‘For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to those who sow and bread to those who eat, …’” (Is. 55:10)

Dear Friends,

This prophecy of Isaiah suggested to me the perspective that I wish to present to you in this Issue # 5 of our publication, SEEDS OF LIFE. For the whole congregation and for many people with whom we share the values of our Charism and Mission, the Celebration of the Centenary of the Death of Mother Frances Streitel was a metaphor of abundant seed, rain and snow capable of refreshing the earth and making it fruitful. However, it is important that we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

Also, the content of the topics in this issue are like many small seeds sown by God in our history, especially in this year of grace. The theological reflection, the questions that we asked of some people and their responses, as well as the photos and children’s drawings, help us to reflect on the gifts of God and to understand that welcoming His Word and the Mystery of Love with an open heart bears amazing fruit.

The examples of Venerable Mother Frances Streitel, of the many sisters who celebrated the anniversary of their consecration to God in our congregation, as well as of the sisters that ended their earthly journey this year, are testimonies of hope for us for today and for the future. They encourage us to welcome the seed of God’s Word with joy and to respond with fidelity and generosity.

If we want to bear fruit, it is urgent that we begin or strengthen our relationship with God. We need to keep watching and removing the obstacles that prevent us from seeing and hearing the action of God in us and around us.

To all who are reading and reflecting on this material, I extend an invitation to respond personally so that God’s gifts that we welcomed produce good fruit.

Sr. M. Teresina Marra
General Superior
This year 2011 was dedicated to our Foundress Venerable Mother Frances Streitel. We solemnly celebrated the Centenary of her Death after being declared Venerable by the church. Sisters, dignitaries, benefactors, bishops, associates, partners in ministry, children and friends who participated in the many celebrations were asked to comment on their understanding of how her Charism and Mission can be applied in today’s societies and to name her legacy/unique gift to the congregation and to the world.
CONTINUING THE CELEBRATION
The deepening of the Christological dimension that supports the spiritual personality of Mother Frances requires a rigorous analysis of her writings, as well as listening to testimonials regarding her life, mission and ministries. In the texts that we have, there is not a systematic presentation of her with a clear expression of these realities. However, we definitely find an enlightened testimony of faith, a particular understanding of the mystery of Christ, the mercy of God, and the mystery of the human person in relation to the Creator, as well as a clear and prophetic analysis of the world during her time. Mother Frances appears as a woman who is sensitive to the Sacred Scriptures, church teaching and tradition, and from which, in the light of the Spirit, she was able to understand and live the hidden riches of the mystery of Christ, with that typical resonance of life and wisdom of the genius of women¹.

Her experience of faith reveals an ongoing tension between the goal of holiness and the spiritual journey which affirms that God is above everything and identifies the true meaning of the human person, and of the history and the world. Her unique understanding of the mystery of Christ is seen in her attitude of constantly being attentive to the presence of the Incarnate, the Crucified and Risen Son of God and in whose light she understands the glory of God and creatures in God. Her writings are a real source from which to elicit and understand the intimate, personal, vital and dialogical relationship with the Incarnate Word. She completely surrenders to Christ, the main object of her love, asking Him for light in each situation to discern emotions, desires and earthly projects. Mother Frances constantly shows both her love and the spiritual attraction that Christ exerts over her and what it requires in terms of discipleship. This we see, for example, in her words in a letter to Father Jordan: «But that is the sign of true love; we adapt to the object of our love so that we are one with him, unashamed to practice what seems contemptible to others.»\(^2\). In this text we note the reference to the cross of Christ and to its offer, not only for the salvation of humanity, but also to the reference of the Imitation of Christ by the disciple. According to this spirit, Mother Frances aligns all the dimensions of her person with the sacred humanity of the Son of God, especially her ability to let go. The goal that she affirms in many of her writings is her participation in the mysteries of the life of Christ in order to cooperate with Him for the salvation of the world. Mother Frances lives the events of daily life in the logic of the Incarnation and the cross with the purpose of joining her will to God’s will. She, herself, in her writing to Msgr. De Waal says: «The book from which I draw my spiritual exercises is the Cross.»\(^3\). We are confronted with a kenosis / a process of self-emptying, which results in living radically open to grace, in humility, poverty and obedience. Here she rediscovers the right relationship with God and neighbor, through a radical purification of her thoughts and desires. Discipleship is the link that unites her to the person of Jesus, becoming as one with Him, humble, poor, gentle of heart and lover of the foolishness of the cross.\(^4\) That is the craziness to which those who refuse worldly wisdom turn their gaze. In this way Mother Frances sees the true face of Christ, welcoming both the veiled beauty of the Suffering Servant and the radiant beauty of the Risen Christ. Through this communion with Christ in the Holy Spirit she experiences the same feelings of love and pain of the Redeemer. Her heart suffers for the people who are in need of salvation and do not have God as the center of their thoughts and actions.

Sr. M. Vittorina Marini
Region San Francesco d’Assisi

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2. Mother Frances Streitel 4 (25), #3, in Letters to F. John Francis Jordan (1883-1885). This text is very reminiscent of certain expressions of St. John of the Cross in The Solitary Sparrow.
4. See 1 Cor 1,23-24.
Mother Frances’ greatest gift to the congregation and to the world was her complete dependence upon God. Through her detachment she made herself available to God’s direction in her daily life which was lived out in her service to those in need, especially the poor of her time. In her own poverty she found her relationship with God to be her greatest gift. I pray that through striving to live her example we, too, can witness the goodness of God to everyone that we meet.

Sr. Sharee Hurtgen
US/Caribbean Province

The more I think and reflect on the life and the spirituality of Mother Frances, the more I see her exceptional availability and sensitivity to God’s plans and ways. She drew strength from surrendering herself lovingly to God and was able to provide unusual answers to God’s calling and to the signs of the times, taking risks courageously. In the history of the SSM’s we see this motivation being repeated: “We went in order to beg and we stayed in order to serve.”

Sr. Regina Fučík
Region Deutschland-Österreich

Mother Frances’ love of God was reflected in her reverence and respect for the human person. She encountered the Poor Christ in the sick and the suffering. Her love for the Eucharist, and Our Lady of Sorrows, are unique to the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother. Her love of God was evident by her life: she was a woman of deep faith; she loved Lady Poverty. Her humility, simplicity and generosity continue to inspire her sisters and those who work with them. Simplicity and compassion are the hallmark of the SSM. Mother Frances went about doing good quite unassumingly. Her gaze was fixed on the Crucified One. Her life is ever fresh for all times. Compassion goes hand in hand with love. Our world is crying for love without realizing it.

Sr. M. Cecile St. Remy
US/Caribbean Province

Mother Frances is able to unite both great spiritual families of the Carmelite and the Franciscan ideals. She clearly knows that both directions have their deep origin on Golgotha. All contemplation and all love for neighbor have their origin at the cross of Christ. That’s what Mother Frances wants to remind us of again.

Fr. Norbert Traub
Eichstätt, Germany
The vision of Mother Frances Streitel has enriched our Church for the past 125 years. Her fusion of Carmelite/Franciscan spirituality is a legacy which continues to bear rich fruit in the lives of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother and their Associate Members -- as contemplatives in action! Here in the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey, we are particularly blessed with the presence of the Sisters, whose apostolic works in the areas of health care, education and direct service to the poor continue to bring hope to others!

Bishop Arthur Joseph Serratelli
Paterson, NJ, US

The unique gift of Mother Frances Streitel was her deep love for God and the people. During our visit to the celebration of the centenary of her death I experienced that Mother Frances was able to pass on this love of God to her companion sisters. The warmth of the sisters that still serve in this spirit today is a bright spot in our increasingly hectic world.

Eberhard Streit
Mayor of Mellrichstadt, Germany

Thank you for the opportunity that you gave me to thank, in the name of the citizens of Castel Sant’Elia, the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother for the service they have been providing in a spirit of generosity to all of us in Castel Sant’Elia. The missionary spirit that animated Mother Frances remained and even grew stronger in our Sisters. The Congregation is present where the children are abandoned by societal neglect and indifference. They are missionaries, not only in distant lands, but also in our homes. Thank you.

Rodolfo Mazzolini
Mayor of Castel Sant’Elia, Italy

Mother Frances lived her life as a humble servant of God. She served the poor and those who could not necessarily speak for themselves, like children. Her time spent in daily prayer helped her to develop a profound love of God and to use the Holy Spirit to work through her to serve others. Her witness calls all of God’s children to live each day in service to others, especially those in need, and in daily prayer.

Peg Groth
President SSM IF, Wisconsin, US
Our grandmothers tell us that Mother Frances cared for the poorest and smallest children in a special way.

*Children of the Kindergarten of Castel Sant'Elia, Italy*

I see Mother Frances in prayer together with St. Francis of Assisi.

*Children in Brazil*

Through this drawing I want to express the love that Mother Frances had for children. With her joyful heart she always loved all the children of the world without distinction.

*Illaria Dionisio
Italy*

Mother Frances loved the children very much. She taught them to learn to read; she played with them and comforted them when they were sad.

*Sophia Lang
Germany*
Reading the life of Mother Frances and her desires, I believe, that we, as Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother are called to:

- stand with/near young people, offering our presence through simple relationships, nurtured in love, listening, joy, hope and fullness of life;
- have a spirit of service, sacrifice, humility and discernment, in order to be real and reliable witnesses;
- be women of prayer. The two points above are to be nurtured and cultivated through a constant meditation on God’s Word, as well as the intimate and personal relationship with God.

Sr. M. Luciana Desini  
Region San Francesco d’Assisi

The biggest challenge in today’s world is to help young people to experience God in their life, cultivating in them the desire of intimacy with God through prayer, the practice of charity toward own’s neighbors, humility, prudence, fortitude and patience. Indeed, they are immersed in a society of the immediate and precarious, that quickly puts aside the identified goals. The example of Mother Frances invites all of us to be among young people as a sign of contradiction/provocation in order to direct them again to Jesus Christ and promote fullness of life.

Sr. M. Lucilda Borges Cantuária  
Delegation Madre Francisca Streitel

I think that the long journey which Mother Frances endured in her vocation, could encourage young people not to give up seeking their own personal path even if it takes years to find it! Her radical commitment to the poor and indigent people can remind every young man/woman that each of us is created by God and has a value in oneself, no matter how much money, prestige or respect one has or doesn’t have.

Sr. Elisabeth Maria Knapp  
Region Deutschland-Österreich
Mother Frances was not only a woman of prayer and great faith, but she also considered poverty to be the virtue that freed her heart entirely for God. Today, for our young people, spending time in prayer and in silence, even for a few moments, is a challenge. It is almost as though they are afraid of the silence. There are too many distractions that command their attention: texting, internet browsing, constantly tuning into music and twittering. Mother Frances was focused on having and being attached to nothing, whereas our young people feel as though they need to have everything. Many times our youth want to live their lives according to their choices, whatever makes them feel good or look good, even though it may be against the way of Christ. The life and mission of Mother Frances are prompting the youth of today and tomorrow to reflect, to listen and to respond to the voice of God.

Mother Frances’ ongoing search and obedience to God’s will which are manifested in her ability to change and to leave the paths which had been taken, even if they were good; in accepting daily the possibility of coming to know God better through individual, liturgical and sacramental prayer, and/or in the people we encounter in our ministry or in service of community life.

Mother Frances’ chosen poverty, based upon the example of the Incarnate Son of God led her to leave not only her possessions, but also to share her gifts, her person, and her dreams; to embrace the hidden life as an opportunity to confront human desire to be at the center of one’s own and others’ lives. The choice of poverty is an opportunity not only for the rich, but also for those who think they have nothing because self-assertiveness is often our true wealth.

For youth, the life and mission of Mother Frances are both a challenge and a commitment. Many opportunities, cultures, and information are within reach and offered to young people, but, at the same time, do not lend themselves to a life lived with confidence and perseverance. Mother Frances teaches young people that authentic living means to keep looking for our place in the world, the one that God has determined for us and then to search passionately for the truth of things. This is a fascinating adventure! Mother Frances teaches us that giving ourselves to God means to respond to the many poverties of those who suffer, and that the primary poverty is lack of Gospel awareness. Young people welcome great dreams with enthusiasm. It’s time, therefore, to reintroduce stories of saints, women and men who made of their own lives a journey worthy of being lived through to the end.

Like Mother Frances who lived as a witness in unceasing pursuit of God’s will, I think that the most urgent need of young people is to develop a direction in their lives in search of truth. If they know and experience being embraced by God’s love and encounter credible witnesses, this desire can be awakened in them.

The first thing that has always been striking to me when I hear the story of Mother Frances is her ability to change, her tireless searching, abandonment and trust. I think that today’s young people, believers and unbelievers alike, live a life of great insecurity regarding jobs, relationships or self-determination and that they are all, in one way or another, looking “for their own path”. The life of Mother Frances is proof of God’s faithfulness; a model that gives hope and witnesses to the love of a God Who is Father, Shepherd and Creator of new things.
I was blessed to be employed at St. Michael's Hospital, Stevens Point, WI. in 1951 caring for the sick, and with the SSMs. In 1983 I became an SSM Associate. Sister M. Raphael Narcisi shared with us the history and mission of Mother Frances, especially her love for the sick and the poor. As an Associate I share in the prayer, mission and values of the sisters; these I carry into my family, parish, and community life each day. I try to show this by praying with my family, visiting the homebound in our parish, and assisting in the material needs for the needy children in our schools.

Lorraine Glodowski
United States

My years with the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother go back to 1971 when I attended nursing school at St. Francis School of Nursing in Wichita, Kansas. I was always amazed at the faithfilled, loving and healing environment the Sisters provided during my early years – the same virtues taught by Mother Frances when she began this ministry. I have tried to emulate the sisters’ passion to provide care to all those in need, especially the vulnerable. I am also an Associate of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother and have certainly grown in my own spirituality and feel this growth has enhanced my professional development and career as well. I feel so blessed to have had the chance to participate in this mission and ministry started by Mother Frances.

Jo Chance
United States

Mother Frances has and continues to play an important role in my life. Since first coming to what was then St. Francis Regional Medical Center 19 years ago, I remember connecting almost instantly to not only the charism of the SSMs, but also to the legacy of Mother Frances. Being a first generation American, I have always had a very strong attraction to her and to the SSMs, as with my parents. They came to this country with very little, seeking to serve. They were all courageous, they relied on their unconditional faith in God and worked one day at a time being present with all they encountered – recognizing that all those they serve are made in the image and likeness of God. Via Christi, this hospital, and all SSM ministries are holy – they are active and living extensions of Christ's healing mission. Whenever I am facing difficulties at work, I pray through the intercession of Mother Frances that I am able to face my challenges with the same courage, determination and faith as she and her sisters continue to live today.

Claudio Ferraro
United States

As I was making my way through a "rough and tumble" early life, I always had more questions than answers about my purpose here on earth. Then I was blessed to find work in a Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother hospital. Shortly thereafter I became an SSM Associate after learning the inspiring story of Mother Frances Streitel. Her authentic, intense love, trust, and devotion to God gave her courage and strength beyond reason, giving her life, and mine, great purpose. Led by her example of hope and charity, I am aware of God's grace and love each day as I am blessed to journey with the SSM Associates as their US/Caribbean Coordinator.

Diane Wegner
United States
We wish to extend a sincere “thank you” to all who responded. Your responses captured the Charism and Mission of Mother Frances and how that Charism and Mission can be lived by each of us now and into the future.
Honoring the Past

“We can separate us from the love of Christ?”

(Rom 8:35)

We memorialize the Sisters who have entered into eternal happiness with the Lord.

Deceased Sisters

November 2, 2010 through November 2, 2011

Sr. M. Jakoba Cwiach
Sr. M. Christine Fuchs
Sr. M. Ann Thomas
Sr. M. Marian Hammerl
Sr. M. Anthony Baca
Sr. M. Martinetta Stöckl
Sr. M. Asteria Gehr
Sr. M. Josepha Wartner
Sr. M. Theresia Frank
Sr. M. Gottlieba Befsle
Celebrating the Present

2011 Jubilarians

“You shall see that the Lord will let His work prosper and there will be beautiful fruits ripening on this new tree for Holy Church. God will be glorified.”

(M. Frances Streitel, Letter 2(2), 6 to F. Jordan)

And let us pray especially for our Jubilarians as they continue to live their consecrated life in ever greater fidelity.

75 Years
Sr. M. Flora Scheurer
Sr. Mary Urban Harrer
Sr. M. Severina Kaestel
(US/Caribbean Province)

70 Years
Sr. M. Mathilde Nutz
Sr. M. Sebaldina Weger
(Region Deutschland-Österreich)
Sr. M. Wendelina Graml
(Region San Francesco d’Assisi)

60 Years
Sr. M. Corona Lang
Sr. M. Friedmunda Gaukler
Sr. M. Bruna Stahr
(Sr. M. Emmanuela Stark)
Sr. M. Konstantina Frank
Sr. M. Natalis Bayerschmidt
Sr. M. Servilla Meier.
(Region Deutschland-Österreich)
Sr. Ann Mary Nutz
Sr. Catherine Mary Kaufman
Sr. M. Frances Meyer
Sr. M. Laetare Nieberle
Sr. M. Mark Schilling
Sr. M. Theresa Regler
(US/Caribbean Province)

50 Years
Sr. M. Cácilia Scherb
Sr. M. Hilaria Brucklacker
Sr. M. Margarita Schütz
Sr. M. Martina Bauer
Sr. M. Mathilde Gottschalk
Sr. M. Meinrada Böhnlein
Sr. M. Rosmarie Netter
(Region Deutschland-Österreich)
Sr. M. Carmela Ciampi
Sr. M. Chiara Merotto
Sr. M. Cristina Rizzetto
(Region San Francesco d’Assisi)
Sr. M. Florence Hengy
(US/Caribbean Province)

25 Years
Sr. Anna Maria Buchini
(Delegation Madre Francisca Streitel)
Sr. M. Vittorina Marini
(Region San Francesco d’Assisi)
Sr. M. Angela Krawiec
Sr. Angella Maria Samuel
Sr. M. Annette Wong
Sr. M. Elizabeth Lee
Sr. Marilyn James
(US/Caribbean Province)
Moving toward the Future

"As Jesus sent his apostles to teach and to heal in his name, so we are sent by the Church, through our legitimate superiors, to be disciples who proclaim the gospel message."

(O.W.L. # 50)

"Lord, I wish to have a thousand lives in order to surrender them all to You".

(M. Frances, Letter 2(2),3 to F. Jordan)