

THE PILGRIM'S COMPANION: SHARING THE FRANCISCAN JOURNEY

Celebrating 50 Years of Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs

Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present

January 2023



Adoration of the Magi -Giotto

"We become what we
love
and who we love shapes
what we become..."

...We are to become
vessels of God's
compassionate love
for others."

-St. Clare

Greetings and Blessed New Year! Along with celebration of the new year, within the Church we celebrate Epiphany – the revelation of God in the world, manifest in the newborn child Jesus.

As written in the Gospel of Matthew, three kings travel far with the mere guidance of a star — and some inner knowing that they were being called to a moment of encounter. They were invited, then led, to a moment of divine relationship.

And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

They were overjoyed at seeing the star,

and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother.

They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Mt 2:9-11

As history unfolds we take part in Epiphany when we live the revelation God is reaching out to be with us. Like the Wise Men, we can choose to journey within that knowledge, offer whatever gifts we have, and learn and live from the encounter.

Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, OSF, who has journeyed with pilgrims since 1991, contributes this month's reflection. She shares from the heart of the pilgrim journey. Her words offer abundant joy and gratitude for God with us, and "the moments of grace that call us to come closer to God."

"Every moment of every day has a purpose, and whether we encounter challenges or blessings...they are both moments of grace that call us to come closer to God."

Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, OSF

This month, consider taking some time to delight in the revelation of grace and holy presence in your life. Go on a contemplative journey to Bethlehem and to the newborn babe who reconciled humanity and Divine Love. What do you notice in that small precious moment? What arises within as you recall sacred encounters in your life? How might you journey in relation to the sacred this year?

Wishing you Peace and Good throughout the new year.

*Mary Beth Wisniewski, Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs
AFCU Outreach Representative*



Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Spoleto

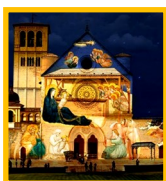
About this month's Reflection writer:

Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, who joined Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs in 1991, is a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She entered her congregation in 1961. She received her BSN in Nursing from Marquette University and holds a MA in Franciscan Studies from St. Bonaventure University.

In addition to pilgrimage work, Sr. Joanne has given presentations in formation programs for the Capuchin Province of St. Joseph, the Intercommunity Franciscan Novitiate in the Midwest and the OFM Intercommunity Novitiate. She lectures internationally, promoting an understanding of Franciscan history and spirituality in ongoing formation, retreat work and higher education. In addition, she has served as a consultant on various Franciscan planning committees and as an editor for several Franciscan authors. She has authored several articles on Franciscan topics for *The Cord* and other journals. She currently serves her congregation as the Director of the Office of Corporate Ministries.



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*Thank You for a New Year
Reflection by Sr. Joanne Schatzlein, OSF*



On the way to the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi

New Year's Day implies new beginnings. As I ponder beginning our 51st year of sharing "pilgrimage" with our Franciscan family and friends, I find my heart filled with gratitude. I will begin my 32nd year as a pilgrimage leader, and, while that astonishes me, I realize that in my heart, I still remain a pilgrim. For me, that is the heart of what our programs offer – the understanding that every day is pilgrimage for all of us. Every moment of every day has a purpose and, whether we encounter challenges or blessings during these days, they are both moments of grace that call us to come closer to God. Francis and Clare understood this completely – and their common response to each day was simply Thank You.

In preparing for this reflection, three things came to mind. Two of them presented themselves unexpectedly!

Chapter 23 of the Earlier Rule of St. Francis, entitled "Prayer and Thanksgiving," is filled with Gratitude: "We thank you for Yourself" [how often do we thank God for just being God?]; "Through your Son you created us and loved us;" "Your Son Himself will come again;" and "for the Holy Spirit." This chapter is a must read during the New Year.



Francis before St. John Lateran
"I like to think these arms are lifted up not just to support John Lateran, but to say, Thank You, God!"



Santa Barbara statue of Francis' Stigmata

"I love this depiction of Francis' utter joy and gratitude, because in the stigmata God confirmed for him he had done all that God asked of him."

St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 1:1-10. Paul opens his letter with "Blessed be God" [a Thank You], "Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens....and chose us in him before the foundation of the world." Do we recognize the gifts given us before we were even born and chosen by God, whose presence is with us each day to see us through? Thank you God!

A Message from Pope Francis. On October 18 in his daily message he said, "We take everything for granted: our faith and our relationship with God. Gratitude makes us appreciate the presence in our lives of the God who is Love...So please, let us not forget to say these key words: Thank You!"



A rainy night outside the Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Assisi

May the New Year be one that opens our eyes each day to the gifts our loving and generous God has given us, and instill in our hearts a deep gratitude which inspires our first words of each day to be,

"Thank You, God!"