



PROPOSITUM

May 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis,

Peace and all Good!

In this issue, the Propositum draws our attention to the *“Eighth Centenary of the Death of Saint Francis: Saint Francis of Assisi, a Model of Lived Charity.”*

2026 is a particularly significant year for us, members of the large family of Francis of Assisi, and for the whole world. On January 10, we celebrated the opening rite of the eighth centenary of the Transitus of Saint Francis (1226-2026). This rite is not merely a commemoration, but an immersive experience that invites each of us to make the Testament of Saint Francis our own, bringing to the world the values of poverty, fidelity, fraternity, honest work, peace, and blessing, in the spirit of a man who was and continues to be "a man of peace, brother to all."

"He burned with fervor in every part of his being for the Sacrament of the Lord's Body, marveling in amazement at that condescension filled with charity and that charity filled with condescension. He received Communion often and with such devotion that he made others devout as well, and, tasting in spiritual intoxication the sweetness of the immaculate Lamb, he was often rapt in ecstasy" (FF 1164).

My most sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the writing of this issue.

Happy reading!

***Sister Daisy Kalamparamban
and the Councillors of the IFC-TOR***

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Opening of the 8th Centenary of the Transitus of Saint Francis 1226 – 2026
January 10, 2026

"FRANCIS: MAN OF PEACE, BROTHER OF ALL"

Sister Lorella Chiaruzzi

Franciscan Missionary of Christ

Rimini, Italy

VicePresident IFC-TOR

Original language: Italian



Eight hundred years after his passing, St. Francis continues to speak to the hearts of the women and men of our time. This was demonstrated by the crowd that packed the Papal Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Portiuncola on January 10th, gathered for the solemn opening of the eighth centenary of the death of our Father, St. Francis. Friars, sisters, regular and secular tertiaries, and simple friends of Francis and Clare, were present to inaugurate a year that promises to be rich in initiatives, celebrations, events, and conferences, culminating on October 3rd, 2026, the date that will solemnly conclude these years in which we have retraced the salient events of the final years of the Poverello's life.

The celebration took place in a sober atmosphere, steeped in values that powerfully speak to the world and to the people of our time. A sort of pilgrimage, divided into six stages along the side aisles of the basilica: representatives of the various Franciscan families walked on behalf of all, accompanied by music, readings, and testimonies that brought to life some of the themes dearest to Saint Francis, which we, his sons and daughters, are called to live and give new meaning to today. Mercy, prayer, fraternity, work, peace, and Blessing—a journey in various languages that has truly embraced the entire Franciscan "universe." What beauty, what silence, what wonder!

Two moments struck me as particularly significant.

The opening, with the calm pace of the Bishop of Assisi—Bishop Emeritus since that day—Monsignor Domenico Sorrentino, alongside the Mayor of Assisi, Mr. Valter Stoppini. Together, in procession, they carried a candle toward the Chapel of the Transitus: the light of the Risen Lord, but also the light of peace and forgiveness. An explicit reference to the peace restored between the Mayor and Bishop Guido II, which occurred after hearing the friars sing the Canticum of the Creatures. A strong appeal for the need for peace that the world, marked by over 50 conflicts, calls for today.

The final moment, with the pleasant surprise that the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIV wished to give us, declaring this year a Jubilee Year and giving us a prayer to seal this great year that has begun.

Saint Francis, our brother, you who eight hundred years ago
went to meet Sister Death as a man at peace,
intercede for us with the Lord.

You recognized true peace in the Crucifix of San Damiano,
teach us to seek in Him the source of all reconciliation
that breaks down every wall.

You who, unarmed, crossed the lines of war
and misunderstanding,
give us the courage to build bridges
where the world erects borders.

In this time plagued by conflict and division,
intercede that we may become peacemakers:
unarmed and disarming witnesses of the peace that comes from Christ.

Amen

The poster features a red background on the left with white text: "Apertura VIII Centenario del Transito di San Francesco 1226 » 2026". On the right, logos for "800 Franciscus 1226 — 2026" and "Città di Assisi" are displayed. The date "10.01.2026" is in yellow, followed by "ASSISI" in large black letters. Below that, it says "BASILICA PAPAIE DI SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI IN PORZIUNCOLA" and "ore 10:00". The bottom half of the poster shows a painting of St. Francis holding a cross and a scroll, flanked by two angels. The scroll contains the Latin text: "HIC ILECTUS MICHIL FUIT ET DEPTI MORIETI". The right side of the bottom half is decorated with a geometric pattern of red and white crosses.

STRIPPING AND SENILITY

Sister Maria Gabriella Bortot

Franciscan Missionary of Christ

Rimini, Italy

Original language: Italian



It may seem paradoxical, but the presence of elderly sisters is certainly a privileged channel of grace, for the vitality and sanctity of the fraternity. But let's be frank: the inexorable decline of faculties, elegantly called senility, is frightening, so much so that, to soften its sting, some deny it or just endure it. This must not be the case for the Franciscan sister. In the golden age of her youth, a dream stole her heart: *to belong to Jesus forever*. That still unformed desire concealed a desire for excellence, whose demanding beauty, preserved and cultivated over the years, would shine only at the twilight of life. Autumn always implies a stripping away, like that of the harvested vineyard, stripped of bunches and ready for winter rest and spring rebirth.

When Francis stripped himself before the Bishop of Assisi and returned his money and clothing to his father, *"he certainly wanted to conform in every way to the crucified Christ, who, poor, suffering, and naked, remained hanging on the Cross. For this reason, at the beginning of his conversion, he remained naked before the bishop; for this reason, at the end of his life, he wanted to leave the world naked..."* (FF. 1240). In Francis, God found not a fullness, but an emptiness. And He filled him with Himself.

The stripping of his garments was the pale external sign of the existential stripping that gradually intensified as he served God alone in radical poverty. In the mill of interior metamorphosis, Francis touched the depths of God, to the point of receiving the supreme gift of perfect configuration to Jesus, poor and crucified, in the ecstasy of La Verna. With the senses of his soul, he glimpsed in the expropriation the perfection of love and perceived the ineffable truth: Jesus was Poverty.

The Franciscan who reflects herself in the sublime humility of Jesus and Francis urges her heart to diminish, to make herself small, to choose the last place, to make room. It is the path of minority, of surrender, of simplified thought, of profound insight. It is not deprivation nor effort, but a burning desire to have the features of Christ. Age lays bare, but fidelity envelops. The body bends like a reed, but the heart remains steadfast as a rock. When with age, the bright and ephemeral colors fade, life becomes a transparency of God with a thousand reflections. And the bride sings the sweetest of praises: *"You are humility, You are patience, You are quiet. You are our hope, You are all our sweetness."* (FF 261)

In old age, the Spirit does not take back the talents given for the mission. It transfigures them. The Franciscan loves, forgives, and gives herself with a freshness of love that the physical cannot convey. At every dawn, she is already at the outposts of evangelization and offers to the Almighty the cost of pruning, to support those who, far away, announce the Kingdom by plowing hard clods and sowing, perhaps without ever seeing the ears of corn ripen. And in the evening, removing her sandals, she approaches the Bush to filter every human pain into the heart of Jesus and repeat to Him the humble words of His Mother at Cana: *"They have no wine."* Amidst the general dismay, the elderly sister is the sure rock, the narration of time passed and sanctified.

But then the pendulum slows its pace and Sister Death knocks. With an artist's brushstroke, God



signs his masterpiece, and instantly the bride is bathed in torrents of dazzling light. For her, it is already Heaven. She runs breathlessly, with

the agility of a gazelle, towards the Virgin Mother who is advancing, carrying in her arms the wedding dress she embroidered for her little sister, burdened with years, become poor like Love.



Images provided by the Author

LIVING FRANCISCAN CHARITY

Sister Carol Juckem

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity

Manitowoc, WI, USA

Original language: English



My first thoughts are on how Saint Francis of Assisi lived charity. First is the leper encounter. The one thing St. Francis dreaded was meeting lepers. They were not only a symbol of what is ugly and disgusting, but a threat to his very wellbeing. Second is creation and his concern for all creatures, especially those mistreated. Third are those who were at odds with each other and needed to forgive. Finally, there were his own brothers in need of encouragement and understanding.

The lepers I have met in my life range from homeless persons, those with strange quirks and those unkempt. How have I kissed my lepers as Saint Francis did His? Sometimes I have not done very well: the woman who held out her hand for a donation as I walked from the courthouse in Milwaukee, WI to the car. I had some money, sure, but I was very uneasy to share it with her. I just said, “No, thank you.” As I walked on, I said to myself, “What kind of response was that?” But I excused myself, saying, “Well, at least I was polite.” People with quirks I can endure pretty well, in fact some have become my friends. Her quirk was a hobble and a nervous smack of her lips. We could greet each other with sincere gladness every time we met. The man, who was our neighbor when I was growing up, combed his hair with his fingers and wore the same overalls for weeks, but we shared a fishing shanty together. We had a wonderful conversation on how to catch Sturgeon. That leper I could embrace.

Though I am not fond of bats or mice I have found them to be amazing creatures as I learned about them on the Nature Channel. All God’s creation carries the touch of the Creator in their presence. No wonder Saint Francis treated them with such care and respect. So I too have learned to respect bats and mice, even if from a distance.

People at odds with each other, needing reconciliation, hits closest to my heart. Forgiveness is so important to me! I have learned that lack of forgiveness clogs the channels of God's grace, as well as my connection to the people in my life. Forgiveness is hard! Unless I connect that need to forgive to the Power of Jesus, it is impossible to forgive most of the time. When I forgive in my heart through His Name and His Power, miracles happen – healing reconciliation happens.

Our own Sisters and Brothers need encouragement. I have a Sister who is brilliant, very wise. Yet she needs my presence, my listening ear, my sharing of the little I have. In this way we are both enriched in sharing our life in the Lord Jesus.

Saint Francis and each of us Franciscans have a mission to live charity. Let us follow the Model of our life, Jesus, and Saint Francis who walked in His footprints.



Photo IFC-TOR Archive

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, A MAN IN LOVE

Sister Elise Saggau

OSF, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls

Minnesota, USA

Original language: English



The early biographies of Francis of Assisi portray him in his young years as a selfish and thoughtless fellow. As the first-born son of a wealthy merchant, he grew up believing that the sun rose and set on him. This is not a recipe for the formation of good character. However, Francis was not only high spirited but generous. He shared the wealth, both of his personality and of his father’s resources, without counting the cost. He was naturally ebullient. Even as a teen-aged prisoner of war in Perugia, he reportedly tried to lift up the spirits of fellow-prisoners by his positivity, though some considered him a bit “out of his mind” (2C1:4).

However, a dramatic turning point occurred after his imprisonment. Feeling despondent, he was praying one day before an ancient crucifix in the dilapidated chapel of St. Damiano. Suddenly the figure on the cross spoke to him and bade him repair the church. Was this the first time anyone ever asked him to do some work? He was so deeply moved that he arose and immediately began to gather stones for the job. He did this, not because he felt afraid of that mysterious voice, but because the sound of it pierced his heart. He suddenly cared in a whole new way—not as the shallow youth he had been, but as the man he was becoming—suddenly fallen deeply in love.

From that day forward, Francis saw himself and his world differently. Everything shone with an inner light and spoke of a great and benevolent power unfailingly at work. Francis had a long way to go, but now he was set upon that way. It would make him one of the greatest lovers the world has ever seen. Focused on the divine reality, Francis was constantly aware that all was given out of love, that he himself was a channel of that burning love—not only to other human beings, but to all his fellow creatures. Earth, air, fire, and water, the heavenly bodies, the creatures of the earth were all there to be loved as God loved them.

This was Francis’s mission; this was the gospel he unceasingly proclaimed to a world that had grown cold, tired, and unloving. This was the flame he ignited in the Church and in the world so that there might be a new birth of zeal for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The story of Francis is a love story, just as the story of Jesus Christ is a love story. It is the kind of love that “catches” as fire “catches.” It caught on rapidly in Francis’s day and spread first throughout Italy. It was quickly transported to other countries and, in time, to the whole world. It caught on because it was nothing other than the message of the Gospel, the message of love. “God so loved the world that God sent the Son.” God so loved the world that God sent Francis. God so loves the world that God also sends us.



Photo IFC-TOR Archive

***"I HAVE DONE WHAT I COULD;
MAY CHRIST TEACH YOU WHAT YOU MUST DO"
(LM 14, 3.4)***

Sr. Maria Helene Zimmer

Franciscan Sisters of Mercy

Luxembourg

Original language: German



With these words, spoken by Francis shortly before his death, something crucial is said on the 800th anniversary of the saint's death. I see in them the key to his life, the eventful story of a lover of Christ and of humanity. What freedom, sovereignty and inner letting go these words express! Francis does not bind people to himself, but points them to Christ. He wants nothing more than to "live according to the form of the Holy Gospel" (Test 14f). This also applies timelessly to my personal life – and to the world and its order.

The more I realize my own limitations – not least those of ageing – the more I feel drawn to the human Saint Francis of Assisi and the breath with which he lives out his love for his neighbour from his deep connection to God and his brotherly love for all creatures. He overcomes his disgust and dares to embrace the leper instead of giving him alms from a distance. The marginalized become his brothers and sisters, whom he meets on equal terms. He looks at them instead of looking away.

Francis teaches me to look people in the eyes. It starts with small gestures in the shopping centre, where I thank the cashier for her friendly service. Almost every time, she lifts her head and smiles at me. 'What's the big deal?' some may think. Well, it's an act of appreciation. It's not enough to praise God's creation in the Canticle of the Sun. Praise must be put into action, e.g. in my encounter with my-sister, who tells me the same thing for the hundredth time. It is often a challenge for me to endure the situation, to stay and not run away. Sometimes I think of the words of St Francis that touch me: "There should be no brother... who has seen your eyes and then has to leave you without your mercy" (Min 9).

The comforting thing is that I can practise this attitude again and again and Francis encourages me in it. Shortly before his death, he urged his brothers: 'Let us begin!' (LM 14, 1.3; 1C 103, 6). This has become a guide for my life and a corrective for my thoughts, my actions, and my encounters with people. It makes me happy that I can still learn and that I don't have to be 'finished' yet. Start afresh, I hear the saint say, and give others the chance to do the same. After many viable and difficult stretches of my life in the service of others, the chance of a new beginning has become one of my driving forces for charity.

Hope and comfort are what people need most of all, and that is what they can expect from us Franciscan women and men. Together with many sisters and brothers, I want to continue to stand up for this, because St Francis of Assisi encourages me today, eight centuries after his death, with his legacy: "I have done what I could; what is yours, may Christ teach you".



Photo IFC-TOR Archive

EMBRACING THE SAINT OF ASSISI, 800 YEARS OF CHARITY AND PEACE

Sister Pascaline Dubam

Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis (TSSF)

Cameroon

Original language: English



As we celebrate the 8th centenary of St. Francis of Assisi's passing, we are reminded of his enduring legacy of love, compassion, and peace. This remarkable saint, known as the "Poverello" or "Poor Man of Assisi," left an indelible mark on the Church and the world.

St. Francis' life was a testament to his unwavering commitment to serving the poor, caring for creation, and promoting peace. His famous greeting, "May the Lord give you peace," encapsulates his vision of a harmonious world, where all creatures coexist in love and respect¹

This 8th centenary celebration, from January 2026 to January 2027 is a year of grace for us brothers and sisters of the Franciscan family and the whole church as it gives us time to reflect on key themes dear to our Seraphic Father like mercy and compassion, faithful love for the Church, and fraternal life. This will certainly go a long way to renew our commitment to the Franciscan ideal as we face today's challenges of climate change, horrible wars and distance that keeps getting wider between the rich and the poor. The Jubilee Year offers opportunities for spiritual renewal, pilgrimage, and service. St. Francis' encounter with the poor and the crucified Christ inspires us to serve the marginalized. His devotion to the Church and the Eucharist reminds us of the importance of unity and faith.

St. Francis' emphasis on living simply and caring for one another challenges us to reevaluate our relationships. In Cameroon, the Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis together with their brothers and sisters sharing this Franciscan heritage are providing healthcare, education, and social services to vulnerable communities.

¹ Pope Francis, *Francis of Assisi: A Model of Charity*.

As we commemorate St. Francis' life and legacy, challenged by the reality of our world, we feel called to reflect on his message of love, simplicity, and peace. May his example inspire us to become peacemakers and servants of the poor, and continue to draw strength from his intercession.

St. Francis' love for creation is particularly relevant today. His Canticle of the Creatures reminds us of our responsibility to care for the Earth and its resources. As we celebrate his eight centenary, our prayer is that more people will be committed to promoting sustainability and environmental stewardship. The Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis in Cameroon are a shining example of his enduring legacy. Their dedication to serving the poor, caring for creation, and promoting peace is a testament to St. Francis' ongoing influence.

As Pope Francis noted, "Francis of Assisi shows us the way to 'misericordia,' the art of loving tenderly, the love that touches the heart and leads to a life of service"² May we be inspired by St. Francis strive to live out his message of love and compassion in our time.

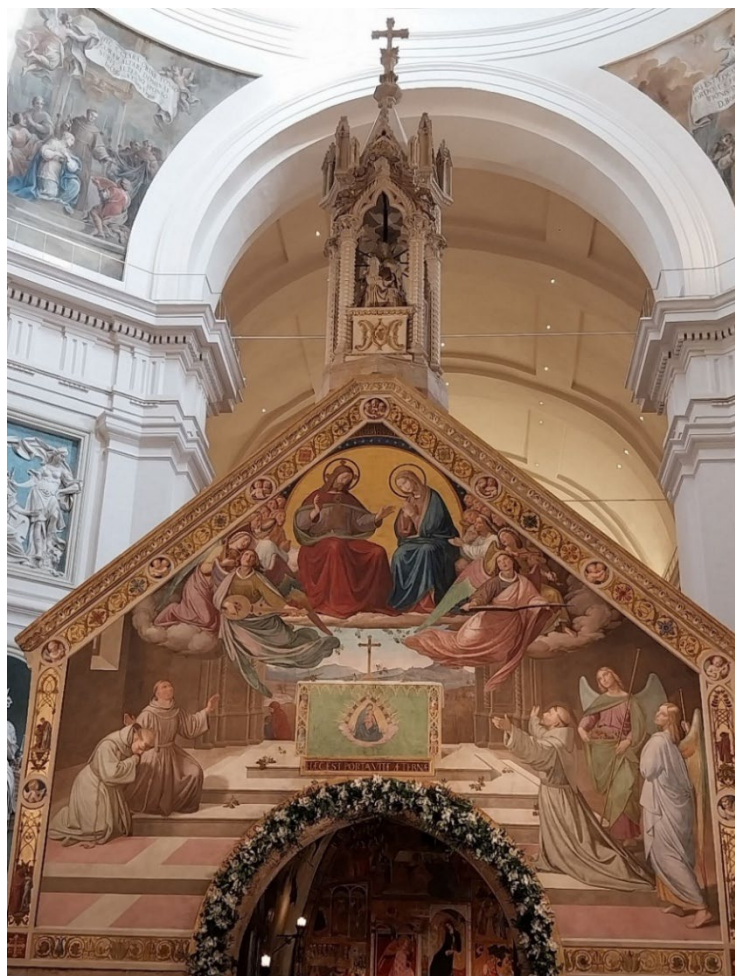


Photo IFC-TOR Archive

² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*.

LIVED CHARITY.

***Franciscan charity is lived in working for systemic change
and walking with our brothers and sisters***

Sister Karen Jean Zielinski

*OSF, Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania
Congregation of our Lady of Lourdes
Ohio, USA*



Original language: English

I was excited for the lecture to begin. A priest-theologian, a well-published author, would speak on Catholic Social Services (CSS). He gave a history of the faith-based, non-profit organization, often operating within local Catholic dioceses since 1945, that provides a wide range of social services to individuals and families in need, regardless of their faith. Their mission centers on honoring human dignity, reducing poverty, and assisting the vulnerable through programs like senior care, food pantries, adoption services, and counseling.

The lecture took place during a tumultuous time of mass deportations in the United States, and the growing war between the Soviet Union and Ukraine. The speaker mentioned that he was aware that the Sisters of St. Francis of Sylvania, Ohio, my congregation, was involved in service with some refugees, and asked if anyone could comment on their service. I raised my hand and began.

My Franciscan Sisters chose to sponsor refugees and started a Refugee Action Committee (RAC). They hosted two families from Afghanistan, and two from Ukraine. For the first year, families lived in a Welcome House.

As they identified the needs of the families, a sister designed an RAC database of sisters, associates, volunteers, friends and community members who were experts in a variety of areas. Some needs included secured housing, legal services, transportation, (shopping, medical appointments, arranged schooling). The biggest challenges were transportation and learning English. Volunteers drove families to school, medical appointments, or out-of-state consulates and bureaus of social services to connect with a social worker.

The RAC hosted collaborative meetings with local churches and individuals who also hosted refugee families. They learned and worked with their experiences which offered support and a good exchange of ideas. The meetings offered hope and support.

Other audience members shared practical experiences. One person commented that the services offered were good, but there was a greater need for doing something more fundamental-systemic change. Working to change inhumane systems and unjust statutes that did not help our poor and marginalized brothers and sisters.

I agreed and felt overwhelmed and a bit hopeless about the huge challenge of this kind of ministry. We were truly helping people who were overwhelmed, scared for their safety and family. They lost their country, careers, homes. They faced alienation by being a foreigner, and had another challenge: limited communication because of the language barrier. They lived with uncertainty.

I imagined Francis with volunteers accompanying our families to a nearby school to register them for classes. He met with family members taking a walk on our Motherhouse grounds and comforted them.

Francis was pleased that those without a home, job, or way to celebrate their culture or family traditions were loved and acknowledged. He was right there with them. Both working to change immigration policies and welcoming our friends in need are Franciscan ministries at this tumultuous time.

The peace prayer was present in this ministry-and so many of Francis' words and stories.



Photo IFC-TOR Archive

***SAINT FRANCIS SEES THE LOVE OF THE LORD IN CREATION
PERFECT JOY***

Donatella Tocco

*Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters Adorers
Italy*

Original language: Italian



When the Creator, out of Divine Love, wanted to give life to the Universe,
His Word promptly ran to sketch,
of Nature, the great and immeasurable Plan.
The harmonious notes spread through the primordial air,
and everything took on a melodious form, according to the Architect's desire.
Everything that came from the unfailing mouth of Wisdom,
and every sigh, and every heartbeat, and every breath was good.
And man was even better than any work that came from Love,
which hovered over the waters and filled the Celestial Garden.
Until the ancient Serpent, jealous and malignant, wanted to break
that primordial harmony, and sin burst in, with evil intent,
to deface every beauty and work in the Divine Garden.
Only those with pure hearts and clear eyes can glimpse,
even if veiled by the brutalizing original sin,
the beauty and majesty of the sacred initial Plan.

Thus the “Little Poor”, silent and prayerful, finally becoming prayer,
captured the true and intrinsic aspect of everything.
Even of Death, whom he called Sister, he considered himself a friend,
of Brother Sun, of Sister Moon, of the starry sky,
of the fields, of the flowers, of the plants, of the streams, of the wind, and finally
of every living being, he understood the primitive and inestimable meaning.
He preached to the birds, tamed the wolf, drew gentle souls to God...
He did not consider himself worthy of dying with anything
other than naked, on the bare earth,
making himself nothing before the Immense, alone,
so he could offer all his nothingness to God.



Image provided by the Author



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