

# SandalPrints

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Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis of Reconciliation - Palm Springs  
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## LIVING JOYFULLY DOES NOT MEAN IGNORING TOUGH TIMES

*By Richard Brakefield, J.D., S.F.O.*

Everyone knows that St. Francis embraced God's creation with fervor. He found in the admiration of creation a means of praising God and a vehicle for drawing people's attention to the essential, the simple and fundamental concerns of all creatures and thus the ultimate dependency upon God's grace that we all share. We are aware likewise that Francis openly and with unabashed joy celebrated the beauty in creation. He also accepted and endured the uglier aspect of human life... disease, aging and the suffering that is so often a part of the human experience. For Francis, just being alive was a succession of opportunities to praise and give thanks to God.

Francis knew, of course, that no amount of human praise can increase God one iota nor can we do anything to decrease Him. All our praise and thanksgiving benefits us. We grow spiritually and come closer to God through prayer. God's plan seems to have had our interests in mind. He is sufficient in Himself so the good that comes from worship of God is a direct benefit to us. But God's generosity does not cease there.... we are empowered to participate in the ongoing mystery of creation. Not only are we empowered to procreate and participate in that obvious way but we can use the gifts God has given us to deepen our appreciation of what God has already perfected. Francis did it with his songs and poems, using music and language to engross his prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Other artists do it with their paints and other media and when the talent and the medium are properly directed, the final work of art draws a person's thoughts and appreciation to the Author of all that is. That is an important way to participate in His plan. What love God must have for us. He never stops giving,

giving, and giving.

But there are bad things that come to us too. Is disease, disability or any of the many painful and dreadful things a gift from God? Well, beside those harmful things that we create for ourselves, the ill that comes our way through no fault of our own certainly can be beneficial for us if we handle it properly. Yes, despite the bad consequences a disease or disability can bring, what appears to be an evil can be used to our benefit. Francis took advantage of the disease and hardships that came his way and rather than curse them, he embraced them and used them to come closer to God. Francis is not the only hero in that regard. All those we call saints did the same and God has given us many of these heroes and heroines. They are, in fact, all around us. Take a good look around you and observe. I am sure that I am no different than anyone else and I see apparent evil being used to benefit the sufferer and those around him or her nearly every day. Oh yes, I see those who wallow in victim-hood. Whiners do not inspire people. They annoy people. Cry-babies abound in society but look closer and you'll find a goodly number of people who suffer with a dignity and courage that inspires others to live the same way. I am thinking just now of a man who suffers from disabilities brought on him by a stroke. Let's call him Sam. I have known Sam for several years and have watched him make immense progress in his ability to walk and get about and the increase in his speech ability, nearly destroyed by the stroke, has been truly amazing. This man is not a whiner. I've never heard him complain of his disabilities. Quite to the contrary, Sam didn't lay down and give up when tragedy came into his life, he caught his breath and engaged the challenge. His determination, his persistence and above all his trust in God turned what might have been defeat into victory and an opportunity for heroic accomplishments.

There is something in people like Sam who seem to have been dealt a bad hand and yet turn it into gold. What that something is, I don't know exactly but it comes from God. It is like the talent an artist has in that it is generated from deep within a person. It is a gift. It is heroism. Sam has credentials that prove that he is a hero. A highly decorated war veteran, Sam is worthy of profound respect for his bravery in combat and his service to his country and his comrades-in-arms. Among those who know him, Sam has earned even more respect for the heroism he lives every day.

Sam and Francis have a great deal in common. They both accept God's invitation to play a participatory role in bringing beauty, dignity and nobility of spirit into the world. They both find great joy in love of God's creation. Like Francis, Sam didn't renounce the joy of living when trouble came his way. He didn't give up and become a whiner. He learned to take control and with God's grace turned a disability into an opportunity for heroic and joyful living. Now, don't call a person like this a hero. He or she won't like that. Heroes and heroines don't see themselves as such. They don't think anyone's watching but those who do notice them receive a wonderful blessing and get a magnificent lesson in living life joyfully and in a way that contributes to the building of the Kingdom.

We can learn so much from people like Francis and Sam. One thing I have learned from such people is that praising God and giving thanks isn't reserved for the good times when life is sweet and it's easy to be thankful and praise comes without reflection. True heroes and heroines praise God and give thanks with equal ease in good times and bad. They don't call attention to themselves but quietly, like Francis, they celebrate the very fact of living joyfully; they overcome obstacles and never give up. And for such examples of Christian living, I thank God.

*The chief exercise of prayer is to speak to God in the depth of one's heart. Prayer is a dialogue, a familiar talk or conversation of the person with God; we speaking to God and He to us, we ascending to Him, breathing in Him, and He in turn breathing His inspiration upon us.*

*St. Francis de Sales*

## Franciscan Saints, Blessed and Holy Ones May

1. St. Joseph the Worker
3. Bl. Thomas Bullaker & Comp. I Ord.
4. Bl. Ceferino Malla, III Ord.
6. Mother Ignatius Hayes, III Ord.
8. Bl. Jeremiah of Valacchia, I Ord.
9. St. Catherine of Bologna, II Ord.
10. St. Ivo of Brittany, III Ord.
- Mother's Day***
- St. Ignatius of Laconi, I Ord.
12. Mother Teresa O'Neil, III Ord. Reg.
12. St. Leopold Mandic, I Ord.
13. Our Lady of Fatima
14. Ascension of the Lord
16. St. Margaret of Cortona, III Ord.
17. St. Paschal Baylon, I Ord.
18. St. Felix of Cantalice, I Ord.
19. St. Theophilus of Corte, I Ord.
20. St. Bernardine of Siena, I Ord.
21. St. Crispin of Viterbo, I Ord.
24. Dedication of the Basilica of St. Francis
- PENTECOST SUNDAY***
25. Body and Blood of Christ
28. St. Mary Ann of Jesus, III Ord.
30. Sacred Heart of Jesus
30. St. Ferdinand, III Ord.
30. Bl. Baptista Varano, II Ord.
31. Most Holy Trinity

### A Story Which St. Bernardine Often Told

"Once upon a time a holy friar, prudent and circumspect in all things of the world, had observed that no behavior is able to escape criticism. "

He spoke one day to one of the young novices, "Son take our little donkey and come with me." The obedient novice untied the donkey and the old friar mounted the donkey while the novice followed on foot. In a very muddy area of the road they passed through a group of people. One of the onlookers cried out, "Oh Look! What a mean old monk. He lets the poor young novice walk through the mud while he relaxes and takes it easy on the back of the donkey."

Scarcely had the old religious heard these words that he stopped the donkey, got down, and put the young novice in his place while he walked in the mud goading the donkey on from behind. Another one of the onlookers exclaimed, "What a strange man! At his age he walks in the mud, and puts this strong and sturdy young monk who has no care whether he is tired or muddy. He must be crazy. It would be better for both of them to ride on the

donkey.” Then the holy old man climbed up on the donkey too.

But a little further on, another onlooker observed, “Look at those two on the donkey. What do they care about the donkey. He could die from all this.” Hearing this the holy friar immediately got down had the novice also get down, and the both walked, one behind the other crying to the donkey, “Move it, Move it.”

A little further down the road, another onlooker cried out, “Look at these crazy and ridiculous people! They have a donkey and here they are walking through the mud.”

The holy old friar then turned and said to the young novice, “Let us go back to the friary.” Once in his cell, he said to the novice, “Did you pay close attention to the teaching of the donkey? Realize that in this world all the good you do, and no matter how you use and employ all your strength, no matter what, you will never be able to avoid being condemned. Avoid the world then, and whether it be for good or for evil, allow whoever wants to speak to say what they want.”

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**Live simply.  
Love generously.  
Care deeply.  
Speak kindly.  
Leave the rest to God.**

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## MARY

May is the month of Mary. As we all know the Franciscans have a great love and devotion for her. She is Queen of the Order. Most probably we all have a little story or two to tell about someone or some event that immediately comes to mind when we mention Mary’s name. I know I do. When I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, way back in 1959, our teacher, Sister Mary Marcy, loved to read us poems about Our Lady. But she had a little twist, she would then sing the poem to the tune of a popular song of the day (late 50's remember). We were all asked to memorize one poem and then sing it to a tune that would fit with the words before the class. This was fun and we all were anxious for our turns. To this day, when I hear Mary’s name mentioned, I remember my poem and though rather sweet and syrupy I want to share it with you.

## TO OUR LADY

**Lovely Lady dressed in blue  
Teach me how to pray!  
God was just your little boy  
Tell me what to say!**

**Did you lift Him up sometimes  
Gently on your knee?  
Did you sing to Him the way  
Mother does to me?**

**Did you hold His hand at night?  
Did you ever try  
Telling stories of the world?  
O! And did He cry?**

**Do you really think He cares  
If I tell Him things –  
Little things that happen?**

**And, do the Angel’s wings  
Make a noise? And can He hear  
Me if I speak low?  
Does He understand me now?  
Tell me – for you know.**

**Lovely Lady dressed in blue  
Teach me how to pray!  
God was just your little boy  
And you know the way!**

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## Website Watching

Have you stumbled upon a great website recently that you’d like to share with the readers of SandalPrints? If so, please email it to: [Anthony@FranciscanCanticle.com](mailto:Anthony@FranciscanCanticle.com) and we’ll put it into the next issue under Website Watching. This issue’s website of interest: [www.Vatican.va](http://www.Vatican.va)

## Franciscan Canticle Appeal

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and whatever purchase you make a percentage is directed back to Franciscan Canticle.

## HOPE

I hope that I will always be  
for each person what (s)he  
needs me to be.

I hope that each person's  
death will always diminish me,  
but that fear of my own  
death will never diminish  
my joy of life.

I hope that my love  
for those whom I like  
will never lessen my  
love for those whom  
I do not like.

I hope that another person's  
love for me will never  
be a measure  
of my love for him/her.

I hope that every person  
will accept me as I am,  
but that I never will.

I hope that I will always  
ask for forgiveness from others,  
but will never need to be  
asked for my own.

I hope that I will find  
spouse to love,  
but that I will never seek one.

I hope that I will always  
recognize my limitations,  
but that I will construct none.

I hope that loving will  
always be my goal,  
but that love will never  
be my idol.

I hope that every person  
will always have hope.

*A student of Henri J. M. Nouwen*

“Here we find ourselves as far away as possible from confusion. Here we listen to a man who stands on solid ground and points into the future. He knows where he is and looks with expectation towards the things to come. The structure and thought of this prayer show a great self-confidence carefully integrated with a deep sense of humility. The prayer illustrates in a beautiful way some of the basic dynamics of the attitude of the mature Christian.”

*Henri J. M. Nouwen*

Let us pray for the intentions of those who

asked us to pray for them.

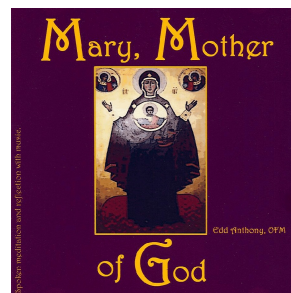


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