



FRANCISCAN SISTERS, T.O.R.  
*of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother*

*Under His Mercy*  
 DECEMBER 2022



In this issue, our sisters share about Jesus' coming in powerlessness and how we can make a home for Him to enter this Christmas.

*The Power of Powerlessness*

BY SR. THERESE MARIE, T.O.R.

**P**owerlessness: The word has always conjured up all kinds of emotions in me: fear, despair, and maybe even panic. This was before I lived through 11 years of experiencing a powerlessness I could never have expected: vertigo (a spinning sensation with nausea).

Two weeks before getting sick with vertigo I gave a talk to 5,000 high schoolers at one of the Steubenville conferences on "the Word Made Flesh: the Powerlessness of Jesus." It was an exhilarating experience. I never dreamed that I would have such an opportunity to share God's love with so many young people, nor the courage to do it. It was the scariest thing I had ever done. But it went so well. They LISTENED. They hung on every word I said. They cried. I cried. I fell in love with them. I felt so fulfilled. It was the realization of the deepest desire of my heart: to make known God's love on a large scale. It was a powerful experience.

Two weeks later the Lord began another ministry through me. I was given the opportunity through chronic sickness to live the words I preached about the power of powerlessness and weakness. Thus began what I believe to be the hardest years of my life. I could no longer commit to much work or ministry as I was spending a lot of time in bed being served - sometimes practically bedridden for months at a time. It began a time of what the Lord has



Sr. Therese Marie with her brothers Bill and Ken while during her treatment in 2021

assured me has the potential to bring in the richest harvest of souls - a lot more souls than the 5,000 high schoolers I spoke to. The powerlessness of the Word was being enfleshed in me.

It sounds beautiful and heroic but it rarely felt beautiful or heroic. I felt useless and utterly powerless. I did not realize how much my identity and worth had been placed in what I "could do." The misunderstandings, depression, loneliness, and struggle that come with chronic sickness were very hard as the years dragged on. One of the reasons I came to this community was because our community has two Eucharistic holy hours every day. I never dreamed that I would be deprived of being able to pray in front of the Blessed Sacrament, or to pray at all due to being too sick. I know I did not always suffer well but the Lord has shown me that if I had, it wouldn't have been real suffering. Even the humiliation of not suffering well can be used for His kingdom! In a profound way, I came to understand the powerlessness and sacrifice Jesus embraced. He did this as a helpless infant, on the cross where He could not even swipe away a fly, in the Eucharist imprisoned in tabernacles throughout the world, and every moment surrendered to another - the Father and us.

Two quotes inspired me during this time. Pope St. John Paul II when he was enduring Parkinson's disease said, "I have written many encyclicals and apostolic letters, but I realize it is only with my suffering that I can help mankind." Wow! And Vatican II's "Letter to the Sick" says, "with [Christ], if you wish, you are saving the world." I clung to this truth.

On a recent retreat the Lord spoke to my heart. "The greatest salvific mysteries of my life were rooted in complete surrender to the Father in powerlessness and weakness. I didn't save the world through the power of my miracles or preaching but through the renunciation of the power that was rightly mine. My choice of powerlessness gives power to your incapacitation."

I tried to embrace sickness and suffering as weapons for His Kingdom. The enemy used discouragement at times to try to knock the sword of suffering out of my hands. But with the



sisters', family's and friends' hands clasped on top of mine helping me grip that sword when I felt too weak to continue, I was able to keep fighting to make known His love to the many He wanted to reach through my suffering.

After a correct diagnosis in 2021, I was able to pursue treatment to my neck that has obliterated the vertigo which has not returned in 14 months. There. Are. No. Words.

Powerlessness: an opportunity to become, in the words of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, "another humanity in which He can renew His whole mystery." The mystery is that, borrowing the words of George Weigel, "in His weakness was His power and in His humiliation lay His greatness." Rejoice with me in this mystery this Christmas as we embrace the poor, weak, and helpless Christ-child!

## *A Welcome Place* BY SR. FAUSTINA, T.O.R.

Several years ago, I was assigned as the sacristan to our mission house in Austria where we minister at the Franciscan University study abroad program. While there, I got acquainted with a tradition called Las Posadas. This is a Latin American tradition that a wonderful friar implemented into our University community in Austria. It is the story of Mary and Joseph going to different houses and trying to find a room in an inn.

Currently I volunteer in downtown Steubenville with the Urban Mission food pantry and thrift store and was recently thinking about Las Posadas. I see the poor come in for food, clothing, and household items and think, "Is the Holy Family knocking at the door of my heart? Will I let them (Him) enter?" Mother Teresa tells us we meet Christ in the distressing disguise of the poor.

Not too long ago I saw a man in the thrift store who was having a hard time walking. He was homeless, struggled with drinking, and had been out in the rain for awhile so his feet were pruned and cut up. He came in for new shoes and socks. My heart went out to him as he struggled to put the socks on that I handed him because it was so painful. I thought, "What can I do for this man?" I gave him the umbrella I had as I knew he was going back out in the rain. I continued to think, "What can I do for God's people in need?"

That day, perhaps I did let Jesus enter, at least in a little way by being kind, which is something we can all do in different ways. So I am trying to think about the Holy Family as I check people into the food pantry, thinking about them as the Holy Family. No, I can't do much, but perhaps just greeting them with a smile, a word of encouragement, an offering of prayer, and to recognize them and make them feel welcome is my Las Posadas at this time in my life.

A few times in our different mission houses we have done the scripted Las Posadas, but it seems like this year God is calling me to do it in a different way. Can you do a Las Posadas this year and welcome the Holy Family? It will look different for each of us, I am sure, but isn't HE always knocking at the door of all of our hearts?? May the Holy Family find a welcome place.

Sr. Faustina with friends at Urban Mission





THANK YOU FOR MAKING OUR SHARE HIS MERCY BENEFIT A SUCCESS! WE RAISED \$100,421 TO SUPPORT OUR LIFE AND MINISTRY.

*Dear friends,*

*Greetings!* My name is Sr. Miriam O’Callaghan and I am the new Director of Mission Advancement! I am originally from Ireland though I’ve lived in the US for the last 17 years. Hopefully I will become a US citizen in 2024. I have one brother and one sister and I love hiking and reading. We have a “Strange Foods Society” within the community of which I am a proud founding member - we eat all the strange parts of animals that are donated to us 😊 I am also known within the community for a particularly idiosyncratic way of eating an apple and carving away all the flesh that surrounds the star-shaped core!



On a more serious note, my new role includes connecting with friends and benefactors of our community, leading our Mission Advancement team (including Sr. Anna Rose, Sr. Sarah Rose, and our employee Lindsay) and spearheading events like our annual Benefit fundraiser. I’ve worked with money and numbers for most of my life! I was never a tax collector like Zacchaeus but I was a tax consultant and CPA in my former life. Math was by far my favorite subject in school. When I first joined the convent, I thought I would never see a calculator again; however, within a short time I was asked to work in our small finance office, which I did for quite a few years before taking up a campus ministry assignment in Gaming, Austria. After a few more recent years as our Vocations Coordinator, I am now in this new role.

*Thank you for your support of our community, whether that is spiritual or financial or in some other way - we are truly grateful!*

Please do feel free to contact me at [srmiriam@torsisters.org](mailto:srmiriam@torsisters.org) or (740) 544-6254 if you are ever looking for new or increased ways to support our community, or if you have friends who would like to support us. Please also let me know if you would like to host a dinner or informal gathering in your home for some of your friends that we could come to and share about our community (distance-permitting). You can really help us by spreading the word about our community and our mission to make known God’s merciful love to all those we encounter, especially through our work with the poor and college campus ministry. Please see our website for more information:

[WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG](http://WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG)

*God bless you and please know of our prayers for you, your loved ones and your intentions!*

*Sr. Miriam*

FRANCISCAN SISTERS, T.O.R.  
 OF PENANCE OF THE SORROWFUL MOTHER  
 369 LITTLE CHURCH RD.  
 TORONTO, OHIO 43964  
 ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT  
 ORG  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 MAILER'S CHOICE

MEET THE POSTULANTS!



Our Postulants Emma & Mary-Kate, making salsa!

*Emma:*

- from Sagamore Hills, OH - studied Theology in college
- she worked in Human Resources before entering
- Fun fact: she has lots of hobbies working with her hands: gardening, knitting, sewing, and playing the flute!
- She's enjoyed using some skills to help out, such as canning salsa and applesauce (see above!), sewing projects, and helping a sister in knitting!

*Mary-Kate:*

- from Butler, PA - studied Catechetics & Theology in college
- Fun fact: she has a brother who is a TOR novice! His name is Br. John Gregory
- Her ministry at the nursing home since entering has been particularly powerful: one woman they visit hasn't had much teaching on the faith, so she asks them to read her Bible to her! She feels like she's hearing it for the first time!

CONTACT US! (740) 544-5542  
 WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG



*"To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love"*



ADVENT  
 RETREAT 2022  
 SAT. DEC. 3

*Emmanuel's Light for  
 our Blindness*



Retreat Schedule:

- 8 AM: REGISTRATION
- 8:30: WELCOME
- 8:45: TALK BY SR. ELIZABETH
- 9:15: TESTIMONY BY SR. AGNES MARIA
- 9:30: BREAK
- 9:45: ADORATION WITH GUIDED MEDITATION
- 10:30: BENEDICTION
- 10:45: MASS
- 11:30: DEPART; OPTION FOR SMALL GROUPS OR PRAYER MINISTRY



SAVE THE DATES!

LENTEN RETREAT 2023:  
 MARCH 11

SHARE HIS MERCY  
 BENEFIT 2023:  
 SEPTEMBER 30

FOR MORE INFO. & TO REGISTER:  
 Go to our website, hover over the "Events" tab, and click on  
 "Advent Retreat 2022."

WWW.FRANCISCANSISTERSTOR.ORG