

Franciscan Sisters, TOR, of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother



From the Desk
of Sr. Katherine Caldwell, TOR
Reverend Mother

Christmas Blessings Radiant Beauty of the Divine

Dear Family and Friends:

As we enter into these holy seasons of Advent and Christmas, may each of us experience glimpses of the radiant beauty of the divine! Each year we have the gift of pondering anew and entering evermore deeply into the awesome mystery of God becoming man. This past summer during my annual retreat, I perceived in a spiritual way a piece of fabric with a radiant gold thread interweaved within it. I sensed that the gold thread represented the divine presence within each of us, who, like fabric, are made up of many threads of colors and experiences that make us each unique. When God became man in Jesus, He united Himself to us so that His radiant beauty is interwoven into the very fabric of our being.

A couple of years ago, I painted Mary with the Christ Child and wrote a poem entitled, "Mary's Song of Revealing Love." Earlier this year, I felt inspired to paint Mary again revealing to us her Son. This time I desired to depict Mary's gaze upon us and her personal invitation to us to gaze upon her Son. As I prayed in preparation for and during the painting, I experienced seeing anew the utter beauty of Mary. What makes her so beautiful is the divine, not through essence but through participation.

Mary has made room for God—she is full of grace. I sensed her purity and graceful transparency, so that God radiates through her. My gaze upon Mary drew me to gaze upon God within her and upon the 'fruit of her womb.'



Through this gaze all pretenses fade. There is the humble and poor handmaid, and in her arms lies the God-Made-Man in swaddling clothes. For those who have eyes to see, the divine is radiant in beauty. The Mother invites those who behold her Son to let go of all façades and to become vulnerable before the hidden divinity of her Son. She invites us to a liberating 'yes,' to the humble love of God who comes to us as a Babe. Who can refuse such love? Yet, I must ask myself each day: Do I take the time to truly gaze upon the face of our loving God? Do I let my pretenses fade so that my daily interactions with others allow me to be transparent with God's love radiating through me? In this way, I believe God is inviting us to make every day a Christmas. Even when we fail, God's humble and merciful love is with us. The most important thing is that we keep turning our gaze upon Him so that we can see and gradually become the radiant beauty of the divine.

Our Younger Sisters Give Me Great Hope for Our Future

On September 15, 2009, the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, I had the wonderful joy of returning home from a fundraising trip to see the big equipment on the building site and significant progress being made. But much more significant was the joy I felt when I heard how God is working within our younger sisters. The evening of my return we had a prayer meeting, and I heard our new candidates and novices share about their trip home from the Eucharistic Congress in Washington, D.C. As they were praying the rosary, they experienced a powerful outpouring of grace. They felt convicted to draw more fully upon the intercession of Mary and the power of the Holy Spirit. They were encouraged by this experience of prayer to realize the difference our life of consecration and intercession makes for the Church and the world (seen or unseen). They felt called to let God reveal to them



their particular gifts and to help them develop these gifts for the building up of the Kingdom. They also grasped the importance of the building of Father of Mercy Chapel and the graces that will flow from the Chapel and all who come here. I cannot put into words the joy I felt to hear our young sisters catch our mission and be so filled with joy and grace to live it. It gives me great hope for our future, and makes all the hard work more than worth it.

As important as the building project is for the continued growth of our community, the spiritual vitality is what will make our community flourish. All these graces received by our younger sisters continue to be fostered and matured through our initial formation program and daily living. This is only possible through the continued support of our friends.



Annual Giving

Gratitude for Making Our Ordinary but Extraordinary Life Possible

I want to thank all of you who make our ordinary life possible. Your prayers and financial assistance help to keep us fed, clothed, housed and serving God and His Church. Like others, we have been affected by the difficult economic times. Our income has not kept up with our expenses as we have grown, and we are praying that the end of the year donations help us make up the difference. We realize that some of our benefactors have lost jobs or experienced other types of financial loss, but for those who are able, we are asking you to continue your financial support or begin to support us if you have not contributed in the past. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.

Gratefully in Christ,

Sr. Katherine Caldwell, TOR

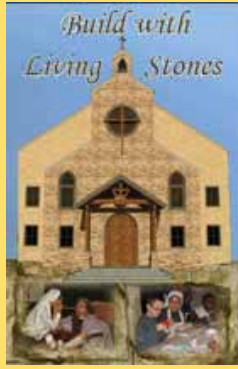
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Ways to assist the TOR Sisters

- † Prayers!
- † Pledges
- † One-time gifts
- † Matching Gifts
- † Gift of Stock
- † Donations-in-kind (furnishings, donated labor, sewing, etc.)
- † Planned Gifts (If you are interested in naming us as a beneficiary in an insurance policy, or giving a gift of estate, annuity, or IRA Charitable Rollover, please contact us or your own legal or tax counsel for more information.)

Building Campaign Goes Electronic

Information about our Building Campaign, including a PDF of our brochure is on our website. We also have begun an e-mail phase of the campaign, where our friends and families can help us by emailing the brochure to their family and friends and asking them to consider supporting us. If you are interested in helping us in this way, please e-mail fosteringfriends@torsisters.org, or call (740)544-6254.

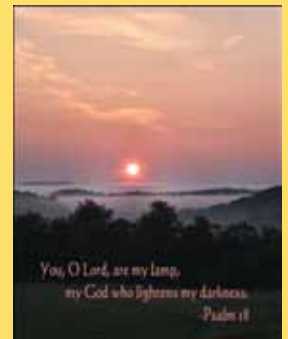


Financial Contributions Made Easy

You can already donate through our website using PayPal, but soon we will be offering new options of donating electronically. Please contact us for more details if you are interested. (E-mail us at fosteringfriends@torsisters.org or call us at 740-544-6254.)

TOR Treasures Cards

Remember that by purchasing either our Christmas Card or Greeting Cards, you are helping us to build our new chapel and residence. See our website for images and more details. If you would like to order a set of cards, call us at (740) 544-6254 or e-mail at fosteringfriends@torsisters.org.



Meet Our New Candidates continued

Hi! My name is Katie Diehm and I am from Portland, Oregon. I came to Franciscan University as a transfer student in the spring of 2007 with no idea where or to what the Lord was ultimately calling me. As I came closer to graduation, I began to beg the Lord for clarity on this, and, almost instantly, a wonderful man walked into my life that fit all of my specifications, namely tall, dark and handsome, and we even met at Mass. In the course of our relationship, though, I felt an uneasiness inside myself. I realized that something was lacking, something that my heart had yearned for when I had discerned religious life in the past. I ended the relationship and soon went to Austria with Franciscan University for a semester. When I was in Medjugorje, at the top of Cross Mountain on my 22nd birthday, I found the answer to what I was looking for: to be at the foot of the cross with Mary, contemplating Jesus. Though at the time I was applying to work in the foreign missions after graduation, I came in contact with the TOR Sisters, and, low and behold, I realized that what I had desired was not far away in distant countries, but literally at my front door. With great joy and anticipation I entered the TOR Sisters on August 8, 2009.



Katie

Christmas Blessings! My name is Anne Yoches and I am from Dearborn Heights, Michigan. It has been a great joy entering religious life and feeling like I am living as the person God created me to be. Living with the sisters makes you feel so loved that you cannot help but pour that love out, especially through prayer, for you all and the whole world. I definitely feel the grace of your prayers for me. Thank you for your continued support.



In the peace that only He can give,

Anne

Franciscan Sisters, T.O.R.

of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother
PO Box 1042, Steubenville, OH 43952
www.torsisters.org
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Upcoming Vocation
Discernment Retreats:

Jan. 29-31, 2010
and April 9-11, 2010.
E-mail Sr. Thérèse Marie at
vocations@torsisters.org or
call at 740-544-6204
for more information.

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Meet Our New Candidates...

My name is Caroline Lorio, and I'm from Jeanerette, Louisiana. Before I came here, I was teaching with wonderful friends at an incredible Catholic school, lived in a cute apartment conveniently located near the mall and coffee shop, and was not far from my friends, family, and precious two year old niece. I did not think it could get any better than this, and I was a little hesitant to give all of these things up. At the same time, I felt God's call very strongly in the depths of my heart.

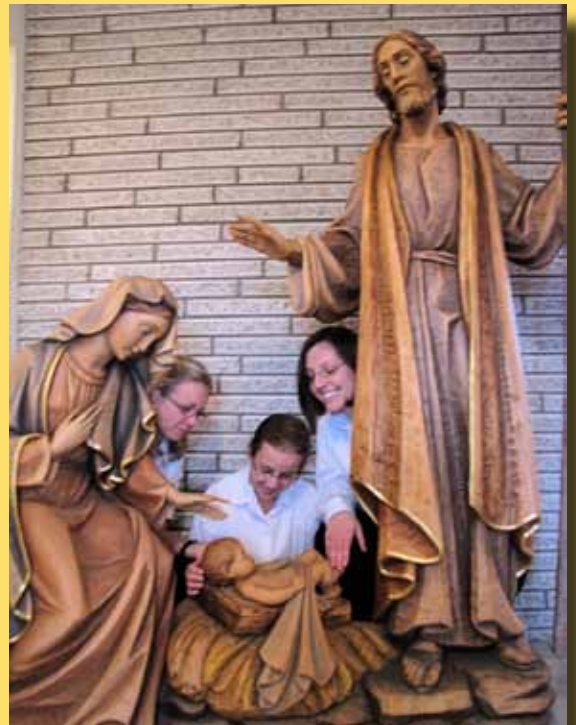


Once I arrived here and was able to enter into this way of life, I quickly realized that we do actually receive so much more than we give up. I could not understand this before I experienced it. Letting go of everything frees my hands and heart so I can more fully grasp Jesus and the gifts and graces He has for me.

He is physically present in our house! What a blessing! The Jesus we live with and get to adore and receive in the Eucharist every day is the same "One whom the Magi saw lying in the manger: Christ, the living Bread who came down from Heaven to give life to the world!" Just as the Magi are filled with wonder and awe when they see, "enclosed in a tiny body the One whom the world cannot contain," it is my prayer that we can all be filled with the same wonder and awe of the Eucharist in a special way this Christmas and every day throughout our lives.

Caroline

Look inside to hear from Anne and Katie.



Katie, Caroline, and Anne, our new candidates, contemplating the Child Jesus. This statue of the Holy Family will be in our new chapel.