



## The Director's Message

By: Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM



Pope Francis has surprised me from the first day that he was elected pope. Of course, being a Franciscan I was delighted when he took the name Francis.

But that was just the beginning.

Since he has assumed the responsibility of ministry to the Church as Pope, he has surprised me over and over again. The gospels often described Jesus as a person who was powerful in word and action. That is how I would characterize what has impressed me about Pope Francis. Some of what he has said I have found personally encouraging, and there have been times when his words have been challenging too. But they are always pastoral, clearly spoken, and seem to represent a balanced perspective.

But honestly, more than his words, what I find inspiring is what he does personally. The media is flooded with images of Pope Francis grinning boldly, kissing babies and the disfigured. Right after he was elected we were told that he was not going to move into the papal palace but rather continue to stay at a Casa Santa Marta, a Vatican guest house. The whole world seems to be aware that two weeks after being installed; Pope Francis washed the feet of young women and men at a detention center in Rome. Since he has become pope he has opened a homeless shelter in the Vatican, installed a shower for the homeless in the corner of St. Peter Square and asked barbers to give them free haircuts. This last June he was in the northern city of Turin where

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Our E-Newsletter:

The focus of this issue is on how Pope Francis encourages us in our own relationship with God. Several readers share their experiences.

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he visited with refugee and asylum seekers from Libya.

I find Pope Francis words and actions to be calling me to a deeper level of authenticity. I have always tried to be authentic. However, Francis' example calls me to be more proactive about living my life in imitation of Jesus Christ, who in the words of Paul: "Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself ..." (Philippians 3:6-7)



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## The Time Is Right

By: Sr. Janice Rosinke

God, in His infinite, loving providence, has a way of always giving us what we need – when we need it. I love to ponder this because I have so much evidence of it in my own life; as well as, in my wider observations.

God's gift of Pope Francis to us at this time is an example. Pope Francis, in his unique way, is providing the style of leadership we so sorely need. He calls us to greater authenticity in our Christian discipleship and witness to the Gospel. He not only talks about the "joy of the Gospel" but he also embodies it and asks us to do the same. This is a wonderful challenge – though not necessarily easy to do!

I am grateful to Pope Francis for having called for a year of focus on consecrated life. In this way, he is reminding all people to reflect on the meaning and value of the consecrated life. I believe this is also an opportunity for those of us who are called to live this life to take time to ponder. I find it a personal challenge, and have taken time, alone and with others, to find ways to respond. One way that is proving fruitful and enjoyable has been scheduling monthly gathering times for the residents of our retirement center. At this time, four sisters each

## Additional Web Resources

The intention of the e-newsletter is to provide a resource for the spiritual life and a place for people to share their personal experience, which serves as a spring board for others. We invite your comments, suggestions, and personal reflections. Use the following links to start a thread on our [Community Forums](#), or to send us an [email](#). In addition, we have [additional articles](#) on our website for your spiritual nourishment.

**COMMUNITY  
FORUMS!**



month share their "stories." July was our fifth month to do this. The residents look forward to these get-togethers and the response and attendance has been overwhelmingly positive.

Pope Francis has also initiated a two-part meeting of the Synod of Bishops to discuss issues relating to the family. This is meant to include some very controversial topics.

His call for our care for the earth is so timely and is another challenge for the whole world; as well as, for every individual to respond.

I am also looking forward to the upcoming year of mercy, which Pope Francis has announced.

Our challenge is to remain as informed and involved as possible, and to inform others, stimulating their interest in what the Holy Spirit is doing in our day through Pope Francis. May we all be open to accepting the challenges and surprises that are in store for us.

## Christian Love



*"Jesus asks those who would follow him to love those who do not deserve it, without expecting anything in return, and in this way to fill the emptiness present in human hearts, relationships, families, communities and in the entire world."*

– Pope Francis, Homily, Holy Mass with New Cardinals, Feb. 24, 2014

Learn more about our [e-newsletter contributors](#).

PHOTO CREDIT: Casey Hoversten

# The Light of Faith

By: Natalie Villmer

In his encyclical The Light of Faith, Pope Francis states, "To those who suffer God does not provide arguments which explain everything, rather his response is that of an accompanying presence which opens up a ray of light." (#57) This quote from Pope Francis gives me hope in my day to day struggles with others. People come to the door every day with many and various sufferings; i.e., not enough food, a close relative who is dying of cancer, no money to pay the rent or the utility bill, no funds for gas for the car to get to the doctor or or a new job, lack of understanding of God's will in a difficult situation. Many times all I can provide is an accompanying presence which opens a ray of light.

Pope Francis' concern for the poor strengthens me in my work as a Rural Parish Worker of Christ the King

# Why I Follow Pope Francis?

By: Daniel Defino

In my relatively short life, I have lived through five popes, including Pope Francis. As life changes and society grows indifferent to many core values, God has blessed us with a Pope to combat these times. Pope Francis is a man who has led by simple example, even before becoming Pope.

I am most impressed by Pope Francis' ability to transcend age, gender, religion and social status. He is loved by all, yet feared by many as well. Is he not unlike our Savior? Pope Francis is not afraid to walk the path he knows is right, no matter who is opposed to it. He does not play to the expectations of others, but rather follows the example of Jesus to love, and only love, above all. He does not judge, and does not condemn. This is obvious in the many stories that surround him, and examples of his life. He leads our Church, yet makes sure he lives the model for what the Church should be. This inspires me, and gives me strength for what I long to become.

His example solidifies the way I should act. It

as I reach out to the marginalized in our rural area. He is interested in their welfare, spiritually and materially and shows it by his actions and words which we see and hear in the media, read about in newspapers and magazines.

Pope Francis' winning smile makes me feel I could just walk up to him, say hello, and I would be welcomed and heard. There is a warmth in his sincere hand shake and gentle spirit which guides me in my relationship with others. In the magazine "The Word Among Us", there is a prayer or meditation on the back page each month from Pope Francis that fills me with hope in this world beset by violence, war, poverty, anonymity, abuse and neglect. His words encourage me to look for that ray of light.

grounds me and gives me a sense to not think beyond what I should be, but just to be. It heightens my sense of simplicity in our religion, as Jesus showed us the way to love, and love above all. This is what I see in the man, Francis. It takes what can sometimes be overwhelming and difficult from our perspective in being catholic, and shows us a much simpler way; THE way.

A specific example for Pope Francis was when asked what he thinks of gay marriage, he replied, "who am I to judge?" This is coming from a man leading our Church, yet knowing that God is above him, and that it is not his place to condemn, or judge. He will speak out against wrong doing in the world, but does not confuse wrong doing with areas of acceptance and morality that walk the fine line of judgment and condemnation that should be left only for our maker. Instead, he loves, and loves above all. He is a modern day example of Jesus, and one I strive to follow daily.

# 2015 Video Contest

*\$500.00 First Prize, \$250 Second Prize, \$100 Third Prize*

**Topic: Care of the Environment, Franciscan Spirituality, and St. Francis**

## ***Eligibility***

- Residents of the United States.
- Participants must be 16 years of age or older.
- Parental consent required for participants less than 18 years of age.

## ***Judging***

- Judges will be selected by the staff of the IL RITIRO Franciscan Retreat Center.
- Judging will be based upon content, thought, presentation, and creativity, especially in terms of the connection made between St. Francis, Franciscan Spirituality, and Care of the Environment.

## ***Timetable***

- Contest opens on September 15, 2015.
- All entries to be submitted by October 15, 2015.
- Contest winners to be announced in the November e-newsletter.

## ***Awards***

- \$500 will be awarded to the first place winner.
- \$250 will be awarded to the second place winner.
- \$100 will be awarded to the third place winner.

## ***Guidelines***

- Video must reflect the assigned topic, and be submitted by October 15, 2015.
- Video must be the participant's original work.
- Video must be no more than 5 minutes in length.
- Video must be posted to YouTube, and submitted via a link/registration form.
- Submit the entry via email with the subject "2015 Video Contest". The email address is [ilritironewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ilritironewsletter@gmail.com).
- Links to selected entries will be posted to the IL RITIRO website.



*"We exhort you in every respect, honorable brother, to heed obediently what has been written by the most blessed pope of the city of Rome, for blessed Peter, who lives and presides in his own see, provides the truth of faith to those who seek it. For we, by reason of our pursuit of peace and faith, cannot try cases on the faith without the consent of the bishop of Rome"*  
 - Peter Chrysologus, Letters 25:2 [A.D. 449]



## Upcoming Retreats

<b>Retreat Name</b>		<b>Date</b>
<u>Take Lord, Receive – Reflection Day for those with Cancer and other Chronic Diseases</u>	Steve Givens	Sept 19
<u>A Day of Reflection with Sophia, Divine Wisdom</u>	Kathleen Davis	Sept 26
<u>Contemplative Outreach Association 7-Day Post-Intensive Retreat</u>		Oct 12-18
<u>Praised be God for Autumn Colors, and Universe Grandeur – A Retreat on the Wonders of Creation and Pope Francis' recent Encyclical</u>	Maurice Lange	Oct 10
<u>Journeying with Christ in Serenity, Courage, and Wisdom</u>	Alacoque Burger, OSF	Oct 24

### Private Retreats Can Be Scheduled Anytime

IL RITIRO offers scholarships to help those in difficult situations care for their spiritual lives.  
 Call us at 636-274-0554

## Next Issue

In our next e-newsletter, we would like to devote articles to latest encyclical of Pope Francis, and we would like to include some of your reflections. What are your reflections on St. Francis, Franciscan Spirituality, and Care of the Environment? We would ask you to keep it short, personal, and practical so that your thoughts can be spring board from which others might begin their own reflection. Send us an email with Environment in the subject line.



Sunday Gospel reflection questions are available on our webpage or can be sent to your e-mail each week. [Click here!](#)