



IFC-TOR General Assembly 2013

**ROOTED IN CHRIST, ON FIRE WITH THE SPIRIT,  
GO... TRANSFORM THE WORLD!**

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**TOR Religious Life**

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*“Let the brothers and sisters be mindful above all things  
that they must desire to have the Spirit of God at work in them.” (TOR Rule IX 32)*



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### INTRODUCTION

I have been asked to reflect on our theme “Rooted in Christ, on Fire with the Spirit, God Transform the World,” from the viewpoint of religious life within the TOR tradition. At the outset I want to say that we will do this from the place of humility. There is certainly something that is ours to do in the Third Order tradition, it is uniquely ours, and while we will explore this today we do so not from any arrogance but simply from a commitment to be who we are called to be by the Spirit and thus take our place in the family and in the church. I am delighted to be here to explore this topic together. So let us begin:

### THE PRESENTATION

In the mid 1800’s the English writer Charles Dickens wrote: *“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct the other way.”*

Had Dickens written his famous paragraph 1,850 years earlier in the time of Jesus, I am quite sure that passage would have found resonance in the heart of the people. That world was ruled by Rome. From England to Africa and from Syria to Spain, one in every four people on earth lived and died under Roman law. The Roman Empire in the first century CE mixed sophistication with brutality and could suddenly lurch from civilization, strength, and power to terror, tyranny and greed. Rome's [social order](#) was as finely graded as flour. The so called the Pax Romana, was not always peaceful and depended entirely upon one’s social position. Archelaus was the tetrarch of Galilee, and his rule aroused such hatred on the part of his subjects that they sent a delegation to Rome asking for his removal. Quirenius, the Roman legate, conducted a census for tax purposes which produced a rebellion. There are always tense moments when living under foreign rule. By the time of the crucifixion “a crafty and vain Herodian King is in charge of Galilee and a Roman



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prefect is controlling Jerusalem and Judea.” (Raymond Brown) While for the Romans it may have been the best of times, surely for many people it was the worst of times. It was the winter of despair. It was a season of darkness for poor small farmers with inadequate or barren land, serfs on large estates, and those in cities without the assistance of produce from their land. Into this situation stepped Jesus – the love of God incarnate. No wonder Jesus’ affection for those who were poor shown like a light in darkness.

Had Charles Dickens been around to speak his words in the time of Francis and Clare I am sure they would have captured the imagination of the people of the 1200’s as an apt descriptor of their world as well. At the time Francis was born in 1182 popes and emperors were battling for control, Jerusalem had fallen to the Moslems. By the time Francis was a teen Duke Conrad Moscaincervelo took over control of Assisi ruling from the Rocca Maggiore, He governed with the support of the emperor, depending on feudal lords, protecting them against the increasing uprisings of Assisi’s citizens. On Jan. 8, 1190 Pope Celestine III died and was succeeded by Innocent III. One of Innocent’s first actions was to seek the restoration of papal rule in Italy’s central area including Assisi. The pope persuaded Duke Conrad to change allegiance from the emperor to himself. However as soon as Conrad left Assisi to swear his new loyalty to Innocent, the people of Assisi laid siege to the Rocca and destroyed it. The next year civil war erupted. Assisi’s rising merchant class challenged the last vestiges of the feudal families and their interests. There are years of hostilities between Assisi and Perugia; raids, ambushes, destruction of crops and border skirmishes. For some it was the best of times and for many it was the worst. Into this world stepped Francis, Clare and the Franciscan family which came with its light and hope, its rebirth of ways to follow Jesus, and its talk of peace. It is no wonder Francis, Clare, and the early communities were experienced as a new springtime for those in the winter of despair Can we not say the same of our own time? Is it not the best of times and the worst of times? Are we not in need of a word of hope? Are we not longing for a time of light? Issues of the growing gap between rich and poor people and nations, global warming and population impacts, lack of access to water and food, terrorism and war, disease, can seem overwhelming. The church is struggling and people are longing for a Catholic springtime of renewal and hope. It is the age of wisdom, it is the age of



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foolishness, it is the epoch of belief, it is the epoch of disbelief, and into this world steps you and me – called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus in a new time, called to live Franciscan religious life in this new place in human history. Good as Francis was, good as Clare and Leo, and Bonaventure and Agnes and Scotus, and the long line of Franciscan who have gone before us were – they did not have to live religious life in our particular context. It has not been done before. Now it is up to us.

Because the challenges of our time can seem overwhelming, the danger is to go the easier place and fixate on our founding period rather than discern together how we might respond as radically to the needs of our time as our famous founders did in their time. As Benoit Fortin OFM Cap. has said: *“What good is it to go to great expense to have the founder or foundress canonized and his/her statue prominent in the garden if we do not update his/her prophetic courage and folly.”* Or as business leaders say: *“You can tell an organization is in trouble when it has more memories than dreams.”*

What should we do? Joe Chinnici OFM says *“Why not allow Francis to die and bury him once and for all so that our hearts can truly be open to the Spirit as was Francis? We casually quote Francis when he said, ‘I have done what is mine, may Christ teach you what is yours.’ One might think that Francis would advise his brothers and sisters, as he spoke his final words, to imitate him, to own nothing, be obedient, to observe the Rule. Instead Francis affirms each person's unique response to God. He did not say, ‘Imitate me’ but ‘be open to Christ.’ This is what we really need to understand and recapture in order to know how to live a Franciscan vision of life in our time.”* (Joseph Chinnici OFM *The Spirit of St. Francis Today. The Cord, Vol. 47 No 2 March-April 1997 p. 51-56*)

Another of our Franciscan brothers Roch Niemeir says: *“We need to let the myths of Francis die so that the Spirit that enlivened Francis and the first brothers and sisters can enliven us. What might happen if we do? Perhaps holiness of life in a new time will blossom. Perhaps there will be a more fully committed dedication to our life and a fidelity to all that the gospel asks. Perhaps we will know a wholeness and freedom of Spirit inside, for the sake of the church, for the well being of others, and for our own happiness. Perhaps we will discover the mystic in each of us!”* (Roch Niemeir OFM *In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare St. Anthony Messenger Press Cincinnati Ohio 2006, p.188-89*)



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The [Danish philosopher](#), [theologian](#), [poet](#), and [social critic](#), Soren Kierkegaard said that *"life must be lived forward but understood backward."* This is our real work now. We must help each other know how to live the faith, and the charism forward into our time and cultures, to understand how to translate the way of Jesus to our time, and to be responsive to the movements of the Holy Spirit in our time.

### **RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY: A FRANCISCAN MANIFESTATION**

*There are two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys, how's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and says, "What is water?"*

If you're worried that I plan to present myself here as the wise old fish explaining what water is, please don't be. I am not the wise old fish. The immediate point of the fish story is that the most obvious and important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about. What we will do first is talk about the water of our life – our identity as men and women religious. It is important that we understand our life form before we try to put a Franciscan expression on that form. I don't claim to have all the answers but I invite our pondering. For many of us, religious life is the air that we breathe or the water in which we swim. It is taken for granted. But our time calls for a re-examination.

In *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Second Vatican Council invited us to return to our founding Charism and adjust to the changed conditions of our time. We did this in the midst of the hurricane of other council documents which reminded us of the universal call to holiness and the right of all the baptized to be engaged in the life and ministry of the church. These things had been major markers of the identity of religious life. So open to the Spirit, we went about our work. For us Franciscans this meant the wonderful opening and exploration of our founding vision. That work, while very good, is not enough. As I reflect on the time since the Council I see a two phase process of renewal. The first steps, immediately after the Council, were a process of letting go of so much that had



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accumulated onto the lifestyle but that had little to do with the essence of religious life, including our role as a labor force for the institutional church. This identity was so much a part of who we were that removing it often left people wondering about the purpose of religious life.

The second phase of renewal is our critical work now and it involves exploring the essence, the meaning, identity, purpose of religious life. Sandra Schneiders assists us with this insight: She says: *“If in 1986 it was appropriate and necessary to talk of new wineskins, that is, of new structures and procedures and even of new theological categories and constructs to hone and give shape to the new experiences of the life that was emerging in the wake of Vatican II, today it is time to speak of the wine itself, the substance of the life that has matured during the past decades, yielding both excellent vintage and some disappointing results. Religious must do the difficult work of rethinking their life in the radically new context of a new millennium that many cultural critics are characterizing as post modern.”*

As we are doing this, religious are coming to a renewed understanding of two important characteristics of religious life consistently expressed throughout history. The first is that religious life is a Spirit initiated reality in the church. It is not, in its essence, part of the institutional structure but part of the charismatic expression of the life of the church. We are familiar with charismatic leadership emerging in the church in the persons of great saints; Francis and Clare were charismatic Christians. The same is true for groups. The Franciscan movement itself was a movement of major charismatic dimensions. Religious life is a form of that Spirit raised movement. Throughout history this has created a healthy and sometimes not so healthy tension between institutional and charismatic leadership.

Secondly, out of this reflection there is a renewed understanding that religious life is a prophetic life form, a blend of mysticism and action in the Spirit of Jesus. Bruno Secondin O. Carm., speaking at the UISG meeting in May of 2010 noted that *“mysticism and prophecy belong to the genetic codes of our identity and our mission for the Kingdom of God. True prophets arise and remain authentic through a special mystical experience of God which marks, sustains, and consoles them in moments of crisis. An authentic mysticism, as an encounter with the living God, lover of life, cannot but nourish and express itself*



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*in bold and liberating prophetic action.*” Every time a new form of religious life emerged in history it had these characteristics so we can assume this to be foundational to the life.

Mary Maher SSND, also addressing the UISG, says: “*One thing is so foundational to religious life that we had better not say it goes without saying. We had better say it. Religious life is all about being seized by the living God. We become religious because God has taken hold of us in such a mysterious and attractive way that we find we can nothing else but respond with our whole lives. If we make something other than this primary, we are not talking about religious life anymore.*”





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Is not this call to mysticism expressed in our Third Order Rule?

*“Within themselves, let them always make a home and dwelling place for the one who is Lord God, almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.” (TOR Rule II.8)*

*“Everywhere and in all places, at all times and in all seasons the brothers and sisters are to have a true and humble faith. From the depths of their inner life let them love, honor, adore, serve, praise, bless, and glorify the Most High and sovereign God, eternal Father, and Son and Holy Spirit. With all that they are let them adore God...” (TOR Rule III.9)*

*“Those who the Lord has called to the life of contemplation... should manifest their dedication to God and celebrate the love that God has for the world...” (TOR Rule III.9)*

Prayer in our tradition is a time for the visitation of the Spirit, (2Cel 9), a Spirit which reveals the tenderness of God. It was in prayer that Francis found his heart's delight, a blessing he had yearned for and he turned this into an urgent call to the brothers and sisters not to miss this treasure. *“We should desire nothing else but the Spirit,”* he said. *“We must be careful never to extinguish the Spirit,”* he admonished. In prayer we discover that God is a considerate lover who woos and invites and never forces. Our tradition reminds us that we should pray simply because God loves us. We know that from her early youth Clare was devoted to the search for God, a quest which enthralled her. She had to defend her desire for God against her relatives, who sincerely believed that the privileges of wealth and social position could guarantee all the happiness that anyone could wish for. However Clare saw that her deepest desires as a woman were answered in the undeserved call of God's love. In her writing we find gratitude for this call to mysticism. She says: *“Contemplate God's ineffable delights, eternal riches, and honors and sigh for them in the great desires of your heart.... We will run in the fragrance of your perfumes O heavenly spouse.”* (4 LAg 28f)

We also receive a warning as it were, from our founder to *“take care not to extinguish the spirit of prayer,”* because prayer does important things: *it directs our actions, sharpens our discernment, monitors our choices and enflames our hearts”. (Reg.B 5:2)*



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We return to Bruno Secondin who continues: *“True prophets arise and remain authentic through a special mystical experience of God which marks, sustains, and consoles them in moments of crisis. An authentic mysticism, as an encounter with the living God, lover of life, cannot but nourish and express itself in bold and liberating prophetic action, the second aspect of authentic religious life.*

Contemplation or mysticism leads to a prophetic lifestyle. While we have wild stereotypes of prophets in sack cloth and ashes berating the rulers of the land, a more biblical sense of the prophetic is helpful. One who is prophetic is immersed in the life of the people in a particular time and place, and from that place she or he interprets that situation in the light of God’s dream for humanity. If one is to be able to do this she or he must certainly listen to the voice of the Spirit in contemplation and focus the Word of God through study and reflection as it relates to the realities of our time. Contemplation is important because it is a welcoming of the Spirit in order to be able to follow in Christ’s footsteps. From our tradition:

*“Since the brothers and sisters are to be totally conformed to the Holy Gospel they should reflect upon and keep in their mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the word of the Father, as well as the words of the Holy Spirit which are spirit and life.” (TOR Rule V.11)*

What Francis understood was that our response to the situations in which we find ourselves is to follow in the footprints of Jesus, do what Jesus would do. Johannes Metz reminds us that this is the very purpose of religious life. He says religious are to be “the institutionalized form of a dangerous memory for a church over adapted to the world.” We are to be the dangerous memory of Jesus! A key question then is who is the Jesus we follow, what is he about? This is where grounding ourselves in a Franciscan Christology is critical.

I believe that Jesus announced, lived, and inaugurated a new social order that was alternative to the political culture of his day which was based on the manipulation of power, the economic culture with its manipulation of money, and the religious culture with its manipulation of theories about God. All these were built on some form of violence, usually denied by participants, and hidden from the superficial observer. This new social order Jesus came to bring was called the Reign of God. It was the subject of the majority of Jesus’ parables, the guiding image of his ministry, and the



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reason he was killed. While many would say that his death was due to the fact that he claimed to be God, I believe it was because of this upside down world view he promoted.

Somehow Francis was able to get this. In an age of Christ the High Priest Francis fell in love with Jesus born in a stable, in a time of the religious power of the mighty, Francis stepped into the spiritual power that comes from embracing the leper as a brother or sister. In a time of corruption and political engagement of the church, Francis and Clare offered an alternative – to humbly walk in the footprints of Jesus. They breathed into the Body of Christ a new expression of the Spirit that represented a life giving alternative.

Listen to the consistent and numerous references in our Third Order Rule to following Jesus:

*“The form and life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (TOR Rule I.1)*

*Acceptance into the life: “Let everything pertaining to this gospel way of life be diligently explained to them, especially the words of the Lord; if you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions, and give to the poor... Then come, follow me.” (TOR Rule II.5)*

*“Since the brothers and sisters are to be totally conformed to the Holy Gospel, they should reflect upon and keep in their minds the words of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (TOR Rule III. 11)*

*“They should desire nothing else but our Savior... giving us example so that we might follow in his footsteps.” (TOR Rule III. 13)*

*“Let all the brothers and sisters zealously follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ. And let them be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the lepers and those who beg on the street.” (TOR Rule VI.21)*

*“Sent into the whole world by God, they should give witness by word and work to God’s voice and make known to all that only God is all powerful.” (TOR Rule IX.29)*



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There was a great conviction on the part of Francis that this way was truly the Spirit's call. Remember he said, that the "Most High" revealed that he should live this way.

In radically following Jesus, Francis, Clare and the early Franciscans, did what new forms of religious life have consistently done throughout history. They offered a life giving alternative. They did not offer a program of reform but spent their entire life trying to be the dangerous memory of Jesus. In a world of power and great divisions between the "haves" and the "have nots" they were determined to be the "minors." In a world of wealth and armies for preservation of privilege they committed to poverty. Why? Because that is what Jesus did.

Now we know that there were those among the Franciscan family who were so monasticized and clericalized that they could not grasp this way of evangelical itinerancy and fraternity. (Mike Crosby) There were followers who grew tired of austerity and wanted to change directions. They even went so far as to seek the help of the hierarchy, especially Cardinal Hugalino, to try to convince Francis to join one of the traditional religious orders. We also know that Francis resisted. He held his ground before the Cardinal and the brothers and declared:

*"My brothers, my brothers, God called me to walk in the way of humility and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want to hear any mention of the rule of St. Augustine, of St. Bernard, or of St. Benedict. The Lord has told me that he wanted to make a new fool of me in the world, and God does not want to lead us by any other knowledge than that."* It is said that the cardinal, dumbfounded, kept silence, and all the brothers were gripped by fear. (LP 114) The image given us as Francis gives this speech is that he holds the hand of the cardinal, a symbol of continuing in relationship with the church, while at the same time clearly claiming the authenticity of his call.

What our Franciscan roots are demonstrating is the unique and sometimes the great discomfort of a new call of religious life in a new age. It is difficult to be the "new thing that God is doing." (Is. 51) This brings us to our identity as TOR Franciscans living religious life in 2013. How are we to live the values that mean so much to us in a new era? We hear some calls from the church:



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From: Pope Paul VI in regard to religious: *“They are enterprising and their apostolate is often marked by an originality, by a genius that demands admiration.... Often they are found at the outposts of mission, and they take the greatest of risks for their health and their very lives.”*

From Vita Consecrata: *‘There is a prophetic dimension which belongs to the consecrated life as such resulting from the radical nature of the following of Christ...’ Prophetic witness is expressed through the denunciation of all that is contrary to the Divine will and through the exploration of new ways to apply the Gospel in history in expectation of the coming of God’s Kingdom. Consecrated persons cooperate effectively in the mission of the Lord Jesus and contribute in a profound way to the renewal of the world.* (Pope John Paul II Vita Consecrata #25)

The exploration of new ways to apply the gospel in history! This is our call as men and women religious – “To be rooted in Christ, on Fire with the Spirit, Transforming the World.”

We are talking about something very difficult, and our problem is that we are endlessly seduced by the dominant view, by the way things have been, and supposedly “should be.” In addition, the dominant culture whether in church or society would prefer to keep us quiet. This is why we need the Spirit and it is why our TOR Rule consistently points us to conversion - a complete turnaround of world views. Conversion, this continual turning to God and being conformed to Christ is never accomplished once for all. To put on Christ, not just to imitate him, is not a learning as much as an unlearning, in which the old world order is unmasked, and the great lover is revealed. We cannot imagine it, much less live it unless we see someone doing it first. Jesus and Francis have forever changed the human imagination, and we are both burdened and gladdened by the new possibility that is now ours. I judge this time of newness as a primal venue for the work of God’s Spirit. In our ambivalence and uncertainty the Spirit can stir, make new, and empower to new possibilities. The Spirit has always been, for the church and beyond the church, “a way out of no way.”

So we must ask: to what mystical-prophetic action are TOR religious called today? What is the Spirit asking of us now and into the future? Of course each of us need to respond to this call in and through our congregations but I would like to offer three opportunities or ways we might be part of rebuilding the house, and transforming the world:



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The first is a call to engagement in inter-religious dialog. When religious intolerance is part of so much of the violence and threat in our world, when our categories of religious denomination do not seem to serve us well in solving the challenges of living in our time we need to find new ways of making sure there is room at the table for all.

The experience of Francis and the Sultan is the obvious model. As you know the dominant thought of the day in the 1200's was that Muslims were considered enemies, the sworn enemies of Christ, and not unlike today the fear was that they would hand the Christians over to punishment and death. By contrast to the dominant thought of the day, Francis says that they were in fact their friends, and even more profoundly, their brothers and sisters. This was a logical and bold extension of how Francis understood the lepers. All men and women without exception were creatures of the same God, endowed with the same dignity and worth, they were brothers and sisters. Sin for Francis was everything which breaks this bond of the sacred human 'fraternity', any violence, abusive use of power, placing oneself over against for personal advantage. To do penance was to distance oneself from actions and attitudes that threatened to rupture the bonds of human fraternity.

So in 1219 Francis goes to Egypt. He takes this action to oppose the bloodshed of the fifth Crusade and to try to turn aside the crusade's intended assault on the camp of Sultan Malik al-Kamil. As often happens when confronting the dominant culture with another way, Francis is mocked. But that doesn't stop him. He crosses enemy lines into the Muslim camp. There he initiates respectful dialog. Risking danger and death he lived the vision of universal fraternity. Francis and the Sultan parted amicably after a profound exchange which we know affected Francis for the rest of his life. He could not have been more opposite to the crusaders. The issue continued for Francis. Some years later in 1224 he spent Lent on LaVerna. It seems that his intention was supplication to God regarding the deteriorating situation between Christianity and Islam. Perhaps he went disturbed, grieved, and confused. Non-violence had shaped his whole life and he wanted healing of this division and antagonism. We know that he focused profound meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ and his death. What happened then can only be described as mystical ecstasy as he experiences Christ on the cross. Why was this so meaningful to Francis? I think it



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was the quintessential sign of the non-violent response of Jesus to the violence and injustice of the world. Jesus refused reciprocal violence. He remained in love. This, Francis knew, was a total commitment to what God wants for the human race. These actions bring us into conflict with the ways of the world, but it is the way of the gospel that we desire. What can we Franciscans bring to the religious and spiritual tensions of our time both within and beyond our church? How can we respond to the increasing violence?

The second invitation speaks to the relocation of a greater portion of the TOR religious among those who are most poor. We love to quote our tradition: *“let them be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the lepers and those who beg on the street.”* (TOR Rule VI.21) In a time of the growing gap between the rich and those who are poor it is time for a review of the social location of the majority of our members and use of our resources. There is a hunger in the land for renewed congruence between our vision and our action. There is need for greater integrity and a clearer option for those who are poor. I think we can learn from the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus. When Zacchaeus was ready for a change in his life Jesus told him to “come down.” This move to minority needs fresh expression today. This is not an easy process as we know from Francis’ conversion. He would move toward the lepers and then return to the safety of his life in the center of the city. Only with time could he make this move more completely. We must begin again in this effort to place our loyalty with those that Jesus as well as Francis and Clare were most sure demanded our love.

Finally, there is our invitation to not only to care for creation in a time of global warming and exploitation of the planet but to an increased sense of the oneness of all that is. The leper and the sultan stories communicate the same theme. *“All the members of the human fraternity are sacred creatures of God, every action which does violence to this sacred community must be repented of.”* (Michael Cusato) We can expand this sacredness beyond the human to all of creation so vulnerable and threatened today. Franciscans are called to be bold proclaimers of vastness of the incarnation of God’s love manifest throughout creation.



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Finally a unique gift we bring is that contemplation is part of each of these movements. It is not mysticism and then action but mysticism in the very place of inter-religious dialog and spiritual search, contemplation in the places of violence and abuse, mysticism in the location of those who are most rejected, and in the midst of creation. From this perspective our action will be clearer. To repeat: “An authentic mysticism, as an encounter with the living God, lover of life, cannot but nourish and express itself in bold and liberating prophetic action.”



## CONCLUSION

God is counting on us to step forward. Teilhard de Chardin said: “*Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.*” But that something new is happening among us as TOR



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religious I am sure. Our work is to tend the movement of the Spirit, so that as Ezekiel has said on behalf of God: *"I am sending you and whether they heed or resist they shall know that a prophet has been among them."* Ez 2:5

In a time of exaltation, or perhaps more truthfully in a period of desolation, St. Francis came to see that the true Minister General of our Religion (the Order) *was the Holy Spirit; who rested equally on the poor and simple as on those who have been rich and wise in the world, equally on the untutored friar as on the learned cleric.* (2 Cel 193) We make this claim again today and ask that the Spirit lead us in our time, following in the footprints of Jesus in order to transform the world. We know that we are at the brink of newness that cannot quite be seen. The Spirit is not finished with us yet. She is bringing plenty into an economy of scarcity, not finished yet - exposing phony religion that will not work, not finished yet - assaulting greedy people and greedy systems that abuse the little ones, not finished yet - making a difference through us.

The more we think about this Francis and Clare who have marked our past so decisively we are sure that this same Francis and Clare will mark our future. We may not know how, but we are sure. We know a big upheaval is coming, because things cannot go on this way. We are the ones who know the Spirit will come; this Spirit is called Francis, Clare, John, Renae, Tyrone, and Karla, called newness and massive change. These are the ones who look like Jesus and act like Jesus. They come to make a difference. They come to bring life to a world of death. You can see it. They heal, forgive, cleanse, feed, and turn us toward each other in generosity. They are just like Jesus. They are among the few who believe and are not helpless, because they believe we are at the break of God's future. This is why we eat and drink at the table of oneness, welcome all, embrace the leper, care for creation, and set a place for the Spirit.

They know – we know, that ours is not the task of fixing the entire world at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Go transform that world, and remember the only thing they should desire is the Spirit of God at work in them.