America late 2016 and early 2017. With the changing attitudes toward immigration in the United States, we feared that there would be more people feeling afraid of immediate deportation. With the support of our Province leadership, we decided to

extend hospitality in the spirit of the Gospel and the care of St. Francis of Assisi.

In May Jorge Taborda and his family were targeted for deportation. Jorge, his wife, and a young son immigrated from Colombia 19 years ago because of the extreme violence and threats in their home country. Jorge was a university professor there, but their request for asylum was denied. Rather than return to the danger, they elected to remain and use the Social Security numbers they had received. Jorge started a business working on computers. His wife cared for their son, Jefferson, and they had another son. For no apparent reason, his wife and son were apprehended on May 9th. Jorge managed to get to their Catholic church and took refuge there. His son was released with a DACA application, and his wife was deported to Colombia.

Jorge has been staying with us at the retreat center since then, appealing for the reunification of his family. His 15 year old son, Steven, is also staying here. Jorge is

Introducing...

Franciscan Voice is the podcast from the Conventual Franciscan Friars of Our Lady of Consolation Province. It is available on our website, as well as on SoundCloud and iTunes. Episodes include:

Fall in Love with God Again (Fr. Vince Petersen)

Hospitality: A Franciscan Response to the Immigration Conversation (Fr. Tom Smith)

Franciscan Retreats - Praying, Eating, Experiencing God's Love (Br. Bob Roddy)

My kids don't go to Mass... What can I do? A conversation with Friar Jude Winkler

Miracles, Apparitions, and the Power of Prayer-- Reflections on a Novena (Fr. Paul Gawlowski)

Don't Be Lukewarm (Fr. John Bamman)

And more....

FRANCISCAN VOICE

the podcast of the Province
of Our Lady of Consolation



Reflections and reviews by
Conventual Franciscan Friars.

In sharing our hospitality we are blessed by the presence of these good people and their faith.

a man of great faith, and has spoken with many people about his experiences. We have informed local and national immigration officials of his presence here and they have respected our space as a religious institution. Some might call it sanctuary; we prefer to call it Franciscan Hospitality.

On October 15th, Martha Lorena Rivera also found herself threatened with deportation the next day. She and her 8-year-old daughter, Bella, also came to live here, so she can appeal for another stay of deportation like she has received previously. Both Steven and Bella are enrolled in school, and the families have good support from friends in the area, as well as a local community organizing group called CAFé.

Jesus called us to provide assistance to the homeless, the outcast, and those in need. St. Francis chose to live as a poor man and to share what little he had with those around him. In sharing our hospitality, we are blessed by the presence of these good people and their faith.



Jorge Taborda speaks at a press conference. The Most Reverend Oscar Cantu, Bishop of Las Cruces, stands behind him.

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and
download the **FREE APP** today.

- Get quick and easy access to our social media - including *Franciscan Voice!*
- **Share your prayer requests** with our Franciscan community.
- **Locate our parishes and retreat centers.**
- Keep up with our latest **news and reflections.**



May you know the joy of your generosity in helping others!

Donating Stocks or mutual funds to the Conventual Franciscan Friars is a smart and simple way to help our Friars continue their ministries.

You can make a gift of appreciated securities (publicly traded stocks, bonds, or mutual fund shares) to the Province of Our Lady of Consolation --

- while avoiding capital gains tax,
- diversifying your portfolio,
- and/or securing a stream of income.

It is easy to do – follow the simple directions below to get started!

HOW IT WORKS

1. You transfer appreciated securities to PNC accounts of The Province of Our Lady of Consolation.
2. The Province of Our Lady of Consolation sells the securities and uses the proceeds to fund their ministries.

HOW YOU BENEFIT

- You receive credit and an immediate income tax deduction for the fair market value (average high and low prices on the day of the transfer).
- You avoid capital gains tax.

Please note that the securities you use to make your gift must have been held by you for more than one year to be fully deductible

MORE INFORMATION

When you donate appreciated securities, you are able to deduct the gift as a charitable donation AND avoid capital gains tax at transfer, though some capital gains taxation may be a part of the income stream. This dual benefit allows you to leverage a larger donation by using appreciated securities rather than cash to make your gift.



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**Questions? Please contact Becki Romans
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812-923-5250, b.romans@franciscansusa.org**

