



Week ending 28 September 2016

Special Double Issue

Issue Number 1076

Feast of Francis and relevance for our times

by Joseph Nangle, OFM

There is no better example of St. Francis' relevance for our times than newly discovered details and interpretations of a famous incident in his life: the saint's lengthy visit to the Sultan Malik al-Kamil during the Fifth Crusade which took place from 1217 to 1221.

It is well-known that the Crusades, begun in 1095, were considered "holy wars" by church leaders. Initiated by a series of Roman pontiffs, their objective was to reclaim the Christian shrines in the Middle East which had fallen into the hands of Islam. No less a noteworthy figure than Bernard of Clairvaux encouraged the crusaders early in the 12th Century to go out confidently and repel the foes of Christ.



Despite Innocent III's call in 1213 for the Christian world to prepare another Crusade, fully four years before it was actually launched, Francis never once preached or wrote in favor of the pope's initiative. This in itself is remarkable given the fact, as noted above, that the Saint of Assisi was known to be a loyal son of the church, the "entirely Catholic, apostolic man." In addition to his "passively aggressive" resistance to war, even a conflict considered by the church as just and "holy," it is not surprising that Francis would act to mitigate the horrors of what another Crusade would inevitably produce. The action he took was surprising, daring and dangerous. In 1219, two years after the conflict began, he sailed from Italy to Egypt, crossed the line from the Christian army to that of the Muslims and approached their leader, Sultan Malik al-Kamil.

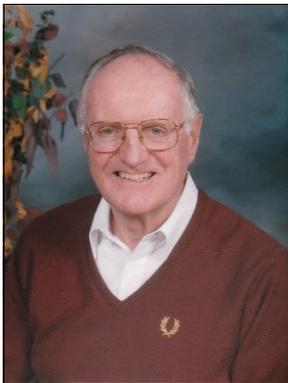
The traditional interpretation of this dramatic initiative on Francis' part has seen it as an attempt in the first place to convert the Muslim leader, then perhaps in the process to effect some cessation of the bloody conflict between Christians and "infidels." Recent scholarship, however, has pointed to a very different scenario. It turns out that the Sultan Malik al-Kamil himself wished for peace and had made several overtures to the Christian military leader, the pope's delegate, Pelagius Galvani. These proposals had been routinely rejected.

There seems to be persuasive evidence that al-Kamil saw in this holy man from the West a possible ally in achieving peace. Francis, after all, approached the Sultan with his usual greeting: "the Lord give you peace." In addition the saint refused to take the gifts of gold, silver and silk garments offered him by the Muslim leader, proving that he was not there for personal gain. From the beginning there seemed to exist a relationship of respect between the two men. Indeed the Sultan allowed Francis to remain in the Muslim camp for the better

part of a year – even as the Christian crusaders laid siege to the nearby city of Damietta, causing the Sultan’s people there immense suffering and deprivation.

Francis’ own conversion

What is more, evidence now shows that Francis himself underwent a significant conversion thanks to his experience of Islam and his relationship with al-Kamil. And here we come directly to the relevance Francis has for our times. While Francis refused the gifts offered him by al-Kamil, he did take with him on his departure an ivory horn, the instrument used to call for “salat,” the Muslim period of prayer five times each day. This Islamic practice particularly impressed the saint. In addition, some of Francis’ own written prayers after 1221 in certain ways parallel the well-known ninety-nine names for the Divine in the Qur’an, among them the Compassionate, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Peaceful, the Mighty. Francis calls God the Most High, King of Heaven and earth, Good, all Good, supreme Good, love, wisdom, humility, endurance, rest, peace, beauty, gentleness, our great consolation, eternal life.



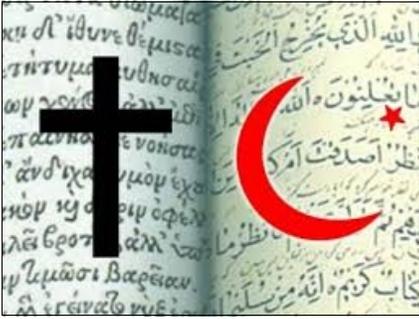
Joseph Nangle, OFM

Additionally, after Francis returned to Assisi from Egypt, he set down another Rule of Life for his fellow friars in which the saint urged them to “observe the strictest poverty and *to be subject to Muslims!*” Then, when the pope, Honorius III, called for yet another Crusade in 1224, Francis went to one of his favorite retreats, La Verna, for a long period of prayer and fasting. Some see this action of the now infirm, nearly blind saint as his only possible course of action in the face of this latest call to military arms. And concern for his friend Malik al-Kamil is also cited as a further motive for this action of Francis.

Could it not be that in his many conversations with Malik al-Kamil Francis recalled the directive which Jesus gives in Matthew’s Gospel: “...when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, go first be reconciled to your brother or sister and then come and offer your gift”? (Matthew 5:24) Surely the Muslims had much against the Christians, who were rejecting all overtures of peace. As a representative of the Christian Church, Francis surely felt the weight of “being an enemy” to the Muslims and took to prayer and fasting at La Verna in response. “Liberation theology gives us a vocabulary and a praxis here. It calls for us who strive for integrity and an inclusive, Christ-like attitude toward all: “salir al encuentro” (go out toward the encounter) with the stranger, the newcomer, the ones whom we do not as yet know. Francis would greatly approve of this insight.”

This experience of our 13th Century saint directly challenges us today. Due to circumstances with which we are all so very familiar, a real “Islamophobia” has gripped us in the West, particularly in the United States. Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001 (9/11), even the very names, manner of dressing, physical appearance, and customs of middle-eastern-looking people spark feelings of unease and even fear in many people here. While officials in our government for the most part have distinguished between faithful followers of Islam and, for example, ISIS terrorists, too often in the popular mind anything which resembles Muslims is viewed with suspicion, antagonism, and even outright hatred.





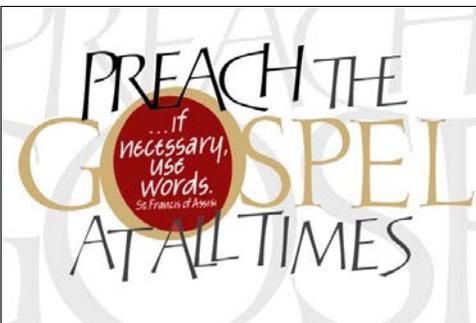
Francis directly challenges this mindset. His physical, emotional, and, yes, spiritual crossover to the world of Islam and his clear acceptance of much that is good in that religious tradition stands as an example for our world, increasingly divided as it is between “them and us.”

What is more, the Saint of Assisi causes us to pause before judging who the enemy is today. While the events of 9/11 stand as horrendous acts of terrorism and violence against innocent human beings, now, after nearly a decade and one half, we must ask if we in the West are not equally the enemy. One has to think only of Afghanistan, Iraq, drones, oil, Guantanamo, and renditions to substantiate this question. Saint Francis would have much to say were he witnessing all of this today. His experience and example when faced with an eerily similar scenario in his time – the Fifth Crusade – question us deeply.

Of course, the example of Francis with the sultan applies not only to our views and actions toward Islamic people. *All of us harbor prejudices of all kinds.* We often see the “others” in our world as suspicious, fearsome, even threats – be they “others” by reason of race, religion, sexual orientation, class, or culture. The challenge Francis lays before us as we learn the facts of his contact, dialogue, and friendship with Malik al-Kamil would have us consciously overcome any and all obstacles we place between ourselves and people who are not like us. Liberation theology gives us a vocabulary and a praxis here. It calls for people who strive for integrity and an inclusive, Christ-like attitude toward all to “*salir al encuentro*” (go out toward the encounter) with the stranger, the newcomer, the ones whom we do not as yet know. Francis would greatly approve of this insight. He lived it.

Joseph Nangle, OFM, served as a missionary in Bolivia and Peru. He is a renowned speaker, companion of the immigrant community of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Arlington VA, and peacemaker. He is a co-founder of the Assisi Community in Washington, DC, an intentional Catholic community of lay and religious men and women dedicated to a simple life-style and social change. This essay is reprinted with permission: © 2014-16, Education for Justice, a project of Center of Concern: For information about this and other Education for Justice resources, please visit www.educationforjustice.org.

How would Francis lead a parish?



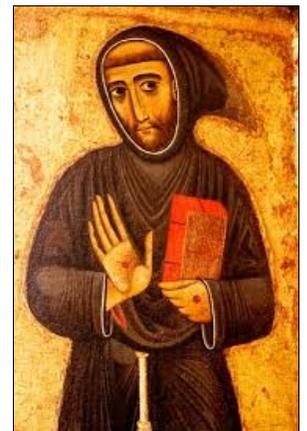
by Jeanne and Joe Mitcho

Legend has it that St. Francis founded the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence, Italy. In front of the building is the Piazza di Santa Croce, a large market square. Supposedly, St. Francis’ placement of the basilica was intentional, meant as a message to the people that before they entered the church together, he wanted them to be with the people “in the marketplace.”

That meeting of Franciscans and people in the marketplace, and the hospitality extended there to all is our first expectation of a Franciscan parish. We expect the friars to meet us and to welcome us where we live, and then to move us beyond our narrow visions to the poor and to our larger communities, and ultimately to all of creation.

Leading to a ministry of justice

We expect the friars to lead us to a ministry of justice. As exemplified by St. Francis, we expect to be led to a unity with the poor and powerless, not so they might remain



so, but that they may come to a place of economic and social freedom, so they might join us in lifting up others. The friars led us to march for the rights of the unborn, as well as tackle issues like human trafficking. We were called to join with other faith communities in our marketplace for community organizing efforts to take action on key local issues like predatory lending, foreclosure and affordable housing.

We expect the Franciscans to help us stand side by side with the disenfranchised, especially those who are the target of hatred and bigotry in the marketplace of our own backyards. The friars led us to march with our immigrant family members when our local government made them feel unwelcome, and to break bread at our local mosque with our brothers and sisters in a message of solidarity because of the mistrust they were feeling.

At St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Triangle, Va., the friars led us to set up our own St. Francis House to reach out to those with needs in our own community. They took us to the marketplace of inner city Philadelphia, and to the more than a dozen 'churches' in the barrios outside Lima, Peru.

Inspired to care for creation

We expect the friars to inspire us to care for creation, not as rulers of that creation but as a member of it. With the charism of Francis foremost in their spirituality, the friars helped us see the earth, sky, water, fauna and flora as brothers and sisters who expect the same kind of reverence as women and men. The friars led us to transform our parish into one that makes present by our actions, the care we purport to have for our world.

We also expect the Franciscans to inspire us with homilies that have meaning for our lives and lift us up with liturgies that challenge us to go out into the marketplace prepared to see Jesus in our brothers and sisters.

Seeing the friars as our partners-in-ministry

We expect to be asked to contribute our talents, our ideas, and our treasure alongside theirs. We invite them into our parish communities to work together *with us* to see how we can best make God happen in our time by doing what Jesus did, eating with all and healing all with whom we come into contact.

While we 'celebrate' the work of redemption in our parish church in rite and ritual, we believe that as a Franciscan parish we are called to begin and end the work of redemption in the marketplace as Francis did.

Jeanne and Joe Mitcho are parishioners at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in northern Virginia. This essay is reprinted, with permission, from HNP Today, newsletter of the Holy Name OFM Province.

Alumni honored by SLS



The Brindisi Award, begun in 2001, is given "to alumni who have integrated the mission and values of St. Lawrence Seminary into their lives, reflecting Christ's gospel mission and demonstrating an outstanding commitment to the values expressed and taught at St. Lawrence Seminary High School."

This year, the seminary honored four alumni with the Brindisi Award, two of whom are Capuchin friars. Congratulations to St. Lawrence principal and St. Mary (Marytown) parishioner Dave Bartel; St. Lawrence librarian and Holyland Catholic Parishes' sacramental minister Oliver Bambenek; Milwaukee Archdiocese

minister to priests Marty Pable; and Marquette University High School guidance counselor Nathaniel Gillon. Presenting the award was St. Lawrence alumnus and Alumni Association board member Mark Goeden.



Dave Bartle (left) receiving award from Mark Goeden



Martin Pable



Oliver Bambenek



Nathaniel Gillon

Cap Corps alum's "care for creation"

by Tim Powers

(Ed note: Tim Powers served with Cap Corps in Milwaukee (2013-14), and ministered at the House of Peace and St. Ben's. He currently is employed with a solar panel company in South Bend IN, and recently wrote the following for the company's blog.)

Rio 2016 inspirations: Seeking social justice through solar energy



Tim Powers

The opening ceremony of the 2016 Rio Olympics featured a beautiful video drawing attention to climate change. It was a somber, moving look at the challenges humans will face in the coming years if we do not take serious actions to become more sustainable. It made me think how Inovateus Solar accounts for people, profits, and the planet through its mission statement, "Building a Brilliant Tomorrow." Our company understands the potential in solar energy, both financial and social, as well as the important role it plays providing clean energy to the Midwest and beyond.



On the other side of South America, I recently attended a meeting with a representative working to facilitate the design and construction of several photovoltaic systems in Ecuador. This beautiful and naturally blessed country is prone to earthquakes. Ecuadorians are also known worldwide for their love and respect of the country's natural beauty. From this love of the environment, and despite the ready availability of oil, Ecuador seeks to provide clean and renewable energy for its citizens.



Inovateus is in the process of developing a deal for multiple large solar farms from in and around Quito, Ecuador's capital, all the way to the grand coastal city of Guayaquil. Major obstacles include financing and infrastructure upgrades as well as coordinating long-distance installation, supply, and maintenance logistics. Even though these projects may take years to finalize, Inovateus has enjoyed overwhelming support from both political and business leaders across Ecuador. The courage and resiliency displayed by the Ecuadorian people after recent devastating earthquakes give us great confidence that no matter what issues may arise in the pursuit of clean energy, we will find a way to prevail.

These projects showcase the role that clean energy could have in social justice around the globe. Studies show that countries facing economic challenges will feel the worst effects of climate change, despite the fact that developed countries are responsible for the majority of the world's carbon emissions.

The World Health Organization estimates 3 billion people cook or heat their homes with coal or biofuel burning stoves, resulting in an estimated 4 million premature deaths from illnesses caused by household air pollution. Costly, heavy pollution-emitting kerosene lanterns are a common source of light in the developing world, and lantern users pay more per-kilowatt than people connected to the grid. Electric alternatives are sometimes available, but since there is often little or no consistent electrical power, people resort to the next best option.

Solar provides clean, affordable energy, and many developing countries are finally realizing solar is not so out of reach as previously thought. Solar is expected to reach grid parity (meaning coal and oil costs the same per dollar per kilowatt-hour) in 80% of the world by the end of 2017. People do not need to be connected to the grid to use it either. Since 1992, the World Bank has provided micro-loans to finance small solar projects in Africa, Latin America and Asia, often placing PV systems on dirt or thatch roofs.

SOLAR ENERGY



Social justice is loosely defined as “the ability for all of society’s basic needs to be met without sacrificing the needs of others.” Carl Henrik Robert, one of the foremost thinkers on sustainability, wrote in *The Natural Step Framework* that “In a (just) society, people are not subject to conditions that systemically undermine their capacity to meet their needs.” It’s reassuring to know the world is moving toward more socially just energy practices.

Most Inovateus customers may not be getting their first electricity from our PV systems. However, everyone has the basic need to live in a clean environment, and that is what we are providing. Midwesterners will breathe a little easier later this year because sustainability-minded people in Kokomo, East Lansing, Detroit and elsewhere are working with Inovateus to build solar power plants. Hopefully, this will prove true for Ecuador as well.

(Tim Powers can be contacted at: powers.timothy7@gmail.com)



“As the Book of Genesis tells us and as St. Francis of Assisi showed us: it means respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live.” ~Pope Francis



On Wednesday, 21 September, friars, Cap Corps volunteers, staff and students of St. Labre and parish members gathered to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Capuchin presence on the Northern Cheyenne and Crow nations in southeast Montana.

(Framed quotes on this page are excerpts from Larry Webber's anniversary mass homily.)



L-R: Romanne Griffith, Susie Thompson, Rob Roemer, Michael Sullivan, James Antoine, Larry Webber, Jerry Johnson, Tien Dinh, Bill Frigo, Randolph Graczyk, Gary Wegner and Steve Kropp.

“The 90 years of proclaiming Christ that we are celebrating includes so many others who with us have been a part of the proclamation and building up of the Kingdom over these many years. These 90 years of Capuchin presence have been built on the foundation of men and women dedicated to the Gospel before we ever got here: first and foremost the Ursuline Sisters, the other priests and religious and the people of faith in the Cheyenne Nation who recognized in Jesus someone who respected, lived and understood their sacred traditions.”

“In the past, and perhaps 90 years ago, the most important thing for missionaries was to baptize people. But the church has come to see that the first and most important work is to come, listen and recognize where God is already present. And to that presence of God that is already respected, announce the good news that God indeed walks with us, and has shown that in a powerful way by becoming one like us in the person of Jesus Christ.”



Mark Joseph Costello (pastor, Crow Agency)



“Have we led others to know Jesus Christ? Has this encounter changed lives? Does the power of Jesus Christ assist us in expelling the darkness from our own lives, and the darkness that often raises its head in our families, communities and world? Does our faith in Jesus Christ bring light to the world? These are the challenging questions we are left with.”



Hermes Kreilkamp (former friar) is suffering with congestive heart failure and mild dementia.



In my name and that of my brother Brian's partner, Ernie, and my brother's George and Pat and their families, please accept our sincere gratitude at this time. Our loss of Brian is profound and will be for sometime; but your words and promise of good thoughts and prayers have been so consoling. Brian so needed a new heart, and we hoped and prayed that would be the outcome of all of this. But it was not to be despite the excellent care he received from so many. Brian loved the province, and he was always so grateful for the hospitality he experienced with us, especially his times in Chicago. We will always be grateful for our years with Brian.
Thank you! ~John Holly



Friar ordained as transitional deacon

Our brother, Robert Wotypka, was ordained to the diaconate recently. Both Dave Zywiec and Paul Schmitz concelebrated the ritual. Robert will serve as deacon in Detroit at St. Charles Parish.

Autumn

By T. E. Hulme

A touch of cold in the Autumn night—
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.



- 1 Focus Group Video Conference
Islamic New Year begins at sunset
- 2 **John Scherer (B)**
Dedication of St. Joseph Hall, Mt. Calvary WI
Rosh Hashana begins at sunset
- 3 **Ronald Smith (B)**
Treasurer/Auditors Meeting, Milwaukee
Transitus
- 4 Francis of Assisi (F)
Francis Dombrowski (N)
Franklin Eichhorst (N)
- 5 Philip Berrigan (B) (1923)
- 7 **August Seubert (N)**
Preach/Evangelization Video Conference
- 9 **Dennis Druggan (N)**
Brenda Boatman (B)
Open House & Tours, Mt. Calvary WI
- 10 Indigenous Peoples Day
- 10-11 CMSM, Region 5, Techny IL
- 11-14 NAPCC, Scottsdale AZ
- 12 **Zoy Garibay (B)**

