

SSM

**Spiritual Preparation**  
*Reflections on the Virtues*



**Venerable Servant of God**  
**Mother Frances of the Cross**

*100th Anniversary of her Death*  
*1911-2011*

Congregational Program Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother

## DEFINITION:

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By faith, we believe in God and believe all that He has revealed to us and that Holy Church proposes for our belief. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1842*)

**The Servant of God always showed a strong faith. She always faced every challenge with serenity and with God's will in mind. She strongly believed that what God gave her was the best for her. She would often say: *All as God wants*. She distinguished herself by a strong faith and constant prayer, especially before the Blessed Sacrament. Mother Frances always upheld a special devotion to the Sorrowful Mother. She wanted all the sisters to have Mary in their names.**

## TESTIMONIALS:

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I know that in her life she had a great supernatural faith. At times of prayer she always had a modest and edifying position which invited us to prayer. (*Sr. M. Wendelina Bauer*)

She was zealous for the conversion of sinners and the return of heretics to the Catholic faith. (*Sister M. Regina Galletti*)

She loved Sacred Scripture; she explained the Gospel very clearly and taught the sisters to draw from this precious nourishment for their spiritual life. (*Sr. M. Johanna Ankenbrand*)

## RESOURCES:

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### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Rom. 9:9-10)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles # 34, 3

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letter to Fr. John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 71 (50), December 11, 1883, #3

Letter 81 (68), January 1, 1884, #2

*Letter to her Parents and her Sister Hedwig:*

Letter 24 (23), June 24, 1898, #2

# REFLECTIONS:

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## **COMMUNITY QUESTION:**

How can we as a community live our faith more authentically matching our actions to our words?

## **PERSONAL QUESTION:**

How do my actions, my words and my choices demonstrate that I am a person of faith?



# HOPE

## DEFINITION:

Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of Heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1817-1818*)

**The Servant of God exercised hope throughout her life. During her difficult life, Mother Frances faced every challenge with the hope that through God's help everything would be ironed out, and the truth would surface. She constantly placed her hope in Providence to help her see that God's Will would guide each project. The goal which guided her actions throughout her life was to show the glory of God. This very hope gave her strength to face everything for the glory of God.**

## TESTIMONIAL:

I hope that God will bear my petitions because in spite of being very weak in the good I have nevertheless a strong desire to become good and to lead others to the good. And whoever asks receives ... whoever asks trustingly receives even more surely. (*M. Frances of the Cross*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Ps. 16)

(Prov. 10:28)

(Rom. 12:12)

(Rom. 15:13)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles #43, 53, 84

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letters to Father John Francis Jordan*

Letter 2 (2), February 18, 1883, #2

Letter 16 (7), March 9, 1883, #3

Letter 69 (46), December 7, 1883, #5

## REFLECTIONS:

### COMMUNITY QUESTION:

As a province/region do we live our lives with a firm hope and belief that God is leading us to minister to the needs of others in a manner appropriate for us, or are we always seeking to do what is beyond us?

### PERSONAL QUESTION:

When difficulties come my way, whether physical, spiritual, emotional, am I able to exemplify patience while placing my hope in God that this will lead to a greater good for me?



# LOVE OF GOD

## DEFINITION:

Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Jesus makes charity the *new commandment*. The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who 'first loved us'. Charity is superior to all the virtues. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1822-1828*)

**Mother Frances loved God intensely and integrally. She also loved her neighbors demonstrating this love by following the commandments. The divine love that she kept in her heart showed outside through her strong pity, her deep faithfulness to religious duties, her unquenchable thirst for the Eucharist, her immense patience, and her conformity to God's will in her suffering. Charity made the Servant of God capable of acting in communion with God.**

## TESTIMONIALS:

Her life was characterized by her great love of God. Her love of God seemed to be the basis of all her virtues. From my personal observation I have never noticed any fault or imperfection in her. (*Mmgr. Joseph Joch*)

I know that doing the will of God was her all. This she demonstrated through all of her sufferings and humiliations. (*Sr. M. Johanna Ankenbrand*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Jn. 13:1)    (1 Jn. 4:19)    (1Cor. 13:4-7)    (1 Cor. 13:13)    (Rom. 12:1-2)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles # 7, 12-13, 33-34, 39, 49, 140

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letters to Father John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 2 (2), February 18, 1883, #3  
Letter 17 (8), March 14, 1883, #2  
Letter 43 (32), September 2, 1883, #2  
Letter 72 (53), December 1883, #5  
Letter 80 (82), December 1883, #4  
Letter 81 (68), January 1, 1884, #2

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## **REFLECTIONS:**

### **COMMUNITY QUESTION:**

How aware are we as a community that everything we have is given to us by God? What does it mean for us to live God's love?

### **PERSONAL QUESTION:**

How much of myself do I "invest", in terms of desire, time and availability to develop a closer relationship with God?

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**DEFINITION:**

The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies* to make ourselves the neighbor of those furthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself. The *fruits* of charity are joy, peace and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1825, #1829*)

**Mother Frances' love for neighbor was a real love. The purpose of her foundation was for the members to be committed to work for the sanctification of souls and to take care of the needs of the least ones. She didn't love with words but with actions. She gave herself to the neighbors providing a humble and fervent service, uniting friendly love to self-sacrifice, forgiving without limits, readily accepting to renounce her rights, always forgiving and sympathizing. In her poverty she helped and visited the poor.**

**TESTIMONIALS:**

She loved God and her neighbor very much, but she had a special love for the children and the poor. She encouraged us to be patient and kind to the sick and to do this ministry for the love of God. She took very good care of the sisters. (*Sr. M. Wendelina Bauer*)

She loved all equally but she expressed that love in a special way to those who had caused her difficulties and displeasures. She prayed for those who had tried to damage her reputation by distorting the truth. (*Sr. M. Johanna Ankenbrand*)

**RESOURCES:**

**SACRED SCRIPTURE**

(Jn. 15:9-12) (Acts 4:32-35) (Rom. 12:9-19) (1 Jn. 2:9-11) (1 Jn. 3:16-18)

**OUR WAY OF LIFE**

Articles #5, 12, 14, 21-22, 43-44, 49, 53

**WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES**

*Letters to Father John Francis Jordan:*

- Letter 2 (2), February 18, 1883, #3
- Letter 57 (40), November 13, 1883, #2
- Letter 68 (45), December 5, 1883, #5
- Letter 81 (68), January 1, 1884, #5
- Letter 92 (56), February 14, 1884, #5
- Letter 99 (60), December 25, 1884, #1

**REFLECTIONS:**

**COMMUNITY QUESTION:**

How do we express true charity without hypocrisy in our communal living?

**PERSONAL QUESTION:**

How and in what way do I treat others with human dignity starting with my sisters?

# PRUDENCE

## DEFINITION:

Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1806*)

**Through the virtue of prudence, the Servant of God received the trust of people. By reading the testimonials carefully, it becomes clear that the Servant of God was clothed with the virtue of prudence: she knew how to discern what had to be done in each moment. Her simple life revealed Christian wisdom and common sense. Before she did something, she sought the light from God in personal and communal prayer. She subordinated her insights and plans to wise priests and was always ready to judge people and situations rightly.**

## TESTIMONIALS:

She was prudent. Her prudence was supernatural and it was apparent in all her actions. (*Msgr. Joseph Joch*)

... she was very prudent, filled with a supernatural prudence. Before she made a decision she always prayed for light from God and asked for prayers. Often she sought the advice of the spiritual director and superiors. (*Sr. M. Johanna Ankenbrand*)

She acted always after serious reflection and prayed so that all would be done in conformity with the will of God. She was always prudent in her counsels, and in her undertakings she asked the Lord in prayer to give her the necessary light. (*Sr. M. Bernarda Hümpfner*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Sir. 37:12-15)  
(1 Cor. 2:4)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles #91 and 93

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letter to Father John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 24 (14), March 25, 1883, #1  
Letter 47 (33), September 25, 1883, #4  
Letter 53 (38), October 20, 1883, #4  
Letter 84 (69), January 6, 1884, #2  
Letter 89 (74), January 1884, #1  
Letter 90 (54), January 28, 1884, #3

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## REFLECTIONS:

### **COMMUNITY QUESTION:**

Do I incorporate the necessary information in my discernment process and then make my decisions in conformity with the values of the Gospel and the Congregation?

### **PERSONAL QUESTION:**

How do I contribute my knowledge, my understanding, and my experiences in the discernment process for the community?

# JUSTICE

## DEFINITION:

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1807*)

**The servant of God was convinced that we have to give God what is his because – as she says – He gives all what we need for our spiritual and material needs. God always had the absolute priority in her talks and actions. She constantly placed herself under the Word of God, the authority of the church, and God’s law. In regard to justice against others, she never showed preference for anybody. She treated everyone equally and hurt nobody intentionally.**

## TESTIMONIAL:

She loved justice tenderly, and also if she did not receive justice herself, she never took revenge. She did to all that which was right and especially to God. As much as I know, she tried always to do the most perfect. I do not know any example of injustice in her life. (*Msgr. J. Joch*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Eph. 4:24)

(Eph. 5:9)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Article # 44

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letter to Fr. John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 48 (78), September 1883, # 3

*1883 Norms*

111, #12

## REFLECTIONS:

### COMMUNITY QUESTION:

Name one contemporary justice issue that Mother Francis was challenged to address during her lifetime and how she responded to it? What message does she offer to us?

### INDIVIDUAL QUESTION:

Do my actions demonstrate that I want the rights of all to be respected?

# FORTITUDE

## DEFINITION:

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1808*)

**Mother Frances never gave way to despair, demonstrating a great Christian fortitude. She was courageous and determined to pursue each goal that she thought was marked by Providence; she never gave up due to difficulties, showing heroic patience for bearing any adversity. She was strong in her suffering and she did it for the love of God, emulating the Sorrowful Mother as her model. Her strength was extraordinary in bearing the exertions of founding a congregation, facing all kinds of hardships, including the journeys overseas to follow the foundations in America. She bore with humiliation, dignity and moral strength her removal from office as general superior of the congregation that she had founded.**

## TESTIMONIALS:

She was always strong in her self-denial and sufferings; she never complained. She was cheerful and patient throughout her illness. She sought comfort in prayer before the tabernacle". (*Sr. M. Bernarda Hümpfner*).

Mother Frances suffered for a long time but always with great resignation. She had a long and painful death agony. (*Mr. Augusto Grispigni*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Is. 12:1-6)

(Jn. 16:33)

(Ps. 23)

(Ps. 46)

(Ps. 118:14)

(Rom. 8:35-39)

(Ps. 27)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles # 4, 11, 28, 39, 41, 51

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letters to Father John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 2 (2), February 18, 1883, #2

Letter 7 (5), February 26, 1883, # 1

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## **RESOURCES (cont'):**

Letter 15 (6), March 6, 1883, # 3-5

Letter 17 (8), March 14, 1883, # 1 and 5

Letter 41 (30), July 21, 1883, # 3

Letter 96 (85), April 10, 1884, #4

## **REFLECTIONS:**

### **COMMUNITY QUESTIONS:**

How and when do we as a community demonstrate living our faith through the Paschal Mystery?

How do we accept with fortitude our crosses and limitations that come from communal living and ministry?

### **PERSONAL QUESTION:**

How do I express and address my feelings during times of suffering and difficulties?

# TEMPERANCE

## DEFINITION:

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion, does not follow his own inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of his own heart. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1809*)

**The life of M. Frances Servant of God was always imbued with temperance. Looking at the different phases of her life, we realize that both temperance and her love for God increased as time passed. She ate and drank sparingly. She slept only when needed and sometimes even less. She did not participate in the comforts of life. She was temperate in talking and acting. During the last fifteen years of her life she was an example of discretion and calmness, especially during the time of her illness.**

## TESTIMONIAL:

She was very mortified in eating and drinking; she was content with what was offered to her. She never complained of the food because it was poor. (*Sr. M. Bernard Hümpner*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Tit. 2:1-8)

(1 Thes. 5:6)

(1 Pt. 4:7-8)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles # 5, 6, 44, 39

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letters to Father Francis Jordan:*

Letter 4 (3), February 19, 1883, # 3

Letter 24 (14), March 25, 1883, # 2

Letter 80 (82), December 1883, # 4

Letter 81 (68), January 1, 1884, # 2

## REFLECTIONS:

### COMMUNITY QUESTION:

In what ways do we as a community demonstrate responsibility for the use of natural resources such as water, electricity and fuel?

### PERSONAL QUESTION:

When have you been invited to risk your own comfort to serve the needs of others?

# POVERTY

## DEFINITION:

The Servant of God loved the model of poverty followed by St. Francis so she tried very hard to emulate it. She was not happy with the institutes she entered, including that of Father Jordan, because she was constantly seeking a more detached, sparse, simple and strict lifestyle. She exhorted the Sisters to love the lifestyle, saying, “Love for poverty is the foundation of all virtues”. Her exterior poverty, in action was service to others, given the freedom and discipline of the simple lifestyle. Further her interior poverty manifested as a “delicate humbleness” gave cause for a witness of her life and service to say, “She had no consideration for herself”.

## TESTIMONIAL:

She loved poverty and practiced it in the highest degree. She practiced it in all of the material things, but she provided for the needs of the Sisters with great care.

*(Sister Mary Stanisla Schön)*

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Mi. 6: 6-8)

(Mt. 9: 9-13)

(Mt. 8:20)

(2 Cor. 8:9)

(Lk. 21:1-4)

(Lk. 1:52-55)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

*Consecrated Poverty*

Articles #15, 16, 22, 23

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letters to Father John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 2 (2), February 18, 1883, # 3

Letter 4 (3), February 19, 1883, #'s 3 and 4

Letter 13 (95), February/March, 1883, #1

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## REFLECTIONS:

### **COMMUNITY QUESTION:**

As you reflect on the spirit of St. Francis' life of poverty and the needs of God's people in your local area, what are two actions you can take as a local house to imitate Mother Frances in living out a more simple and detached lifestyle that would enable you to better serve the needs of your local area as Mother Frances would?

### **PERSONAL QUESTION:**

Reflect on your lifestyle and ministerial service and name how it truly reflects Mother Frances' vision of poverty – "delicate humbleness".

# OBEDIENCE

## DEFINITION:

The Servant of God never commanded, although she could. Rather, she was always obedient, first to God at any cost and then to the people she served, even when she was a superior. She was obedient when asked to teach music and French when her great desire was to serve the poor and the sick. She obeyed the spiritual directors and the ecclesiastic authority when she was deposed. It has not been possible to prove any insubordination by her of this act by the ecclesiastic authority or of her encouraging the sisters she loved to leave the institute with her. Not only was she obedient to the Superior General but also to a school principal whom Mother Frances welcomed as an orphan when the principal was two years old.

Above all, Mother Frances was obedient to her call from God, her vocation. In that she never wavered; she remained faithful. She heard and felt God calling her to give service to the poor. After many years of suffering in attempts to follow God's will, with confidence in God's call, with the inner virtues of trust and courage, she founded a congregation that embodies the spirit of Saint Francis' lifestyle and her vision of service to the poor.

## TESTIMONIAL:

She practiced obedience always and she instilled it in us. She was most punctual in all of the community exercises. (*Sister M. Ignatia Schindler*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Mk. 6: 7-13)

(Lk. 9:57:62)

(Heb. 5:8)

(Mt. 23:46)

(Ez.11:19-20)

(Jn. 6:38)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

*Consecrated Obedience*

Articles #24, 29, 30, 31, 32

### LETTERS OF MOTHER FRANCES

*Letters to Father John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 2 (2), February 18, 1883, #'s 2-3

Letter 12 (81), February / March 1883, #1

Letter 22 (12), March 18, 1883, # 5

Letter 24 (14), March 25, 1883, #1

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## REFLECTIONS:

### COMMUNITY QUESTION:

How do you as a local house and in your ministry reflect the obedience of faithfulness to your lifestyle and ministry as defined in *Our Way of Life*?

### PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

Given we live in a society that is constantly in the midst of change and uncertainty, what are three major concerns of the people to whom you minister?

How does your ministry respond to these needs in light of obedience to the Gospel?

# CHASTITY

## DEFINITION:

The virtue of chastity blossoms in friendship. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends, who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church #2347*)

**She loved the Lord compassionately and unconditionally. She said that pride and sensuality are the sources for all other sins. This is the reason why our senses and touch need to be under control. She fostered chastity through prayer and protected it through discretion, always paying attention to her behavior. She asked her sisters to maintain a lifestyle and a language that makes chastity shine through. Her interior beauty showed itself exteriorly in her noble attitude. Even in death, she had the colors of life, as some witnesses confirm, and in this way the connection between virginity and unspoiled nature was remembered.**

## TESTIMONIAL:

She was simple in her dress, in her words, and in her gestures. Her presence invited respect, veneration and raised our hearts to God. When she explained the Rule teaching me about the virtue and vow of chastity, her words invoked in me the love to exercise this virtue. (*Sister M. Regina Galletti*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Gal. 5:22)

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles #10 -14

### WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

Letter 1 to Sr. M. Scholastica Demer, #4

*Constitution 1885:*

Chapter VII: # 47, 48 – 53

## REFLECTIONS:

### COMMUNITY QUESTION:

Reflect on your lifestyle and name how it truly reflects Mother Frances' vision of living the vow of chastity.

### PERSONAL QUESTION:

How do I live the vow of chastity?

# HUMILITY

## DEFINITION:

All the Christian virtues and the practice of the evangelical counsels are based on humility which shone in the life of the Servant of God; a life marked by a search for silence, lack of self consideration, and acceptance of any kind of humiliation. In her, humility and charity were associated. She was meek and friendly to everyone, also accepting advice from others.

**The Servant of God desired to perform the most menial tasks even when she was Superior General. She would serve as cook, launderer, and wait on the sisters at table. In the United States she surprised the sisters by cleaning floors on her knees until late at night with them. When deposed from office, the Servant of God did not defend herself but accepted the ecclesiastic decision with heroic humility. Humble is the person who places her trust in God. This is what the Servant of God always did because she placed her hope in God.**

## TESTIMONIALS:

One can say that humility was her most favorite virtue. She fled immediately from every, even the smallest, praise. She withdrew herself to a great extent and did not want anyone to speak about the good that she had done. Whenever she had an opportunity she would practice humility. In her humility she avoided every exception or privilege and she sought nothing else than the glory of God and the salvation of souls. She loved the most difficult occupations; she watched over and washed the sick children, overcoming every repugnance. When she was in need of something she asked with much humility and modesty. (*Sr. M. Regina Galletti*)

In spite of her spirit of humility and humiliations she never forgot her dignity. (*Sr. M. Jolanda Windisch*)

## RESOURCES:

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

(Ps. 25:9)	(Ps. 147:6)	(Ps. 149:4)	(Is. 29:19)	(Dan. 10:12)
(Zeph. 2:3)	(Mt. 11:29)	(Lk. 1:52)	(Eph. 4:2)	(1 Pt. 5:5-6)
(Prov. 11:2)	(Prov. 18:12)	(Jas. 3:13)	(Mi. 6:8)	

### OUR WAY OF LIFE

Articles # 44, 48, 53, 85  
*Journeying*

General Principles of Formation, # 3

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## **RESOURCES (cont'):**

### **WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES**

*Letters to Father John Francis Jordan:*

Letter 12 (81), February/March 1883, #1 and 2

Letter 32 (24), April 16, 1883, # 3

Letter 39 (86), July 1883, # 6

## **REFLECTIONS:**

### **COMMUNITY QUESTIONS:**

In our community living, do we recognize and accept our limitations and abilities?

How do we as a community relate to and support legitimate authority in our congregation and the church?

### **PERSONAL QUESTIONS:**

Do I recognize the virtues and talents that others possess, particularly those that surpass my own, and rejoice over their gifts?

Do I do the little things in life well and with great love?