

Franciscan Sisters, Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother



From the Desk of
Sr. Katherine Caldwell, TOR
Reverend Mother

"Let Me build you our home"
A Song of Gratitude

Dear Family and Friends:

As we journey through Lent, I thought I would share with you my journey of growing in greater trust of God through the experience of our building project. This story is like a song that magnifies God's abundant love and mercy for His frail but striving to be faithful bride.

Grounded in the Truth of Who God Is and Who We Are in Him

"Who am I, O Lord, and who are You?" These are the words that St. Francis prayed throughout the night which inspired Bernard of Quinteville to join Francis even before the Order was founded. These words always ground me in the reality of who God is as my Creator, who has loved me into being and knows me even more intimately than I know myself. Thus, He knows best how to provide for me. He has loved me so much that He sent His only Son to be my Savior. When I forget Who My God is and who I am in Him, letting untruths get the best of me, He is there to forgive and heal me by His Merciful Love. Even though we may know the truth, most of us are still growing into the truth. This is our life's journey.



Gratitude for the Journey

I am so grateful for the journey of this past year for those times when God has penetrated me with His Truth as well as for the painful times when I have felt my fears and anxieties. Growing in deeper trust of God is a lifelong process for many of us. Each time God helps us through a difficult life circumstance or interior trial our trust in God is deepened, and whatever is at the root of our fears is continually being healed and purified. Gradually, we learn to rely more on God than on ourselves - at least that is my experience.

More Challenges than I Imagined

Designing, building and fundraising for the addition to Our Lady of Sorrows Motherhouse and Father of Mercy Chapel has presented far more challenges than I could have imagined. Eight months into the project, we lost our project architect and realized that much of the work had to be redone. This put us in a catch-up mode, which is particularly challenging when you have a community involved. We then lost the person helping us with the interior finishes and eventually even the principal architect - basically the entire original team.

In May, I felt particularly challenged. I found out that the walls planned for our new chapel were higher than we realized, the cost more than we expected, and the fundraising was not looking hopeful. I almost canceled my annual retreat because I

wondered if the plans needed to be revised again to reduce cost. However, through talking with our consultants, I gained confidence that the Chapel was the right size, and I decided to head out to my retreat. I began my annual retreat with all this weighing upon me.

“Let Me build you our home”

On the first morning of the retreat, while in adoration, I sensed the Father gently letting me know that He was building the chapel for us, not us for Him. I was reminded of the soft whispers that I had been hearing over the past few weeks: “Let Me build you our home.” The following morning, as I prayed where the sun was rising over a serene pond, I sensed the loving presence of the Father sharing with me that the chapel was for our children - all the sisters now and those to come in the future. I cannot put into words the beauty of this conversation. Tears streamed down my face. It was so tender and loving.

I returned home and continued to discern our fundraising trips and the building campaign plan. With 3.7 million dollars already provided for us, it could seem like 1.5 million would be easy to raise. However, I knew that we needed to meet new people in order to raise this amount, plus a miracle or two. The fundraising trips in the summer did not seem to be too fruitful, but I tried to remain faithful to the fundraising plan, reminding myself that it is faithfulness not success that God is asking of me. It was not until September, almost one year after we had begun our efforts to raise money that we started to see the fruits of our fundraising, but it was still only a fraction of what we needed. The economy was continuing to decline, and many foundations were not in a position to support new projects. In addition, we had unexpected stresses with the building, and I was beginning to feel worn by it all. I also was very aware that we would run out of money in the spring. I found it hard not to feel discouraged. I knew God would provide, but I wished I had a walky-talky to connect with God (I guess I should say a cell phone. I am dating myself.), so I would know when and how He wanted to provide.

God will bring good out of all the difficulties.

While I was in Italy to meet with the wood carver for our crucifixion scene (see next page), we made a pilgrimage to Assisi. At the tomb of Francis, I sensed that I was not to be afraid but to move forward. Furthermore, God was going to bring good out of the past, including all the difficulties involved with the building. As the project has been unfolding, it has become obvious that God is in charge of this building project, not us. Even those aspects of the building that were stressful and may not have been according to our plans, we now believe will probably work out better than we had anticipated.

God also has been in charge of the fundraising. It has truly been a journey of trust as the building cost kept increasing, and we knew that we needed a miracle. I experienced a huge relief in December when we found out that someone was willing to cover whatever we could not raise in time to pay the bills. In January, I came home from visiting our sisters in Austria to find an unexpected large donation that really raised my spirits. Later, I got word that we would be receiving another very large donation which would cover the cost of the building. We are still waiting on estimates to know the updated costs of the other line items in the capital campaign - but the end is now in sight! I am overwhelmed by God’s goodness to us. I am humbled by the fears and anxieties that I experienced along the way. I am so grateful that God is bigger than our fears and loves us even in our weakness. He is indeed providing us a home where He will dwell among us and continually make known His merciful love.



On January 18, Caroline, Anne, and Katie became Postulants, receiving the postulant habit and Tau Cross. The Lord continues to call young women to join us with Mary at the Foot of the Cross. The building of our chapel and motherhouse enables us to continue receiving vocations.



God's Timing Perfect

The timing for receiving this donation for the building was perfect. Now I can be more peacefully attentive to the other needs of the community without the burden of raising over 1.5 million dollars. Through our recent General Visitation in which I visited all



of our houses, I realized that we needed to further prepare ourselves spiritually for the next phase in our development. In my prayer today, I sensed the Lord ask me if I would love Him and make a home for Him. While He has been providing us a physical home through good people, it is only by us making a home for God in our hearts that our

new building will become truly a home where God's merciful love is shared among the sisters and among all who visit. Please pray for us that we can truly make our hearts a home for God and live a life of loving intercession and service for others.

Furthermore, the timing of God's providence enables us to channel some of our fundraising efforts toward providing for our operational expenses. We are grateful for all who contributed to our operational needs. We closed out the year with a \$13,000 deficit, which is not as bad as it could have been given the economy and building campaign. However, it indicates that we still need to increase our friends and benefactors in order to cover our living expenses, especially as we continue to grow.

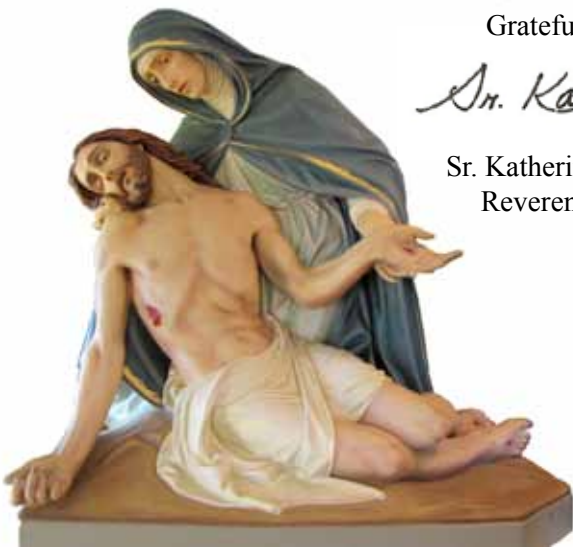
Gratitude for Your Support

I am so grateful to everyone who has made a contribution to our building fund and for all of your prayers and encouragement along the way. You are a part of our chapel and motherhouse, and in a physical way, always with us and in our prayers. Thank you for your ongoing support. God is so good!

Gratefully in Christ,

Sr. Katherine Caldwell, TOR

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Reverend Mother



This Pieta expresses the complete outpouring of the mercy of Christ and His Mother, and will be situated in the entrance of Father of Mercy Chapel.



The above wood relief captures the the heart of our spirituality centered on Christ Crucified who is the perfect reflection of the Father of Mercy. Christ's pierced Heart gives birth to the Church and the sacraments, becoming the living streams of our salvation. We are so grateful to be with Mary at the foot of the cross where we receive God's mercy so that we can make known His merciful love. What a wonderful blessing it will be for us to gaze everyday upon this graced scene that is at the heart of our spirituality and all that we desire to become.

Franciscan Sisters, T.O.R.

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SEE UPDATE ON
CONSTRUCTION AND
FUNDRAISING INSIDE!

Abandonment

By James Grundl

Glistening snowflake
Shafts of sunlight break thick clouds
Unafraid it melts

Unafraid it melts. Trusting, empty of its own will, it lets go of its unique, one-of-a-kind beauty, letting its matrix soften and disappear forever. Surrendering to the wind and sun, it lets the weather determine its fate, the length of its existence. Then it seeps back into the earth to allow its elements to be used in another way, however its surroundings determine. The same sunlight that causes it to glisten, that highlights its beauty and allows it a moment to shine, to give glory to God in its brilliance, is the same sunlight that brings its demise, that breaks down its crystals and causes it to change form. In its obedience, changing form simply allows it to be used in a different way; it does not annihilate its existence. It continues on its way in the cycle of its life—ice crystal to water to vapor and on and on... It brings life to the earth. If it refused to melt, the earth would dry up; nothing would grow and death would come. Unafraid, it knows, "life is changed, not ended."



Reflection of the poem by Sr. Eliana Day, TOR