



MAKE A DWELLING

November, 2017



Peace and all good!

Make a dwelling...

Within themselves, let them always make a dwelling place and home for the one who is Lord God almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, so that, with undivided hearts, they may increase in universal love by continually turning to God and to neighbor. TOR Rule 8

Make a dwelling...

We come together, sisters and brothers, to make a dwelling.
What is this dwelling we make?

We hear in the Gospel of John:

...the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us... John 1.14

These words, speaking of the Incarnation, God-with-us, filled Francis with joy and praise and they inspire us as we make a dwelling for God in our time.

What is that dwelling?

In English, the word “dwelling” has gone through a long and complicated passage to arrive at today’s meaning:

Originally, “dwelling” contained a sense of attraction, even seduction:

We could ask ourselves --

What kind of dwelling do we make that will attract God, that will seduce the Spirit to abide within? That will welcome all in hospitality?

Later there was more of a sense of hindrance or delay:

And our question would be --

How do we make a dwelling that will delay, or hinder, our readiness to move on when we experience the indwelling of God within? A dwelling that pauses to be with the Spirit within my brother or sister?

Francis knew this in his life; Bonaventura tells us of Francis:

He usually neglected no visitation of the Spirit. Whenever it was offered, he would follow it; and for as long as the Lord granted, he enjoyed the sweetness offered. When he was occupied with travel and felt the breathing of the divine Spirit, while his companions went on ahead, he would stop in his tracks, as he turned the inspiration into something fruitful. He did not receive grace in vain. Major Legend, 10

Even later, “dwelling” had a sense of lingering.

With that, we ask ourselves --

What kind of dwelling do we make where God will linger, will be an indwelling presence?

Where I linger with God, with my brothers and sisters in the presence of the Holy?

Today, to make dwelling is synonymous with making a home, a home into which we invite all our brothers and sisters in the common family of God where God has pitched his tent, made a dwelling among us. This comes with a promise:

How happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things, and persevere in doing them because “the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them” and God will make his home and “dwelling place with them.” Second Letter to the Faithful 1



Sr. Deborah Lockwood, IFC-TOR President

During these days, as we deepen in our charism as brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular of S. Francis, we welcome Sr. Ramona Miller who will give us reflections on the four values of the Third Order Rule.

Sister Ramona Miller has a wide experience in pastoral ministry in parishes and retreat centers. For twenty-five years, she was a staff member of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs leading pilgrimages to Assisi. Sister Ramona served as the president of the National Franciscan Federation from 2009 – 2012 and continues to offer presentations on contemporary aspects of Franciscan spirituality including virtual pilgrimages to Assisi. She is a graduate of Seattle University (Master’s in Ministry) and the Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University (Master’s in Franciscan Studies). In addition, she is the author of *In the Footsteps of Saint Clare, Sui passi di Santa Chiara*, and co-author of *Praying with Clare of Assisi*.

Each reflection on the Franciscan values will be followed by a panel of three sisters or brothers telling the reality of the value in their experience, in the context of their lives in different countries and cultures where they live and minister.

To help us manage our Franciscan spontaneity and joy, Sr. Maria Elena Martinez will use her creative art of facilitation, keeping us on track and on time! S. Maria Elena has much international experience in facilitation of chapters, especially with congregations in Central and South America which have provinces or sisters ministering in the United States.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Col. 3:16

This will be our time together as we seek to understand more deeply this dwelling we are called to make and to be – a dwelling that attracts the Spirit, a dwelling that hinders distraction, a dwelling that helps us to linger in all creation, a dwelling that becomes an indwelling presence of God.

Opening address
Sr. Deborah Lockwood
President IFC-TOR



EVANGELICAL CONVERSION

Sr. Ramona Miller, OSF

Historical origin of the four values

The Spirit of God has been very active with Franciscans during the renewal years since the closing of the Second Vatican Council. Today, we gather together for our international conference seeking a richness of renewal that will animate us for our leadership in our congregations. In the spirit of the conciliar document, *Perfectae Caritas*, the renewal of the Religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the Institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.¹ It is necessary that we leave our ordinary tasks occasionally to reflect on our charism in order to assess how we are doing personally and collectively. Without such opportunities we might become atrophied and comfortable in maintaining the status quo. Looking back in history, we are grateful for the inspired leadership of all Franciscan superiors of the various male and female congregations who collaborated in the 1970s to arrive at the designated Working Group who wrote the 1982 *Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*. In the first chapter, article two, we read that we want to live “this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, poverty, and of humility.”

The Working Group had spent hours in prayer, study, and dialog to find the language that conveyed our rootedness in the tradition of the penitential movement. It was recognized that The First Letter to the Faithful was the form of life that Francis wrote for the penitents which inspired them to live a renewed response to the Gospel.² Our TOR brother, Raphael Pazzelli, did the research identifying the title of the letter to the faithful found in Codex 225 in Volterra. It reads: “These are the words of life and salvation, concerning those who do penance.”³ Our Third Order charism springs from the form of life that Francis provided for “those who do penance.” The penance that we desire to live is not any code of mortifications or negative ascetical practices, but rather a joyful embrace of daily living the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Penance is biblical *metanoia*, evangelical conversion. This is our hallmark.⁴



Sr. Ramona Miller, speaker

Evangelical

First, let's consider the adjective, evangelical. The term comes from the Greek word *euangelion*, meaning “the good news” or the “gospel.” Franciscan evangelical life is to live the Gospel in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare, the founders of the Franciscan movement. Francis' conversion did not begin with reading the Gospels. Rather, he had impactful encounters with Christ (examples: Christ speaking to him from the San Damiano cross, and the Spirit leading him to embrace a leper). Francis' became attuned to listening to the Word of God; his religious imagination became sensitized to the spoken Word. So much so, that on a specific day in February 1208 while attending Mass in the Portiuncula chapel, Francis, while listening to the missionary discourse of Jesus sending out his disciples, took the words as a personal mandate.

¹ *Perfectae Caritas*, 2

² See the dissertation by Robert M. Stewart OFM, *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1990), 49-53.

³ Raphael Pazzelli TOR, “The title of the ‘Recensio Prior of the Letter to the Faithful’: Clarification regarding Codex 225,” Trans. Nancy Celaschi OSF, *Analecta TOR* XIX, 142 (1987), 241-248.

⁴ Margaret Carney OSF, “In Nomine Domini!,” *The Cord*, 57.4 (2007), 374.

Thereafter, Francis went forth preaching the Good News, taking nothing for his journey—a literal interpretation of the Gospel. Clare’s conversion stories are less dramatic, but not less important for her example of living the evangelical life. She insisted in living poverty to imitate the poor Christ. The Scripture images and words in Clare’s letters to Agnes convey the Gospel foundation for her lifestyle.

Similar to Francis’ experience, the written Word of God might not be the initial experience that awakens us to the presence of God in our lives, but Scripture becomes the ongoing meeting place for Franciscans and God. Hearing the Word proclaimed, in a respectful and meaningful manner, is an opportunity to hear the voice of God. Privately reading Scripture in the particular manner of *lectio divina* allows us “to be transformed by the Spirit.”⁵ We become enlightened and changed so that we embody the Gospel, we become the Gospel for others. This reminds me of the description of Francis becoming prayer from the Second Life by Celano.

Francis would often ruminate inwardly with unmoving lips, and, drawing outward things inward, he raised his spirit to the heights. Thus he would direct all his attention and affection toward the one thing he asked of the Lord,⁶ not so much praying as becoming totally prayer.⁷

We penitents of the twenty-first century may be the only Gospel some persons know. How are we interiorizing the Gospel in order to have it influence us? As we dialog with each other during this conference, let us share the best practices we have in our congregations for deepening our understanding of Scripture. What are the means for educating incoming members to know Scripture? What biblical sources and programs aid our ongoing formation? What is the experience we have of good preachers? Do we have access to retreat presenters who provide biblical foundation for our lives? We can assist each other in identifying the ways we have for our ongoing conversion to become the Gospel.

In chapter three of *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis exhorted preachers to prepare by a prolonged time of study, prayer, reflection and pastoral creativity.⁸ If we substitute the word “preacher” in this exhortation with our own names, might we develop a new outlook on the importance of our own evangelical lives? “It is good for us to renew our fervor each day.”⁹

Elements of Conversion

Daily, each of us strive to incarnate in our local situations the same spirit of prayer, poverty and humility that characterized the early Franciscans who were known for their happiness and their generosity; the lifestyle of evangelical conversion. Franciscan penitents in the 13th century changed their behavior from following societal norms for a prosperous life to living simply for the purpose of serving the poor. They were familiar with Francis’ own conversion story recorded in his *Testament*:

“when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy to them*. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body.”

In Francis’ account we find three elements of conversion: **1) the initiative of God, 2) a change of outward behavior, and 3) an interior transformation.**¹⁰

First, **the initiative of God**: “the Lord led me,” introduces the mystery and the grace of the personal call from God. The first apostles heard Jesus’ voice: “Come, follow me.” The young Francis did not hear the voice explicitly say “Come, follow me,” but there was a call or some

⁵ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, #152.

⁶ See Ps 27:4 “the one thing” is to dwell in the house of the Lord.

⁷ 2 Cel 95

⁸ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, #145.

⁹ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*, #149.

¹⁰ Margaret Carney OSF, “Fundamental Value: Conversion,” *History of the third Order Regular Rule*. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008), 248.

motivating force that directed him who abhorred lepers to be moved to touch a leper. God's initiative in Francis birthed a movement that we continue to manifest in our lives. The call that each of us experienced is a guiding light for us to live the Franciscan tradition. Throughout history, God's initiative has raised up persons to respond to specific situations. We have the utmost respect for our founders and foundresses whose response to God's inspiration acted in such a manner that our religious congregations came into being.

The second element of conversion is an **outward change of behavior**. The change of behavior of Francis—from avoiding lepers to embracing and caring for lepers—happened by the grace of God. These outward behaviors demonstrate the interior response to God's call. In the initial stages of our formation and preparation for vows there are obvious changes such as renouncing property ownership, and moving into a celibate community. What happens after profession of vows? How do we keep our commitment to live daily, evangelical conversion grounded in the initial conversion experience? When we do so, there might not seem to us to have significant changes happening in our behavior, but all outward behavior flows from our interior. Our personal transformation will be observable by others even when we are not conscious of the changes. Through the years, the process of dying to our ego so that we “live, now, not I, but Christ lives in me” requires a diligence in continuous formation of conscience.

The third element, an **interior transformation**, designates the conversion. Francis testified, “what had seemed bitter was turned into sweetness of soul and body.” Can we recall in our lives such interior changes? Perhaps there was a time when we were paralyzed with fear – like anxiety about a specific assignment which turned out later to be a joyful chapter of our life. Personally, I was terrified of the assignment to become a staff person for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. The conversion to trust in God and develop inter-dependency with other staff persons transformed me to enjoy this ministry. For the challenges of needing interior transformation when dealing with difficult relationships, Francis' letter to the minister offers advice. Francis told the minister who was complaining about one of the friars that he was supposed to accept the person as he was! Specifically, Francis wrote, “love them...and do not wish that they be better Christians. And let this be more than a hermitage for you.”¹¹ How many times I have wanted to seek out solitude in a hermitage when Francis' letter would remind me that the necessary conversion was to love the person with whom I was having difficulty, and not to avoid the situations. And the interior transformation that is felt? A sweetness, an inner peace, that generates new recognition of the Spirit of God at work within us.

Sources for God's Initiative

There are many sources for God's initiative intervening in our lives to bring about conversion. By praying the “Prayer Before the Crucifix” asking God to “enlighten the darkness of my heart,” we are disposing ourselves to be available for God's initiative. One of the ways that God speaks to us is through Pope Francis, who has provided much invitation for our personal and communal transformation since becoming Christ's vicar in March of 2013. On Easter Sunday this year, in the “Urbi et Orbi” address, Pope Francis addressed many situations of suffering in the world through a prayer to the Risen Christ. This prayer could provide us with an examen of consciousness about our response to the global family.

Conclusion

There are challenging situations in society that require new generous responses. Our ongoing evangelical conversion prepares us to respond with innovative ministry. We do not undertake such actions to impress others, but rather as selfless ministry done in the name of Jesus Christ. The stories of each of our congregations reflect God's desire for people in many different cultures and countries around the globe to have the witness of “those who do penance.” We are assembled here from diverse cultures with unique communal histories, and we have in

¹¹ LtMin 2-8

common a public profession to live the *Rule of the Third Order Regular*. As we dialog with each other during this conference, let us listen for the various ways that characterize us as Franciscan penitents who live evangelical conversion!

This presentation was followed by a reflection of three responders:

- **Sister Silma Maria Araujo (Brazil)** spoke of how her congregation finds its inspiration in the life of Francis and Clare, which is reflected in the Rule and Life, noting that her congregation has been greatly helped by the IFC educational materials. Then too each congregation has received



Sr. Silma M. Araujo Sr. Monica Weedon Sr. Magdalena Schmitz

a particular charism from its founder/foundress. Thirdly, each one must incarnate the Gospel in his/her own life and in the life of the congregation. All three elements must be operative.

The challenges are: *How can we keep this inspiration alive? How do we find the energies to keep responding?*

- **Sister Monica Weedon (England)** spoke from her experience in the UK and in mission lands. She believes that we are called to trust that there is a call to trust that the Spirit has been active in religious life on a parallel journey at the individual and congregational level. She spoke of fragility as a place of encounter, of embracing the leper. As a congregation, the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood are called to embrace the reality of their vulnerability, holding the dying and birthing in tension. There is great outward change -- in numbers, in externals and inward change, too, with the subsequent lessening of energy and the ability to do. They seek to accept the lack of control in peace. They see their mission as primarily the gift of presence – to one another, to others and to creation. The younger sisters are anxious about the future and mourn the loss of their wisdom figures. All are being called to an interior transformation, for it is only in vulnerability and powerlessness that we encounter Christ. She concluded by mentioning that the congregation recently surveyed the sisters, asking them to name the vulnerabilities, gifts and promises of the congregation; the gifts and promises named far outnumbered the vulnerabilities.
- **Sister Magdalena Schmitz (Germany/Rome)** said that she was touched by the expression “joyfully embracing the dialing living of the Gospel which, to her, is an inherent reference to an experience of Christ. This is, first of all, God’s initiative, one to which we respond. She noted that religious live on the margins of society in a secularized world; this marginal experience helps us to reach out to others, the “lepers” of our day. In our communities in Europe we are declining in number, we are different externally, seeing our vulnerability. We are creating new ministries for our elderly sisters, turning our convents into a combination of spirituality centers and places for the elderly. As Francis prepared for death, he wrote a testament, which had a life-giving impact. In Holland our sisters are speaking about our Franciscan mission about death, handing on a life-giving spiritual testament. This experience also brings about an inner change. Gratefully, we are discovering new gifts – in ourselves and in our communities. We prefer to concentrate on what we have received, and not lament what we have lost.

PRAYER

Sr. Ramona Miller, OSF

This morning, feeling fearful about giving a presentation on prayer to major religious superiors, I remembered a novitiate experience, which gives me confidence to proceed.

Young, and intimidated by other novices who seemed so much more talented than I was, I was feeling afraid that I could not measure up to expectations of what it meant to be a good Sister. So, I went to confession to confess my insecurity and that I did not know what to do about making vows. I was told to consider the image of God as a gardener who had lawn filled with leaves to rake up. It did not matter to God that the rake He used was missing some of the tines, because nothing is impossible for God. I was to consider myself like that broken rake missing some of its tines. If God chose me as an instrument of God, all would work out fine. So, with confidence in God, I'll begin this presentation!

Living our evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer requires prayer as the nurturing element, the necessary ingredient that provides the momentum for daily transformation into the likeness of Christ. Within ourselves we make a "dwelling place and home for the one who is Lord God almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit," so that with undivided hearts we may increase in universal love. Re-reading the prologue to our Rule--the words of Saint Francis to those who do penance--we see that Francis quoted from the Gospel of John¹² to remind us that we who persevere in our penitential life prepare for God to make His home and dwelling place within us.

Pregnant Virgin My reflection intends to evoke consideration for us as leaders (ministers) of Third Order Regular men and women, to teach by word and example that prayer makes a dwelling place for God with us. Becoming aware of God's love for us and God's will for us requires daily attentiveness to the Beloved. Our prayer is the rendezvous with the Beloved whereby we humbly dispose ourselves to become the dwelling place for God.

St. Francis used the image of the intimacy of motherhood to describe carrying God within us. He exhorted the penitents, saying "We are mothers when we bear Him in our hearts and bodies." It was Jesus who gave us the imagery of being His mother: a crowd had gathered to hear Jesus when someone whispered to Him that His mother was standing outside and wanted to speak with Him. He asks "Who is my mother? And my brothers?" Then Jesus gestures to all present saying, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:50).

Saint Clare in her third letter to Agnes of Prague shares her thoughts about being the mother of Our Lord. She wrote "only a faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne." She went on to describe that the faithful soul [Agnes] could be like Mary following in her footprints of poverty and humility and thereby she could carry Christ spiritually in her chaste and virginal body.

Gaze Clare used three verbs for the inner dynamic of prayer: **gaze, consider, contemplate** as found in her Second Letter to Agnes, 20. Prayer begins with the first of the three verbs, gazing. The question I raise for us is this: "How might these three verbs- gaze, consider and contemplate-be operative in our communal prayer?"

First of all, the word "gaze" means to look at intently and steadily using the physical sense of sight. It also can mean a steady wonder or expectancy, so I will use the word "gaze" to expand beyond sight and say that gazing **involves all five senses**, perceiving our surroundings with an expectancy of God's presence. The entire universe speaks to us of our Creator whose infinite designs for creatures and environment provide us with endless inspirations of gratitude for the beauty, the wonder, the magnificence of God. All five of our physical senses—sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touch—are entrees to interior prayer as they bring to us the revelation of God in our daily environment.

¹² John 14:23

We Franciscans are so conditioned to the beauty of creation as a meeting place with God that we naturally spend time out of doors noticing the flowers, the sky, the gardens, etc. Even these days at the conference we are experiencing new sensations that impact our consciousness. We walk outside and see many colors, we feel the breezes of air on our skin, we smell the aromas in the air from wood fires and from blossoming plants. We hear bells ringing, foreign languages spoken... Beverages and food delight our taste buds. This manner of coming to know and love our God is incarnational spirituality - the bodily senses lead us to the Divine.

How are the senses involved in our communal prayer? When we focus on the sense of **hearing**, perhaps the first thing that comes to mind is music. Our minds and hearts are lifted up to pray through song. Very important is the proclamation of Scripture by good voices, persons trained for lecturing. And, we need to provide hearing aids for those who need it. Fragrant **smells** can stimulate prayerful sensations awakening a realization of the transcendence of God. This is why we use incense, or fragrant flowers in the chapel. And think about what we focus our **eyes** on; the visual in our environment makes a difference for our disposition in prayer. Beautiful displays of sacred art and flowers, or the San Damiano cross, or the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament, are a few examples of setting an environment for prayer. Jesus reminded us of the importance of **taste**: “Eat of my body and drink of my blood.” The satisfaction of the external taste buds prepares us for the hidden sweetness of God. Clare instructed Agnes in her third letter that through prayer “you too may feel what friends feel in tasting the hidden sweetness that from the beginning, God Himself has reserved for His lovers.” And the sense of **touch**? The felt sense of a shared sign of peace expresses the grace of the sense of touch. Touch can also include bodily movement such as dance. Dance as a prayer form has developed in post-conciliar time as we appropriated the teaching from the *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy*. **I quote:**

“the Church has no wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not implicate the faith or the good of the whole community; rather does she respect and foster the genius and talents of the various races and peoples... Sometimes in fact she admits such things into the liturgy itself, so long as they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit.¹³

Our private and communal prayer begins with the use of the external senses. However, some of us are so overloaded with external sensations that we choose absolute silence and bare simplicity for private prayer. In the 1400s, Blessed Angelina of Montegiove lived at St. Anna’s monastery in Foligno. She became the first minister general of a congregation of Third Order Women Religious. She understood the need for solitude for personal, private contemplative prayer and had the monastery constructed so each Sister would have a private cell; the cells were very tiny—about 3’ x 5.’ This personal space divested of external symbols was conducive for deepening contemplative prayer. That example raises the question, “What space do we provide in our congregations for those seeking more solitude, especially the introverted members who need more time in quiet?” Perhaps congregational ministers can act similarly to



Sr. Maria Elena Martinez, OSF, Facilitator

¹³ *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (4 December 1963), #37.

Blessed Angelina and assess the availability of private silent space and time for their members, and for ourselves. Do we value solitude for our own practices of private prayer?

The second verb - Consider

The prayer activity of **consider** means to think about in order to understand. Gazing is the manner in which we take into our interior self the images, the messages, the revelations of God. Then, in the interior faculties of memory, intellect and will,¹⁴ we enter into the cognitive activity known as meditative prayer, in which we **consider** many things. A few examples of how we “consider”:

- When we meditate on scenes from the Gospel, we might conclude with a resolution for the day. Inspiration for actions to pursue overcoming injustices flows from meditative activity.
- At some times in prayer, our memory puts forth thoughts and feelings that might move us to a litany of gratitude, or desires for repentance, intercessory prayer, or humble adoration.
- There are times during consideration that our feelings of sorrow, anger, or pain extend beyond our limits of reasoning and we plunge into lamentations. Such lamentations can bring us into deeper intimacy with and sharing in the suffering Christ. In such intimacy we hear Jesus say, “Yes, I am with you. Do not be afraid.” Does our communal prayer provide expressions of lamentation? Most of us would respond that through our intercessory prayer we reach out to suffering peoples
- There is consolation in reflecting on the Divine Presence with us in communal prayer. Trusting in the words of Jesus, (“where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst (Mt 18:20),” we are blessed that our gathering exists as a communal dwelling place for God.

The third verb, Contemplate

The Latin origin for the word **contemplate** comes from an expectant looking at space. When visiting the interior of the Pantheon in Rome, we can imagine the origin of the word “contemplate” as we look through the opening at the top of the dome to view the infinite sky. Clare, in the Fourth Letter to Agnes, uses the word contemplation to speak of experiencing the dwelling place of the Holy One within us by describing this as “resting in contemplation.” Contemplation uses no words while being attentive to the Presence of God. In such a nonverbal state, we are transformed like clay in the potter’s hand. Examples of “resting in contemplation” during communal prayer:

- Silent pauses within our Liturgy of the Hours for the proclaimed messages to be absorbed in our hearts
- allowing designated times At congregational gatherings, for sitting together in silence. Such quiet can transform a congregation from reactionary responses in conversations to sharing a more contemplative dialogue. This is a maturing process - to communally sit in silence and trust that the “Spirit of God is at work with us.” This state of absolute trust and receptivity to God allows the members of the congregation *to be overshadowed* by the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 1:35).

During times of “resting in contemplation”, we may sense that we are lost in the seeming darkness. This state of receptivity is the disposition for interior openness, e.g. for God to come, to dwell within.

Communally, moments of “resting in contemplation” will deepen our love and respect for each other. Jesus foretold the outcome: “by this will all know that you are my disciples, that you have love for one another (John 13:35).”

¹⁴ For further reading on the interior faculties, see Bonaventure, *The Soul’s Journey into God*, chapter three.

Conclusion

The three actions, Gaze, consider, and contemplate, lead to imitation of Christ. Keep in mind that prayer disposes us for God to come and make a dwelling place within us. Francis interpreted this as a type of pregnancy: “We are mothers when we bear Him in our hearts and bodies with divine love and with pure and sincere consciences; and we give birth to him through a holy life which should enlighten others because of our example.” Our prayer life overflows in our lifestyles and ministries. Thomas of Celano described the early penitents as those people of all ages and both sexes who hurried to behold the wonders which the Lord worked anew in the world through his servant, Francis. Through our conscious efforts for renewal of our communal prayer, may the world see in us the wonders of the Lord.

In summary, I ask “What are best practices that have rekindled the flame of love in our communal prayer?” Remembering how we have been renewed by praying the Liturgy of the Hours in our vernacular tongue, we might consider introducing various translations of the psalms to bring a newness to our prayer. Or, maybe it is time to put in a new microphone system. There are many aspects of examining our communal prayer. As we share our stories, we will reflect on how we might encourage our local communities to be renewed in the purpose of Franciscan prayer: “to give God ceaseless praise and thanksgiving for all He has done and does in creation and in our re-creation in Christ.

This presentation was followed by a reflection of three responders:

- **Sr. Ann Joseph, FCC, (India)**, said that the talk shed light for her on three areas of life and the reality of her congregation:

1) The need for silence and solitude. India is famous for its gurus. Of their 832 convents, 267 have Eucharistic adoration for a whole or half day. All sisters have an hour of adoration before Mass in the morning. The atmosphere of prayer and silence seems to be increasing new vocations.

- 2) Dispose ourselves to become god’s dwelling place. They are becoming more attentive to Scripture in formation. Some provinces have ashrams; they have more than 100 retreat centers and more than 200 sisters serving in such centers.
- 3) Prayer that flows into lifestyle and ministry. Sister Rani Maria was killed in 1995 because of her work with the poor. She will be beatified on 4 November 2017. Sister Rani Maria always spent hours in prayer before going to ministry.

- **Sister Rosa Ada Morelli (Brazil/Germany)** observed that Sister Ramona was speaking to the group, woman-to-women, and that she began and ended her talk with the figure of a woman. She also highlighted Bishop Domenico’s reminder that we are all called to be an *alter Christus*, and Francis’ exhortation to generate Christ. One might say, she added, that woman does everything, but does nothing... the same as prayer.



Sr. Ann Joseph, FCC Sr. Rosa Ada Morelli Sr. Květa Vinklárková



Installation of the new elected IFC-TOR council

Reflecting on the words, “Gaze..., consider... contemplate, she noted the involvement of the five senses and said that we need to have a sixth sense, the spirit of the Lord in us. She compared the Spirit to the “third eye”, which allows us to see beyond our two eyes. The previous day’s responders helped everyone to SEE their vulnerability, but also to see the life that is flourishing, blooming all

around us. We should begin our prayer from what we see around us. She noted that the previous day’s speakers helped us SEE our vulnerability. We begin our prayer from what we see around us. We see new beginnings, we feel that something newish is beginning. Let us become prayer.

- **Sister Květa Vinklárková (Czech Republic/Rome)**, noted that the previous assembly talked about going to the peripheries, noting that the first document of Vatican II was the document on the Liturgy, precisely because it is at the center of our life. She noted that contemporary society is too hasty, demanding instant information and taking no time for internalization. All this talk about gazing, but look at people on the public transit. Everyone is looking at their cell phone. Nobody is looking around them. Nobody hears the music, sees, the flower, watches the dance. Our members should be encouraged to take time for prayer and solitude, to pause during common prayer, to use repetitive prayer patterns, citing the psalms or Taizé mantras as an example. All in all, we must remember that Jesus is the center of our life. Let’s concentrate on our values and make a dwelling.



From left: Sr. Benigna Aoko, Sr. Dolores Caneo, Sr. Joanne Brazinski, Sr. Magdalena Schmitz, Sr. Deborah Lockwood, President, Bro. Franco Kannampuzha