



August 2023

The Franciscan Spiritual Center is a vibrant place that fosters peace, presence, and community. Today I am asking you to contribute to allow this ministry to continue to impact people's lives. One program offered is the Franciscan Hermitage. More than 25 years ago, Sister Mary Jo envisioned and created the retreat to invite participants to experience a cornerstone in the life of St. Francis in the opportunity to pray together without the distractions of the world.

Hermitage has been transformational in my life and in the lives of the dozens who have participated. Hermitage is a four-day retreat that combines silence with an introduction to the Franciscan charism. Each day follows the rhythm of eating together in silence, praying together, listening and learning, and an extravagant amount of time for silent prayer and reflection. St. Francis and St. Clare demonstrate their ongoing relevance in our world. Their faith in following in the footsteps of Jesus, living simply, and being peacemakers shows us a path of hope and healing.

When I leave Hermitage on Monday afternoon, I am in awe and wonder at the gifts I have received...the gift of friendship, the gift of community, the gift of support, the gift of truly being seen. I am inspired to continue to see the face of Jesus in all whom I meet. With Francis and Clare as role models, this task still is not easy, but it does seem possible. St. Francis is honored as an ambassador of peace. He greeted everyone he met with the words "pace e bene" (peace and all good), which was so revolutionary. His times were as troubled as our own, yet he truly did not see others as different from himself. All were brother and sister, even the birds of the air and the creatures of the forest. St. Clare cared for her community at San Damiano for 42 years. I feel Francis's influence as I "seek to understand" instead of being understood. I am no longer frustrated by my inability to create world peace. Instead by following Francis and Clare, I find a path to inner peace and to greet all I meet with peace.

Please donate today to allow this and the other life-changing programs to nurture the souls of our community.

September 2024

This year I look forward to gathering with community to observe and celebrate the Transitus of St. Francis. On the evening of October 3, the Franciscan Spiritual Center will recreate the passing of St. Francis in stories and song. I participated in the planning of this event. The ceremony will be sacred, solemn, and joyous all at the same time.

In his Canticle, Francis praised Sister Death saying: "Praise be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death from whom no living man can escape." Francis did not fear death and longed to meet Christ.

In the year prior to his death, Francis' health declined. He returned to Assisi where he stayed in a dwelling on the grounds of San Damiano. Clare and her sisters ministered to his needs. He lay in the dark because of the injuries to his eyes and awaited his death. And when his time approached, he asked his brothers to return him to the Portuincula. Francis and his brothers had built their huts on that swampy piece of land in 1211. It was a place of great importance to Francis, a place he frequently returned to for prayer and solitude. It was there he wished to lay naked on the ground and enter eternal life.

As his final minutes neared, Francis said to his companions, "I have done what is mine to do, may Christ Jesus now teach you yours." This approach to death carries direct relevance to us today as each of us seek to discern what is ours to do.

St. Francis' final words have always resonated with me. Isn't this the question we all ask ourselves? Isn't this what we have been pondering our whole lives as young people who selected careers, as parents who guided children, as caregivers who ministered to loved ones and congregations, as people, who like Francis, seek to see the face of Jesus in all we meet?

In 2024 the Church began a three-year cycle of celebrations of the 800th anniversaries of significant events in the life of St. Francis: the miracle of the Stigmata (sharing in the wounds of Christ); the writing of the Canticle of the Creatures (the first poem written in the Umbrian dialect and still recited today by Italian children in praise of creation); and the Transitus of St. Francis (his passing from his earthly life to eternal life). These are opportunities to meditate upon and learn again how we can join in the wisdom of the Little Man of Assisi.

Join us on October 3 as a community. We will meet on the campus of Marylhurst Commons at 6:30pm. The program begins with a short procession for those who are able. A reception and refreshments will follow.

With gratitude,

Terry Cappiello

August 2025

The teachings of St. Francis and St. Clare have provided a roadmap for my spiritual journey. They have shown me how to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

The Franciscan Spiritual Center has been a rest stop on my journey, providing nourishment and nurturing for my soul and a supportive, loving community.

Many of the Franciscan teachings have provided challenges and none more so than the privilege of poverty, which was a cornerstone of their rule.

When St. Francis created his rule for life, he patterned it after Luke 9:1-6, "Take nothing for the journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, and do not have two tunics." This rule led to his total dependence on God for all.

According to Wendy Murray in her book "Clare of Assisi, Gentle Warrior," Pope Innocent III penned the papal bull *Privilegium pauperitas* in 1215 or 1216. In it, he allowed the sisters of San Damiano the privilege to live without an assured income or ownership of property.

Despite this assurance throughout her life, Clare continued to battle with subsequent popes for the privilege of poverty, living in accordance with the ideals that she and Francis held dear.

Clare famously said to Pope Gregory who wanted the sisters at San Damiano to live according to the Benedictine rule and be provided for with property and assets, "I will respect you, but I will not obey you. Holy Father, I will never in any way wish to be absolved from the following of Christ." We know that Clare battled for her rule, being the first woman to write a rule and finally receiving it on August 9, 1253, two days before her death.

Why was the privilege of poverty so important to Clare? And what does it mean to us in our comfortable 21st century lives with possessions and comforts which Clare readily rejected?

Clare recognized her total dependence on God. This allowed her to receive all as gift. She had no sense of entitlement, no sense of having earned or deserved the comforts she enjoyed. It all was from God.

We need not desire physical poverty to aspire to the privilege of poverty that Francis and Clare modeled. All we need do is recognize our dependence on God.

As we approach the Franciscan Season of Giving, do we recognize the Franciscan Spiritual Center as a gift from God? Do we recognize that its continuation is a gift of God's extravagant love? Knowing that, how do we stay true to the mission of Franciscan Spiritual Center and like Clare, fight for its continued relevance in our world?

With gratitude,

Terry Cappiello