

Franciscan Season of Giving

We offer you voices from this Franciscan community so you may pay attention to what is sacred in your life.

Every Tuesday we send one out. To see the others check our website's home page.



a word from Christine

Something opened up for me this past year.

Now that I can see it, I know it's not new. It's eternal - just easy to miss.

For me the clarifying glimpse came via the 15 people I get to accompany in their spiritual direction practices.

Every week I have a front row seat to acts of courage and integrity, gentleness and fierce love. I hear about moments of reconciliation and bear witness to the patience and self-control required to pull that off. I sense longings and prayers for goodness. I join in joy-filled laughter when God's presence is savored.

What is extraordinary to me is how such a reality can thrive in this moment of history.

I do my best not to be reactive, but there is an ugliness unleashed in our world. I regularly despair at the callousness and greed. I've stopped saying, "That could never happen. We have checks and balances for that." I've joined crowded marches, just wanting to be counted. I spend most Saturdays volunteering because I need to do *something*. I've sought out new voices, from people groups who endured worse and still showed up with faith and goodness believing it mattered. I've learned to accept that a broken heart can be a sturdy place from which to pray.

Despite my best efforts, I have felt down about our chances as a people. The trajectory does not look good.

But there is something about the lived experiences of those 15 people that that is counter-intuitive. I think I'm glimpsing what Jesus was referring to when he said "the kingdom of God is within you." These days I'm seeing a completely other realm, right here and now, not immune from the heartache and harms in this world, but also not overcome by it.

Cynthia Bourgeault refers to the fruit of the spirit as nutrients, which the cosmos requires to survive and thrive. This take on a familiar scripture excites me. It frees up the concept of "fruit" from being just an individualized code. Instead, it points to a realm we can participate in for the benefit of the created order.

Once you see something, have you noticed how you begin seeing it everywhere?

I get to spend my days in this particular Franciscan community. It is both imperfect and extraordinary.

On most days people gather and, in doing so, nourish this ailing planet.

- I have a colleague who facilitates a meditation group. He marvels at the maturity and readiness of who shows up these days.
- Another colleague gathers groups online every Monday. The stated purpose is a book study, but I think the reality is more about community and meaning-making.
- Another FSC friend was inspired and tried his hand at a book group. A group of men considered gospel vulnerability.
- In spring I did my first Soul Collage. I was hooked. It allowed into prayer image, color, symbol, and the unconscious. Three members of the Catholic Deaf Community joined us. What a gift when they shared their experience and insights!
- Several times a month people gather in our offices for quiet-ish prayer. Contemplative Outreach facilitates a Centering Prayer group, one of our sisters facilitates Lectio Divina, a Zazen group assembles, and two

formation groups are led by SoSF sisters. Each pitches in on our rent and we benefit by another group gathering in prayer.

- Another colleague tried his hand at Group Spiritual Direction for Gay Catholic Men. I am glad he tried. His reasons were generous: Who needs a safe community? Whose spirits are precious and deserving of nurturance? Who might otherwise be denied community?
- Several times this year, we've thrown our version of a soiree. Art is hung on the walls, music fills the space, and folks gather to contemplate the ways people are creative.
- It's been a two year labor of love to re-imagine our training program for spiritual directors. Two colleagues re-imagined the curriculum, a board member built out our online learning platform, two others operationalized it, and a large group of mentors, supervisors, and teachers offered up their gifts.

We often say that spiritual direction is done “for the benefit of the other.” This was that. In October we will graduate a large cohort of newly minted spiritual directors. As adult learners who had all been on journeys of growth before they came to us, they contributed much to one another’s development and to our understanding of cohort community.

- Every Monday, a group of staff and regulars gather for faith sharing, prayer, and lunch. One of those regulars, an accomplished retreat leader, will offer a month long writing retreat this fall.
- And let's not forget the community of walkers who stop by our offices. They include residents of Mary’s Woods, neighborhood dogs, and recently a gaggle of girls from Mercy Housing Greenbrae.

For me the “Season of Giving” is more than a necessary year end fundraiser. It’s an opportunity to take stock and express gratitude. I know if I don’t pause and pay attention, I may miss that the kingdom of heaven is here and now.

May you be encouraged. May you not lose hope. May you recognize what is yours to do.

Christine Naylor
FSC's Director

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use our online portal.

Give

To share your own word of reflection, thanksgiving, or prayer
email **info@francisspctr.com**.

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