



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

from the desk of

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.

SEPTEMBER 2017



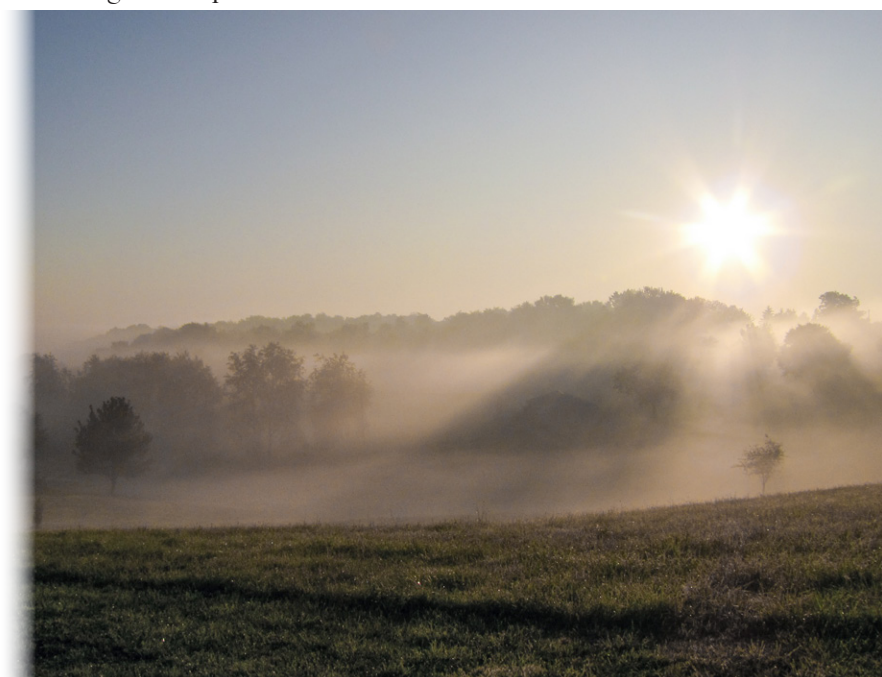
Closer than Before

Dear Friends,

Life events seem to come in groupings. There was a stretch of time when weddings, professions or baptisms were the primary events I attended. This past year has been a year of primarily attending funerals. I've discovered that the funeral of a close friend or loved one can be a real opportunity for reflecting on and discovering the deeper realities of life.

One of the truths the Lord has revealed to me in a more profound way is that after his or her death, our loved one is closer to us than before. We may not feel this at times because the person is not here in the flesh; however, the Lord has given me a greater awareness of the reality that begins in this life and reaches its fullness in heaven—the Communion of the Saints.

If a sister would have entered my room some days ago and heard me talking, she would have thought I was talking to myself or that the dear Reverend Mother maybe was "*losing her marbles*," because she would have seen no one in the room with me. I was talking to a friend of mine who died three years ago. At one point, I stopped and thought to myself, "*Now, if she were living, would I be speaking to her this way?*" The Lord immediately convicted me of two important realities. First, that my friend was still very much alive. We Catholic Christians would not have the tradition of praying to the saints if when we died, we no longer existed. Second, my friend was still very present. I could speak to her now because she was not limited by her body. She could be with me all the time no matter where I was, whether I was here at the monastery or traveling throughout the country. When she was living in her body, she was limited by time and space. My interactions with her were limited to a visit every so often or a phone call or letter, but now I can speak with her at any time or in any place. I know she hears me, and I have experienced her presence with me in a gentle but more consistent way.



Jesus told His disciples in John 16: 7 that it is better that He leave them in order that the Holy Spirit may come to them. Jesus says in John 14:18, "*I will not leave you orphaned.*" In the Preface of the Mass for the Ascension, the Church prays, "*...He ascended, not to*

To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love

distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our Head and Founder, has gone before.” The Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts gives us confidence that Jesus is present to us all the time. We are one with Him (John 17: 20-26). The Holy Spirit also unifies all the members of Christ’s body, so that we have communion with our fellow believers here on earth as well as our loved ones who have gone to the Lord before us—the Communion of the Saints.

Jesus prays in the 17th chapter of John that we be one in Him just as He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. We have received this great gift of God, the indwelling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, at our baptism. We were cleansed of original sin, received His sanctifying grace to become holy, and entered into the divine life of the Most Holy Trinity (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1263, 1265, 1267). Just as we are one with the Most Holy Trinity by the power of the Holy Spirit, so we are one with each other (Eph. 4:25). Even though our bodies will die at some point in time, our souls, being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) are immortal. So even though we will not receive our glorified bodies until the resurrection of the dead on the last day

(John 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24), the souls of our loved ones are still very present to us through our union with God and the Church.

I believe the words that St. Dominic spoke to his brothers as he was dying could be spoken to us as well by our loved ones who have passed: *“Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death, and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life.”* May the Lord console all of us who have lost loved ones and may the joy of His resurrection ever remain in our hearts.

Thank you, my friends, for all of your time, talent, and financial assistance. We could not build up the kingdom of Christ without you. Please consider continuing your support.

Fraternally in Christ,

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, TOR

Mother Mary Ann Kessler, T.O.R.

Reverend Mother

LESSONS ON THE VOWS FROM MY TWO-YEAR-OLD NEPHEW



A sister holds one of the three knots on her cord, which represent the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

by Sr. Miriam

The most adorable, extroverted and winsome little two-year-old in Ireland just happens to be my nephew, Daniel. He lives in Dublin, Ireland with his mom and dad and in utero sibling. I went home to Dublin in July and had the privilege of spending a lot of time in Daniel’s company.

To give you an example of his adorableness, on more than one occasion, we had friends or extended family over for dinner. Naturally, from time to time, everyone would laugh at something funny that someone had just said. As the laughter began, Daniel would proceed to toss his curly, blond head back and give a very real, loud and prolonged laugh that made it look like he fully understood the joke and was, quite naturally, joining in! It was hilarious and provoked yet another round of laughter on our part! As well as enjoying his company, I found myself observing closely how a child sees the world, and, to my surprise, found myself learning more about the living out of the vows.

While I live the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the context of religious life, each one of us without exception is called to live poverty, chastity and obedience according to our state in life, as this was what Christ modeled for us when He was on earth. We are all called to live in a way that is mindful of those who have less than us, to love chastely with deep respect for the dignity of the other person (though some are not called to live celibately), and to be obedient to rightful authority (lawful government, civil and Church law, etc.).

It struck me one day that Daniel and I both live a kind of radical poverty. Neither of us owns bank accounts, phones (dumb or smart), cars or houses. Neither of us wears labelled clothes or gets fancy haircuts! We use things but don't strictly own any of them. We don't really have much more than we need. Everything has been gifted freely and generously to us, including his little blue boots and my worn sandals (see picture). Our needs are provided for, but not necessarily our wants. Neither of us can just get up and go somewhere else when life is not going according to plan or we're having a meltdown. Our lives are ones of quite radical dependence and this can lead to tears for both of us on occasion!



Daniel's rain boots next to Sr. Miriam's sandals during her home visit in July.

But it also leads to great freedom! Not being so preoccupied with material wants and worries, I observed Daniel being present in the present moment. I walked with him to Mass one day. What could have been a brisk, blinkered, future-focused 4 minute walk on my part took about 18 minutes because with Daniel, every twig on the path had to be examined, flowers in passing gardens had to be pointed out and admired, cars going by had to be waved at, random people walking by had to be engaged with in some way, the teddies on the children's graves by the church had to be hugged and any open gates had to be pointed out (All doors and gates in Daniel's world have to be closed, and, if by chance we forget to put across the child-proof closet latches and close the child-proof gates, he points those out, too, until the house is adequately child-proofed!!).

In his material poverty, he kept drawing my attention back to the natural beauty of the present moment and the people present in front of me.

After Mass, he began smiling widely at all the older ladies who were leaving the church. He even took hold of the hand of one of them and was marching quite happily away with her when I had to run after him and grab hold of his other hand! We escorted the lady to her car, and then Daniel proceeded to wave goodbye to her as if she were his third grandmother! He then wanted to wait and wave off every other parishioner as they left in their cars! He loved chastely and widely, with no agenda or expectation of something in return. His love was abundant and reached out to all, including these hidden, holy women whose lives often fly below the radar of our world's obsession with youth, looks and materialism.

I also observed his obedience, not yet perfected of course! It was my last time to see him before I flew back to the U.S. We were having dinner in my mom's house and we were eating meatloaf (I was trying to introduce my family to some U.S. recipes!), carrots and potato wedges. Daniel's plate contained a little of each. The wedges were his clear favorite and were speedily eaten while the carrots were all piled over the top of the meatloaf as if to hide it and pretend it didn't exist!

Daniel gestured that he wanted more potato wedges. His mom told him that he couldn't have any more wedges until he'd eaten his carrots and meatloaf. This produced an indignant outburst, a very red face and lots of tears. Shortly after, his mom, dad and grandmother left the room temporarily. It was just me and him. He climbed up on one of the chairs and suddenly the coveted wedges were within his grasp. He could easily have done a "*grab and gobble*." But he didn't.

He picked one potato wedge up, looked up at me with a questioning look and when I shook my head "*no*," he quietly and without fuss put it down. It was clearly a difficult "*no*" as he had campaigned long and hard for it, and it was now easily within his grasp, but in the end he freely chose to be obedient and to do what he was asked. He didn't realize it at the time, but this act of obedience maintained him in a better physical balance and was ultimately for his greater good. It was a good reminder of how rightful obedience keeps us within the parameters of what is ultimately in our best interests.

I came away from my home visit with a deeper gratitude for the vowed life and a new resolve to live our way of life more fully and freely. I also acquired a new perspective on being present to those who are right in front of me and of living in the present moment (and, I should add, the importance of eating my carrots and meatloaf when I'd rather be eating potato wedges!).

~ SR. MIRIAM O'CALLAGHAN, T.O.R.

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"To Glorify God and Make Known His Merciful Love"



UPCOMING EVENTS



All Souls Mass

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2017
7:15 AM
FATHER OF MERCY CHAPEL
OUR LADY OF SORROWS MONASTERY
369 LITTLE CHURCH RD
TORONTO, OH 43964

The following will be offered:

- Mass at Father of Mercy Chapel
- Chaplet of Divine Mercy Novena
- Daily "Prayer for Our Beloved Deceased"

*Submit the names of your beloved deceased by filling out and mailing in the remit envelope, or by visiting our website
www.FranciscanSistersTOR.org/allsouls/*