

When art and prayer merge

Prayer and art sometimes combine to create something stunning. Witness St. Francis and his Canticle of the Sun, a joyous poetic expression of kinship with all of creation.

A more recent outburst of spiritual creativity revolves around events in the life of Francis -- a book (on CD) of original poetry and art produced by members of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity in Oakville, Missouri. It's titled, *On the Path of Peace: 12 Wondrous Stories in the Lifeline of Saint Francis*.

"Our fraternity has been using this series as a formation tool for our monthly

gatherings," notes Poet and Formation Director Rita Baughman, OFS. It has been in the works since the fall of 2010 and was completed earlier this year (2013).

The seed for the project was planted by a deceased Secular Franciscan, Mujana Darian, a talented sculptor. She created 12 sculptures depicting milestones in Francis' life, which are now on display at the Poor Clare Monastery in Oakville. The book is a reflection of prayerful meditation on each sculpture, with Artist Howard Schroeder, OFS, painting and writing about his interpretation, and Baughman penning a poem after gazing

on the illustration and seeking inspiration. Sometimes the inspiration takes an unexpected turn, as when, for the story of the wolf of Gubbio, she wrote a poem from the wolf's point of view, called "Hunger."

Each reflection is then rounded out with quotes from original Franciscan writings about the scene, and a concluding prayer. There are also questions for group discussion or meditation.

Anyone interested in purchasing the CD may email Howard Schroeder, OFS, at fieryfx@earthlink.net. The cost is \$25.

-- by Bob and Mary Stronach, OFS



Hunger

*Food for the soul, the mind, the body
All different, yet life's necessity
My selfishness sought to cause the ache
The ache of solitude, pride, physical desires
The results satisfied my growling mind and belly*

*Yet only momentary happiness was evident
Like sin, its brief pleasure turned to gloom
With each bite, my need grew
Its taste made sour by my own avarice
Hunger controlled and ruled my sins*

*Then the inconspicuous stranger appeared
His brown garb blended with my wooded home
He approached fearlessly, looked into my eyes
His gentleness drew me in*

*He knew my transgressions, spoke as a friend
My cravings were curbed by his peace
He offered a pact, non violence for angst
Transformation has become my relief*

*The aches I once felt, that consumed my soul
Were controlled by this tranquil desire
To peacefully live among my past foes
And end inner violence as well*

Rita Baughman, OFS

Illustration
by Howard
Schroeder, OFS