

# Francis Star Still Rising at 800

By Joan M. Smith

"Of all men who have made an impact upon the world and the human heart," wrote author Paul Gallico, "next to Jesus, time has least diminished Francis of Assisi."

The saint, whose popularity has never faded and in fact seems to have increased over the last 800 years, has been called, in today's world, the saint of conservation, environment, and ecology. According to Virginia Otto, PhD. and director of the Casa Italiana at Nazareth College, St. Francis' influence has continued to the 20th century because of his dedication to poverty, work and charity, and his message of peace.

"His birthday comes at a crucial time," Dr. Otto said, and, referring to the present nuclear dangers, added, "His message of 'peace on earth' is appropriate."

St. Francis of Assisi's message will be heard through his prose and poetry at the eighth centenary celebration of his birthday to be hosted by Casa Italiana at 8 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 11. It is free and open to the public.

The two-hour program will feature Robert Raymo, PhD, director of the Medieval Institute and professor of English at City University of New York who will discuss "Images of St. Francis in Literature."

In keeping with the centenary committee's plans

to involve the departments at the college in the event, appearing on the program will be: Sister Margaret Teresa, SSJ, professor emerita of the English Department, who will discuss "Dante and St. Francis;" and Francesca Guli, poet-in-residence, who will read the poetry of St. Francis. There will also be a film, "Francis of Assisi: A Search for Man and His Meaning."

In researching for the Dec. 11 program, Dr. Otto said she discovered there were many pilgrimages being made to St. Francis' birth place and that there have been numerous celebrations of his birthday throughout the world.

St. Francis, born in 1182 into a wealthy merchant

family at Assisi in Umbria, died at 45. During those four decades he went from a comfortable lifestyle and service in the military to a life of voluntary poverty in the service of God, a founder of religious orders. But because early legends have left a picture of beasts and birds becoming his companions, he is best identified with simplicity and love of nature.

Christmas was his favorite feast. In 1223 he decided to celebrate the Nativity "in a new manner," by constructing a model of the crib scene of Bethlehem. And 800 years later, that idea, too, will be a part of the Casa Italiana's celebration. On view, beginning Dec. 1, will be the "Presepio Poliscenico," created by local artist Achille Forgione.



Birds form the halo on this statue of St. Francis of Assisi.

Fr. Albert Shamon



Word for Sunday

## Time On Our Hands

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Lk. 21/25-28, 34-36. (R1) Jer. 33/14-16. (R2) 1Thes. 3/12-4/2.

The Church Year differs from the Calendar Year in that the Calendar Year starts with Jan. 1, whereas the Church Year begins with the Sunday nearest Nov. 30 (the Feast of St. Andrew).

The Calendar Year is built around the sun; the Church Year is built around the Sun of Justice — Jesus Christ. We might say that the Church Year is the life of the Church revolving around the life of Christ.

The Church originated with the celebration of the greatest event in our Lord's life, namely, His resurrection. Every Sunday became a little Easter. When the Catechumenate came into existence in the fourth century, the Easter season was born, with its preparatory season of Lent. The Christmas season followed next, with its preparatory season of Advent.

Advent prepares for the coming of Christ. Christ comes in three ways: in history (second and third Sundays of Advent); and in majesty at the end of the world (first Sunday of Advent).

A final observation about the Church Year: the new one is built on a three-year cycle. This means there is greater exposure to the gospels and the other scriptures. The same passages will re-occur only once every three years and not annually as in the old Church Year. Thus there is Cycle A, Cycle B and Cycle C. In Cycle A, the gospel according to Matthew will predominate for the Sunday gospels; in Cycle B, the gospel according to Mark; and in Cycle C, the gospel according to Luke. The year

divisible by three is always Cycle C or the Lucan year. For instance, 1983 is divisible by three; therefore this Church Year of 1983 will be Cycle C, the Lucan Year. Next Sunday's gospel is from St. Luke.

The best way to begin anything is at the end. If we are going on a trip, the first thing we think about is our destination — where we are going. It's the last thing we arrive at, but it is the first thing we think about.

So the Church Year begins with the end things — Christ's coming in majesty. Luke moves smoothly from the description of the fall of Jerusalem (21/5-25), to the coming of Christ as Judge. For the Jews, the fall of Jerusalem was the end of the world — their world. But Luke saw it as the beginning of a new world — a world in which God would begin to reign in the hearts and minds of men, drawn into His earthly kingdom, the Church. This period before the final coming of the Lord, like Advent, is to be a preparatory period for the day of the Lord.

Christ says, "Be on guard ... Pray constantly." St. Paul begs and exhorts his Thessalonians, and so us, to conduct ourselves in a way pleasing to God.

On clocks, time always moves at the same rate. But for us, time does not do this. Sometimes time flies (when we're having fun). Sometimes it just drags on (when we can't sleep). Sometimes, it seems to stand still (when we're in a hurry).

Advent is time on our hands. Will it fly by, because we are so swallowed up in preparing for Christmas? Will it drag by, because we can't wait till Christmas comes? Or will it be just like any other time?

For children, Advent is a time of great expectation, an eager lunging forward in anticipation of great joy. So should it be for us.

## More Opinions

### His Example Commended

Editor:

It was refreshing and inspiring to read an article featuring Corpus Christi and its pastor, Father James Callan, in the Nov. 4 Times-Union.

I was first introduced to the Thursday evening Eucharistic celebration at Corpus Christi through my young adult children two years ago. What amazed me from the beginning — here was a gathering of people of faith, participating voluntarily for over an hour in a beautiful and joyful celebration of their belief. In an age when the Church is losing many of its young adults to indifference, agnosticism or basic fundamentalism, Corpus Christi and its Christ-like leader, Father Callan, have been an oasis in the desert. It quenches the thirst of a growing number of young, Catholic marrieds and singles who long for the warmth of a loving Christian community and a meaningful, joyful expression of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Especially notable in Father Callan is his spirit of poverty. Diocesan spokesperson Father Louis Vasile is quoted as saying that other priests take the vow of poverty but "may not be as outspoken on the subject as Callan." Is it not time for other priests to be outspoken on poverty, both in word and personal example? In our very materialistic society, don't we all have an obligation to follow the spirit of poverty and service that Christ preached, and which is so beautifully practiced at Corpus Christi?

An analogy can be drawn between Father Callan and his Corpus Christi community and Mother Teresa of Calcutta and her Daughters of Charity. In both of these communities the spirit of poverty and care of the down-trodden is of paramount concern. Mother Teresa's religious community is one of the few orders worldwide with increased vocations in the last decade. So, too, Corpus Christi has had a resurgence of growth and strength as it reaches out to the physically, emotionally and spiritually needy.

May the Lord continue to

grant his blessings a hundred-fold to Father Jim Callan and the Corpus Christi community!

Jane G. Zaepfel  
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### Why Cambodia Was Bombed

Editor:

In his letter, "A Case for Pacifism," Michael J. DeMott made statements concerning my letter of Aug. 18 that were incorrect.

First, our bombing of Cambodia was undertaken to destroy the sanctuaries of the Communist Vietnamese. Allowing the enemy to

regroup, be supplied and then return to Vietnam to fight, defied any logic of fighting a war to win.

By the time we decided to bomb Cambodia, many lives were needlessly lost by giving the enemy an advantage he didn't deserve.

However, throughout the Vietnam War the pacifist mentality was never absent and eventually led to a surrender by the United States Congress. This, in turn, as pointed out in my letter of

Aug. 15, led to the genocide in Cambodia and the "boat people" in Vietnam. This was a shameful episode in our nation's history.

Today, a similar mentality is at work in our peace movement. Unless we fight this movement with intelligence and perseverance we are likely to share the fate of those we abandoned in the Vietnam War.

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