

# REFLECTIONS ON THE VIRTUES OF MOTHER FRANCES STREITEL



FAITH



Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother  
*Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Assisi*  
I-00165 ROME - VIA PAOLO III, 9



## DEFINITION

By faith, we believe in God and believe all that He has revealed to us and that Holy Church proposes for our belief. (CCC #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 ... of the past ...



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. (Sr. 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

**SACRED SCRIPTURE:** Rom 9:9-10

**OUR WAY OF LIFE:** Articles #3, 34

### **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

### **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?



## TESTIMONIALS ... of today ...

I view Mother Frances as a woman of vision, who was not afraid of change and not afraid of going wherever she was called to serve. She was willing to try new things and let go when it was judged her mission was accomplished. I continue to be inspired by her deep faith which included a sense of responsibility for the common good and a deep concern for justice and fairness. She was not afraid to challenge civil and church authorities when she saw injustice and oppression toward others.

In turn, she was often misunderstood, for she could not settle for the status quo. One of her personal strengths that formed her and speaks to me was her conviction in order to serve others well, one had to have a deep prayer life.

Today in a world that feels like life is constantly in the “fast lane”, Mother Frances’ legacy of balance, detachment, and love for the cross – of the need for continuous development of our relationship with God is vitally important for me.

*Sr. Cathy (USA)*



As a spiritual counselor in a hospital and in a retirement home, I am constantly confronted with the human condition. It makes no difference to me what religion or faith the people I meet have. I believe it is essential to meet them with an open mind, to accept them as they are, to listen to them, to share their pain, to bring them joy and to bear with their loneliness .

I find this approach more effective when it is the result of prayer, rather than when I rely solely on my professional skills. It is not always easy and there are times when it works better than others, but I find in Mother Frances a model of humility, who made herself small in order to be close to the poorest (children, the elderly and the sick), even when her health was already very poor.

*Michaela, SSM Associates (Austria)*

Mother Frances, in her deep faith, sought to evangelize by combining the active with the contemplative style of living. In her spirituality she too knew the best of both Martha and Mary (Luke 10:39-42), with the single eye of love focusing on the purity of her intentions, basing her spirituality on the harmony of the two. All this time in my life, I am very much influenced by this aspect of Mother Frances' life and work which was based on a solid faith foundation. I am seeking to imitate her especially in this regard.

*Sr. Jeanine (USA)*



When I first met the sisters, one quote from Mother Frances immediately resonated with me: "Through Mary be introduced into the mystery of "love and suffering", that I may truly become the "spouse of the crucified", that never withdraws from his bloody feet, until the crucified love will say: come up higher, take your place in the middle of my heart".

I didn't know why, but this quote attracted me, brought me closer to the figure of Mother Frances and through her, closer and closer to the Crucified Love.

Over time I learned and understood when and where in her life Mother Frances had written this sentence and what it could mean to her in her journey of following and conforming to Christ. This deeply shaped my story and my vocation.

Her ability to hold on firmly to God, always, in every situation, with the typical Franciscan way of returning everything to God, in suffering, in weariness, in loneliness, is what has touched my life so deeply.

*Sr. Claudia Maria (Italy)*



I, Sr. Maria Auxiliadora, before entering the congregation, would hear the church bell ringing, then I would go out to the church to attend Mass and then I would stay to pray the rosary.

I joined the congregation of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, and while studying I learnt about the virtues of Mother Frances, who showed us the power of prayer. This inspired me to pray more fervently and to pray with families, inviting everyone to go to church for Holy Mass.

*Sr. Maria Auxiliadora (Brazil)*



[Much more than a religious figure to be remembered, Mother Frances represents an innovative, living proposal for social transformation.] It is impossible to put into words the feelings that have become the beginning for those who have historically embraced the ideals of contemplation and fervent spirituality. Thank you for this grace.

To be part of the evangelizing mission of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother is to be committed to the values and principles proposed by the foundress, M. Frances Streitel.

*Genira, SSM Associates (Brazil)*

*Faith, hope and charity*

*“The Lord gave this woman a strong faith, confident hope, and a glowing love”*

In recent years, Mother Frances has become a role model for me in her faith in God. She lived her “yes” to her vocation unreservedly and tirelessly sought the will of God. Her faith was a living testimonial.

Mother Frances lived in hope, deeply rooted in her faith in the Word of God and in the Church, which was given to her in her vision. Despite the many difficulties, she brought Franciscan and Carmelite spirituality to the new community with unwavering perseverance.

Mother Frances lived the love of God that was given to her, never keeping it, but rather giving it to others. The community of sisters started out of love and I was called to this community to be a witness of God’s love for all creatures.

*Sr. Beate (Germany)*



Mother Frances Streitl was and is a woman of great and admirable virtues, but there is one aspect of her life that influences me and makes me seek to be in prayer in order to obtain this virtue—her abandonment to Christ, her losing everything in order to give everything to Christ.

Only a person of great humility and unshakeable faith would know how to hope in God and recognize her human limitations, as Mother Frances Streitl did. She sought refuge in the Lord with many hours of prayer, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at Holy Mass to deal with the trials that came her way.



Another aspect that also impacts me is poverty, as this virtue was dear to her. She mentions in one of her letters that it is the mother of all virtues. Every day, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, I hope to grow in poverty and abandonment to Christ.

*Nov. Nayara (Brazil)*



As I reflect on my being a Franciscan Sister of the Sorrowful Mother, I believe Mother Frances invited me to join her Sisters, through Sister Irma Hilger, Sister Marie Eichinger and Sister Victoria Kaminiski who arrived in St Lucia in 1961.

Our three Sisters invited young girls to a “come and see” I went to visit them, and was deeply impressed. We young girls often visited the Sisters. They mirrored Mother Frances to me by their simplicity, loving service, and prayer.

During the Easter week, on April 26th 1963, I joined six St Lucian Postulants. At that time Postulancy began on February 2nd, therefore I became a postulant on 2nd February, 1963.

Mother Frances’ Faith, Humility, perseverance: her love of the Cross, Mary and St Joseph formed her life. She was a contemplative.

Our senior Sisters did exemplify Mother Frances. Their simplicity, love of the Poor and loving service.

Certainly glorified our Loving God, our Government of St Lucia requested our Sisters (Sister Irma Hilger) to transform an old US NAVAL hospital: St Jude Hospital was born. Sr. Irma is still remembered. She is called the ICON of St Lucia. She mirrored Mother Frances.



I am always happy when the Congregation calls us to a renewal. This is one way of calling us to live Mother Frances' DREAM. A secular way of life is very subtle.

Our day of Renewal and yearly retreat is vital. It seems that Renewal day has shrunk to 1/2 Sunday, and the annual retreat has shrunk as well. I pray that our Venerable Mother Frances will intercede for us, She is in heaven and near us calling us to appreciate and welcome God's call.

My Beloved Mother Frances, I praise honor and thank God for you.

With you it was always 'Yes.' You responded to Jesus' Thirst.

Thank you for founding our Congregation: SSM, and for making it possible.

For me to be your daughter. I love you, and I want to blaze your trail. To you. Strong woman of the Lord, I entrust all of us. Pray for us and gather many women to continue what you and the lord started. Remain with us. I love you. Amen.

*Sr. Cecile (Caribbean)*



"Prayer and work must go hand in hand".

This statement made and lived by Mother Frances has greatly influenced my formative journey. Like her, I want my prayer to become work and my work to become prayer. I want to learn how to transform moments of spirituality into action as I carry out my daily activities and interact with people.

"Whoever asks receives – whoever asks trustingly receives even more surely."

The way Mother Frances lived the virtue of hope and set an example for us is a way for me to continue on my journey in the desire to configure myself to Christ, giving him all that I have and all that I am.

As long as I can breathe, there is hope for transformation, for conversion. Every day I ask the Lord for the grace of a sincere conversion from my weaknesses, which sometimes hurt others around me, so that I can bring hope and help those who need it, whether it's a friendly word or just to be heard.

*Sr. Janiele Maria (Brazil)*



It is with joy and gratitude that I write these few words to say that Mother Streitl's vision of the two mountains has always called my attention and inspired me in my vocation. Our life is based on prayer and work, and in my daily life I see how important the two are and how much they help me to grow in faith and in total abandonment to God and to my brothers and sisters.

*Sr. Maria (Brazil)*