

# REFLECTIONS ON THE VIRTUES OF MOTHER FRANCES STREITEL

## LOVE OF NEIGHBOR



# Love of neighbor



## 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.

(CCC #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 ... of the past ...

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)



## SOURCES

**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 Fr. J. F. 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?



### TESTIMONIALS ... of today ...

Mother Frances

My encounter with Mother Frances Streitl during my initial formation helped me to understand and appreciate her love of humility and poverty. Her spiritual life and mission greatly influenced my love for the poor and needy.

Both Mother Frances and I were inspired by the Holy Spirit to hear the cry of the poor, and to take positive action to alleviate their needs. With the spirit of humility, I requested financial assistance from persons who gave generously to the need to provide a house for a poor mother and her children. Also, with the meagre savings of the mother, I was able to have a simple and more suitable house constructed for this poor family.

This act of service resulted in much gratitude and joy from the family. Thanks to God and the example of Mother Frances, I was moved with zeal to help other poor and needy persons.

*Sr. Angela (Caribbean)*



Reconciliation and a willingness to forgive.

I was particularly moved by the description of Mother Frances' attitude towards her opponents in the talk about her life.

Mother Frances showed an outstanding attitude in the time of the great denials, in which she responded in love to injuries.

As she had to struggle with misunderstandings and denials throughout her life, this attitude of forgiveness is exemplary for me.

What life is free from denial and humiliation? Mother Frances followed in the footsteps of Jesus by focusing on the goal of her mission.

This love and openness towards those who rejected her can only be explained by her deep attitude of prayer. The time spent in front of the tabernacle and her contemplative orientation,

even during the day, allowed God's presence to grow stronger in her. She became the dwelling place of God. This also allowed grace to permeate her experiences and became her strength. That



is the gift of contemplation.

I can therefore see Mother Frances as a role model for our time.

At a time when hatred, war, discord and revenge are flooding the entire world, the life of Mother Frances, her reconciliation and love is the exemplary way for people and nations, it is the only way. Reconciliation leads to peace. This is where I see the real mission for our community today.

*Sr. Klarita (Germany)*



When I think of Mother Frances, the first thing that always comes to mind is her desire to care for the sick, especially the most suffering.

She herself, in the norms of 1883, reveals the reason for her high regard for the sick – because the “Divine Savior” is hidden in them.

She knew only too well that to care for the sick with a mother’s love is to love Christ Himself, and that in doing so we are enriched with the most precious of treasures: time and eternity.

She urged to be even more loving and kind to the sick sisters. She wanted them to feel that they weren’t useless and to recover more quickly.

These expressions of tenderness by Mother Frances have been a great encouragement to me all these years when I have had the grace to care for the sick (including some of our sisters) and to be with them until their last breath.

These were painful moments, but they were also full of Grace, and I truly experienced that the Lord gave me the strength to “stand under those crosses” in order to be a presence of love and hope.

*Sr. Monica (Italy)*



## **Assigning blame**

### **“Never point the finger at others”**

This sign particularly affected me, because how quickly do I blame others or accuse them of wrong behavior? This happens quickly in large communities. People have too little or no knowledge, but only a suspicion about the various incidents.

The path that Mother Frances shows us here reveals her knowledge of human nature. Only the path of charity changes people and the most diverse situations, which means: **love, be merciful, always be ready to apologize instead of accusing.**

My own experiences and dark sides are changed by a merciful attitude and loving interaction can develop in our life together.

I find plenty of opportunities to practice this in my daily work and Mother Franziska is a role model for me. I thank her for these examples.

*Sr. Fortunata (Germany)*



“I have appointed you to go out and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (Jn 15:16)

Mother Frances Streitel of the Cross – Her two special virtues, gifts, attributes that speak to me mostly are her deep HUMILITY and her great LOVE FOR THE POOR she encountered daily during her life as she states- her desire to correct “the ills of her time.”

Even though being our Foundress, she De-PRIDED herself in all humility by being there for her sisters and worked with them- she did her house chores; when she was deposed from her office she served the sisters and worked along with them in the kitchen, she never complained. She founded her peace, joy and strength through daily adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, knowing the “Potter was shaping the clay” into the form He desired, Our Congregation.

Mother Frances demonstrated her Christ likeness love for the poor throughout her life, our charism and especially her ministering to the children at the orphanage in Castel Sant’Elia, where she was unrecognizable, but had the opportunity to unite the Active with the Contemplative life and to pray for the “prosperity and growth for the community.”

Mother Frances became the greatest example of Servant Leader for all of us SSMs, knowing all will be done for His greater honor and glory.

Mother, pray for us your daughters, and all Franciscans throughout the world.

*Sr. Michael (Caribbean)*

