

OPENING  
TOR ASSEMBLY  
May 7, 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

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.