



Forty years later, 'The Dream' lives on

BY TONI CASHNELLI

The Sisters of the Atonement have a ritual when they lead people to rooms at their guest house in Assisi.

They pause at Room 12 to announce, "And this is where **Fr. Murray Bodo** wrote his book about Francis." It's the "Washington slept here" kind of association that gives a place the aura of a shrine.

Murray laughs as he reveals this, as though it is beyond belief that a space he once occupied would become an object of veneration. But what happened in Room 12 could best be described as a minor miracle. In 1972 Murray, a teacher and an up-and-coming poet, produced a slim paperback of prose that defined his future and continues to inspire readers around the world in ways he could never have imagined.

Asked to name their favorite book about their favorite saint, many choose *Francis: The Journey and the Dream*, a work that far surpassed the expectations of its author and its publisher (St. Anthony Messenger Press, now Franciscan Media). More than 200,000 copies have been sold in English, Spanish, German, Italian, Chinese, Maltese, Portuguese, Slovenian and Korean. Last year when SAMP suggested a 40th-anniversary hardback edition, "I remember being stunned that it was 40 years" since its release, says

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Marking a milestone

Save the date: SJB Province will commemorate the 40th anniversary of *Francis: The Journey and the Dream* with a lecture by its author on Sunday,

April 22. **Murray Bodo** will repeat the presentation he gave in November at St. Bonaventure University for the Ignatius Brady Lecture series, "The Writer's Journey, the Poet's Passion". The time and place are yet to be determined. Stay tuned.

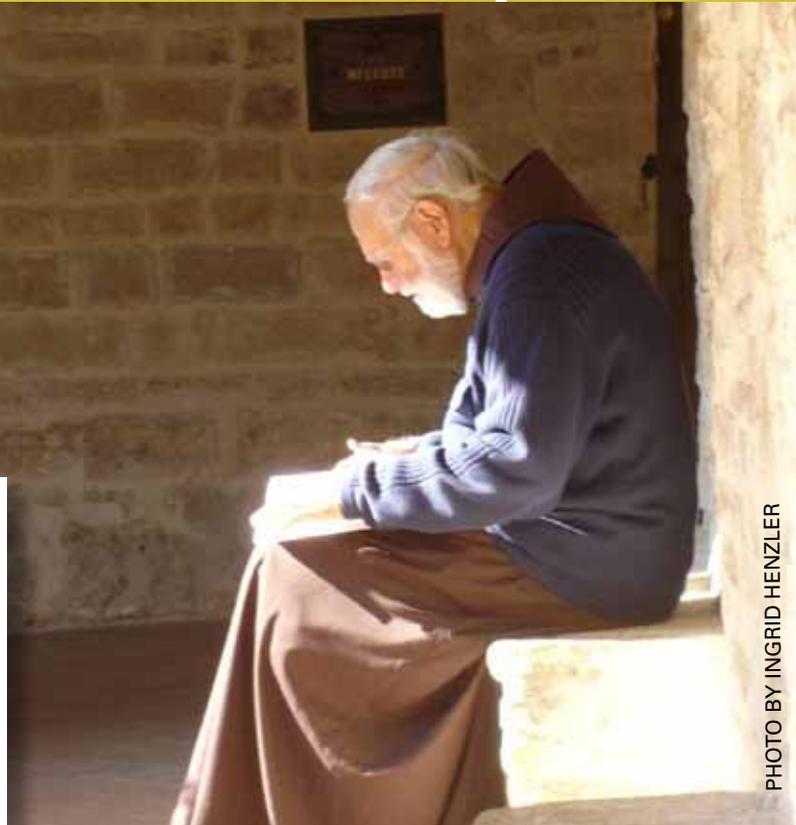


PHOTO BY INGRID HENZLER

Murray Bodo writing at San Damiano in Assisi. He's been part of the team for Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs since 1976.

FROM JEFF

We friars have five "priorities" or core values that are to shape and guide our lives. Though developed a bit more in our documents, simply put, they are 1) prayer, 2) fraternity, 3) minority, 4) mission, and 5) formation. In my own experience one or the other may get more emphasis at certain times, for example, "prayer" when I am on retreat or "formation" when I am studying or taking a workshop, but in some ways they can't be separated and they all need to be part of the rhythm of our daily lives. Each influences and colors the others. When I pray, I pray as a member of a fraternity and out of my experience of mission. I bring my experience of mission back into prayer and prayer sends me back into mission. Minority shapes my living of fraternity and minority calls me to depend on the brothers. Ongoing formation strengthens all of this. I like to think of them like the transparencies often found in anatomy text books. You can study the transparency of the nervous system or the transparency of the digestive system, but they are printed on transparent plastic precisely

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Roman was witty to the end

BY FRANK JASPER, OFM

(Frank was homilist at the funeral for Roman Pfalzer, held Dec. 29 at St. Clement.)

At 93 and second oldest in the province, **Roman Pfalzer** outlived his classmates, most of his family and even his funeral plans. Even though his brother, **Miles Pfalzer**, was ordained with him, he wanted **Valens Waldschmidt** to preach for his funeral. Both had their own health concerns and were unable to do it.

I first met Roman at St. Clement when I was in grade school and he was the second assistant. **William Faber** was the pastor, **Callistus Solbach** was the senior assistant and the newly ordained **Humbert Moster** was third assistant. As I recall Roman was very shy, quiet and incredibly neat. Every hair was in place and he was just as precise when he questioned the students in religion class. He carried out his duties in a highly responsible way. He devoted most of his time to the youth group that met almost daily in the clubroom under the convent. He collected the money for snacks and refreshments.

Roman's career spanned almost every parish in our province in the Midwest and Southwest. He had 21 different assignments. He was always the assistant, never the pastor, and he served well in that capacity. He likely had so many assignments because he was open to the provincial's call to help resolve problems with personnel.

He was a simple friar, gentle, easy to live with and highly responsible in carrying out his duties. When Roman was in Batesville, **Norbert Bertram** told me the pastor was on vacation and he had five funerals to do in one week. When Norbert apologized for so many funerals, Roman said, "That's what I'm here to do."

Even with dementia, Roman shared the Pfalzer trait

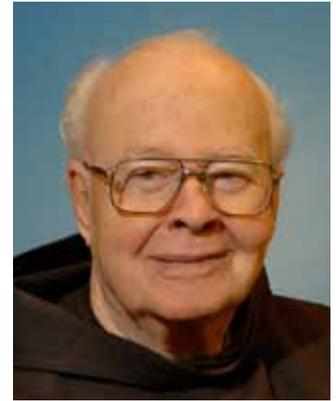
of being quick-witted. In the physician's office, the doctor was checking for dementia by asking him some questions like the date and who was the president of the United States. Finally Roman said, "Doctor, you're a well-educated man. You should know these things."

Again, Roman was in the doctor's office and the doctor asked him if he could walk to the other wall and back without holding on to anything. Roman thought for a moment and then said, "No, I don't think so." "Why not?" the doctor asked. "Because you're standing in my way." At the sharing during his wake, many friars told stories of Roman's witty comments that were always clever and never hurtful.

Roman was a "neat freak." His room and his grooming were always impeccable. Even at Franciscan Terrace, he loved to show off his crisp, new, colorful shirts. Of course, it's always good to have a neat freak in the friary, considering all the rest of us. It makes life easier.

Of his seven siblings in Louisville, Juvenal, Roman and Miles became Franciscan priests. Miles is the only one who survives.

Roman was first and foremost a man of service. He exemplified that service by his willingness to move so many times and to serve in so many diverse parishes. His consistent, unassuming service made him truly a "servant of the Lord." Roman, may the Lord reward you for your faithful service.



Roman Pfalzer, OFM

DIRECTORY UPDATES

■ From **Gene Mayer**: "On a pre-addressed envelope to be returned to St. Margaret Hall I noted that they now have the four-digit zip code of **1896** instead of 1828."

■ **Dominic Lococo's** new phone number is 513-825-5125. His cell phone remains the same: 513-328-5125.

LET US REMEMBER

■ **Mark Pax**, brother of the late Bart Pax, OFM, and Ulric Pax, OFM, of OLG Province, died yesterday as the result of an auto accident in Versailles/Russia, Ohio.

He was 67 years old. According to Duane Torisky of OLG, the Mass of Christian Burial will take place at 10:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 13, at the Church of St. Remy in Russia, Ohio. Please keep the family in your prayers.

■ **Margaret I. Carney**, the mother of Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF, of St. Bonaventure University, died Jan. 10 from complications following surgery. She was 94 years old. The Mass of Christian Burial is at 10 a.m. Jan. 13 at St. Thomas More Church in Brentwood/Pittsburgh. Margaret's address is: Office of the President, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778. Her e-mail is MCARNEY@sbu.edu.



Murray in Assisi, the city that changed his life. "It has become a part of me," he says.

write that book here." A teacher at the minor seminary, Murray was a classic "2" on the Enneagram; fulfilling requests for help kept him hopping. "The Provincial, **Fr. Roger Huser**, knew me" and suggested a trip to the land of Francis. "I had never been to Assisi. The fact that I was going there was so extraordinary," says Murray, who had "only wanted some time off" to do the work.

Four months and counting

On Roger's advice, he took a room with the Sisters of the Atonement, up the street from the main piazza in Assisi, and settled into Room 12 with "a certain amount of panic. I had four months to get the book finished and get home. My great fear was that I would get writer's block." He spoke no Italian and had no resources. "I asked if anyone had a library," and was directed to local resident **Nesta de Robeck**, author of the classic 1951 biography, *St. Clare of Assisi*. Things fell into place.

Writer's block was rarely an issue. "From the moment I got to Assisi I felt inspired" by the palpable presence of Francis. When Murray says, "It was Francis speaking to me," he doesn't mean he was channeling a saint. The subject took over its author, words began to flow, and "I had a character who was developing right before my eyes," a composite of friars he had known and admired.

The days in Assisi fell into a pattern. Early riser Murray had Mass, ate breakfast, helped the Sisters serve their guests, then returned to Room 12 for a morning

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Murray. "It was quite a surprise and made me feel incredibly grateful that this book is still in print." In a foreword to the new edition, singer-songwriter **John Michael Talbot** wrote: "One of the most influential saints books ever...*Francis: The Journey and the Dream* continues to inspire people of all ages with its lyrical prose and depth of love for the Poor Man of Assisi."

There are other books about Francis, hundreds of them, but Murray's was the first to go behind the stern-faced frescoes and cement statues to reveal an imperfect visionary with a passion for life and the Lord. Reading *The Journey and the Dream* is like opening a window on the soul of a saint.

Prose from a poet

"I look upon this book as a gift – a gift of the Province, a gift of Francis, a gift of **Jeremy Harrington**," Murray says. "When I look back now I just have this enormous gratitude." It was Jeremy, then Editor of *St. Anthony Messenger*

Press, who approached Murray with the project 42 years ago. "It was only obedience that led me to do it. They wanted a popular book, not a biography. I protested I couldn't do it because I was a poet." But Jeremy thought otherwise. "He knew I was enamored of the Franciscan story. He knew I had it in me to write a prose book, but neither of us knew what that was going to be."

Asked to produce a chapter, Murray commandeered a table at Carter's Restaurant on Winton Road one morning and put pen to paper. "I gave the chapter to Jeremy and he liked it." Excited but intimidated, Murray wondered what to write – and how to write it.

Then came the first of many "Thank you, Lord" moments. "In my first exploration of the text, the great break was the 'frame' that came to me: The book is to begin with Francis dying. It was like an epiphany. He was going to be remembering. The framework was one of memory, and that of course helped me. It enabled me to take a point of view." The second revelation: "I knew I could not

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of writing in longhand. Afternoons were for typing with carbon paper sandwiched between pages, a messy, frustrating exercise. After dark, “I would walk the streets of Assisi, observing. I wanted to get a feel for the streets and countryside. It helped me ingest the ‘mystique’ of Assisi.”

Persnickety as he is with words, “*The Journey and the Dream* was fairly easy for me to write,” he says. “I had been ‘pre-writing’ that book since I was 14. I was always rehearsing stories of Francis in my mind. I’d read all of **Ignatius Brady**’s writings in college. So when I came to write *The Journey and the Dream*, the story itself was so embedded in my consciousness that I only needed to find only a point of view, a voice, and a title that would crystallize all of the information I had been pouring into my head all these years.”

No expectations

Typing his final page, “I remember thinking, ‘I have no idea if this is any good or will speak to others,’ but it spoke to me. I remember Jeremy was happy with it.” With drawings by **John Quigley** and a cover designed by **Larry Zink**, *Francis: The Journey and the Dream* was released in 1972 with little fanfare. No one sought an interview. “It was

a slow starter and didn’t take hold right away,” Murray says. In the beginning, “my greatest fans were my own students and Secular Franciscans. About half a year after it came out, there was a review in *Cord* magazine by [Franciscan scholar]

Raphael Brown. He said it was ‘the best kept Franciscan secret of the year.’” The biggest break was the 1972 release of **Franco Zeferelli**’s *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, the glossy, dramatized life of Francis. In an Age of Aquarius, it fueled the imagination of a generation disillusioned by war and saddened by violence. In the film and in Murray’s book, they found a real-life hero. By 1973, “People were asking me to talk about the book, asking me to formation programs,” Murray says. “I wasn’t going to question what they were experiencing reading the book. When it really hit me was when people said it changed their lives. It was very humbling, but also unbelievable.”

Asked if he ever tires of talking



Walking helped Murray “ingest the ‘mystique’” of Assisi.

about it, like a rock star who’s always singing his greatest hit, Murray shakes his head no. “It always gives me an opportunity to talk about Francis, who along with Jesus is one of the passions of my life.”

Forty years, dozens of books and hundreds of poems later, the work that is still most celebrated, most closely associated its author, is *The Journey and the Dream*. Facing his 75th birthday in June, “It is like I did the book of my life at 35 years old,” Murray says. “Everything I have written since, its seed, its germ, are in that book. I smile at myself and wonder if I should have stopped there.”

Fortunately for us, he did not.

FROM JEFF CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

so that you can put them on top of one another and get a sense of how all the systems that make up the marvelous human body work together. Recently **Roger Lopez** shared with me a reflection he heard that suggested we should consider the order in which the priorities are given. Prayer, fraternity and minority are listed first for a reason; they are foundational. In practice, in our daily lives, these are often sacrificed

as we give most time and energy to the later ones, especially mission and ministry. We can get so caught up in the good work that we are doing that we don’t give sufficient time and energy to the foundational values. It is something to think about.

– **Jeff Scheeler, OFM**

Our ongoing journey of conversion

By PAT MCCLOSKEY, OFM

Francis of Assisi and His Conversions, by Pierre Brunette, OFM (Franciscan Press, 1997, 95 pages)

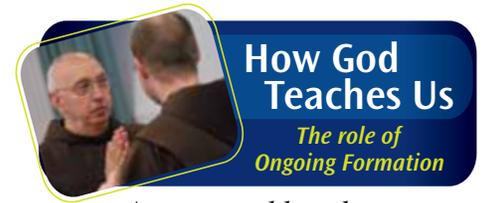
Although we remember dramatic conversion stories (Zaccheus the tax collector, etc.), most conversions happen gradually.

In separate chapters, Brunette uses the earliest writings about Francis to describe his seven conversions between 1202 and 1210: prisoner of war in Perugia, visions of glory as a knight, coming to terms with solitude, serving lepers, rebuilding San Damiano, breaking with his father and following the Gospel with other brothers.

Brunette addresses three questions for each conversion: What is happening

here?; How do we interpret what was happening then?; and How did this event leave its imprint on Francis' thoughts and writings?

Brunette writes that Francis' inner quest for the Absolute "repeatedly required him to give his consent or to take risks, had to sooner or later translate itself into a mode of life ... From stage to stage in his development, he experiences important changes in his soul and in his network of human relationships. The texts of the Sources confirm that God utilized his entire being in the process of discernment. Saint Francis did not improvise becoming a disciple of Christ, nor did he become a Friar Minor overnight. Every circumstance of dispossession in his search also becomes an occasion for growth. If nothing of his personality, the depths of his soul, or



How God Teaches Us

The role of Ongoing Formation

A new monthly column

his relationships was spared, everything was purified and expanded. Little by little in his pursuit of heavenly realities, Francis understood himself as a guest passing by. The remainder of his religious life, which was lived communally, was marked by this consciousness."

In fact, wasn't Francis undergoing conversion until his last breath? This book would be very useful for a private retreat or days of recollection. I will be happy to lend my copy to any friar. Who is first?

FOCUS ON FRIARS

■ From **Jeff Scheeler**:

"**Larry Dunham** has been invited by the Custos of the Holy Land to live and work at Mount Saint Sepulchre Monastery in Washington, D.C. Larry will move there near the end of January and assist **Jeremy Harrington** in the ministry of the Monastery. Larry has also decided to retain his membership in St. John the Baptist Province. Welcome home, Larry!"



Mount Saint Sepulchre Monastery

■ **Tom Gerchak**, interim Pontifical Mission Director for the Diocese of Montego Bay, will represent the diocese at the Antilles Conference in Trinidad and Tobago Feb. 6-9.

■ News from St. Leonard's in Centerville, Ohio: On Jan. 27 the San Damiano Residence, three new buildings, will be dedicated. A fourth building, the Franciscan Wellness Center, was dedicated a few months ago. According to **Joe Rigali**, "The Administration has really worked hard to build a retirement center on the Franciscan vision and has transformed the former seminary into an outstanding Franciscan center."

■ It was a Christmas that three families in Shreveport, La., will never forget. "The Christian Service Program and St. Joseph's Church sponsored Christmas for three households, which included nine school-aged children," reports **Giovanni Reid**, Christian Service director. "St. Joseph donated the clothing. Christian Service supplied toys and the groceries (including turkey, ham, chicken,

breakfast foods, snacks, beverages, fruit, milk, etc.)." Gio was on hand when the Williams, Hall and Kelly families came to pick up their gifts.



Giovanni Reid and the Christian Service Program helped make the season bright for three families in Shreveport.



Retreat on Clare blends history and contemplation

BY HENRY BECK, OFM

(Henry sent this update and photo yesterday from the interprovincial workshop at Holy Cross Retreat Center in Las Cruces, N.M.)

We are 54 friars from five provinces here – SJB, SH, ABVM, OLG and HN – and we are getting along well. The sense of fraternity is very strong, and **Sr. Ramona Miller, OSF**, with the Rochester, Minn., Franciscans, is guiding us along the theme of: “St. Clare: A Light for Our Path”.

This year (March 2012) will mark 800 years (March 1212) on Palm Sunday that Clare left her home and joined Francis and his companions to begin a community of “Poor Ladies”. Thus the interprovincial

retreat planning committee asked Sr. Ramona to present on St. Clare for us.

Sr. Ramona was a teacher and retreat director and then joined the team of presenters for the Franciscan Pilgrimages in Assisi. She also helped develop a pilgrimage to Prague, Czechoslovakia, to the Monastery of St. Agnes (with whom St. Clare corresponded).

Our retreat this week is a blend of Franciscan history for our minds and then contemplation to take these insights into our hearts and souls to see what this “then” means for our “now” and “future”. Ramona is very good about offering “contemplative questions” at the end of each session to move us to consider our own lives in light of Clare’s words and example.

Her overall plan for the retreat is to help us to know Clare through the four letters that she wrote to Agnes in Prague as Agnes began a Poor Ladies community there. Some conference themes so far have been: Praiseworthy Exchange, Path to Prudent Happiness, the story of Clare’s life seen in the “Tabla” sacred icon, Clare’s summary of Franciscan prayer, and “place your mind before the mirror of eternity”. She will be going into Clare as “another Mary” this afternoon.

All of the material is so rich because Ramona knows the places and history well, and she has internalized these themes deeply in her prayer. We are most blessed to be here together with her.



Henry Beck, Bruce Hausfeld, Francis Wendling, Sr. Ramona Miller, Bryant Hausfeld and Giovanni Reid at Holy Cross Retreat Center.



IN GRATITUDE

Ron Cooper from the Provincial Archives sends his thanks for the prayers and concern offered for his mother, Juanita Cooper, who suffered a stroke Jan. 2. Mrs. Cooper spent five days in the ICU in Phoenix and is now in Banner Boswell Rehabilitation Center, where she will receive therapy in hopes of returning home. Your continued prayers are appreciated.

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