

REFLECTIONS ON THE VIRTUES OF MOTHER FRANCES STREITEL

OBEDIENCE



Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother

Third Order Regular of Saint Francis of Assisi

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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.



TESTIMONIALS ... of the past ...

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



SOURCES

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

WRITINGS OF MOTHER FRANCES

Letters to Fr. J. F. 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



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 QUESTION:

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?



TESTIMONIALS... of today ...

I admire Mother Frances for this: in every difficult situation in her life, she was solely focused on fulfilling God's will, entrusting herself completely to God's guidance with courage and boundless trust in God.

Mother Frances' trust that God does everything right sustains me and helps me in my life.

I often don't understand God's guidance, but I firmly believe that God makes no mistakes.

Sr. Meinrada (Germany)



Mother Frances was always respectful to Father Jordan in her letters to him but when she was clear about what God wished of her, she did not hold back from telling him what God required of her. Then she would be very regretful for writing her thoughts. As I became more aware of Mother Frances' letters I found her letters like these a bit entertaining since she seemed unable to refrain from telling Father Jordan what God was asking of her. I believe that was a gift of God to her.

I pray that that may be my gift from God, too: Always to be respectful to leadership but not to be fearful to share insights I believe are God's will. That will ensure that another view is presented when I am convinced God is making known to us for the congregation or for me as an individual.

Sr. Helen (USA)



This being the 25th of the month, I pray for an increase of religious vocations to the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, especially in places where we minister to the poor and needy. I also pray in gratitude to Mother Frances for an increase of vocation in Tanzania and Brazil.

Mother Frances, Foundress of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

Often was found in front of the Blessed Sacrament in contemplative prayer,
The example of faithfulness to serving the poor and needy was her gift to us .

Having answered God's call, Mother Frances was faithful to serving others when convenient and inconvenient.

Ever faithful, Mother Frances was often misunderstood.

Returned temporarily to her family home where she connected with Father Jordan--the Church separated the two of them as being called to found two different congregations.

From Maria Stern to Mount Carmel to founding a new religious community that would combine action and contemplation.

Returning from activities she believed were God's will for her and exhausted, she was deposed from office of Superior General.

Always seeking God's will!

Never shrug from living a life of humility!

Could not fathom a woman as foundress of a religious community.

Every humble, she submitted to Mother Johanna Ankenbrand, her replacement.

Seeking God's will, she served the poorest of the poor at Castel Sant'Elia.

Sr Dorothy Ann (USA)



My place

What has always impressed me about Mother Frances is her desire and determination to find the "place" that God had planned for her.

"I was to find out where He wanted me" (Letter to Fr. Jordan #28): This is what Mother Frances wrote in a letter to Father Jordan in 1883, and the desire to *find my place* represented an important turning point in my journey of discernment. In 2016, I began to feel called to a specific vocation,



but I still felt resistance and fear. That year, I participated in an evangelization mission with young people, brothers, and sisters. On the last day, as we enjoyed a cup of coffee together, one of the brothers said, "These days have been so beautiful. Once again, I have experienced that this is truly my place," referring to his consecrated life. I thought to myself, "I wish I could say that one day!" When I got home, I began to take my search for my place seriously. In 2020,

I entered the convent and, as I learned more about Mother Frances, I was inspired by her perseverance and commitment to God's will, despite the many difficult moments she faced.

Mother Frances's life was not easy: As she said herself, she understood that the Lord would lead her along unexpected paths (see Letter to Fr. Jordan #28). She lived in "her place" until the end, serving the poor children of Castel Sant'Elia.



Today, I live my vocation with a sense of joy at having found "my place," yet I am also aware that, if I want it to continue bearing fruit and bring fuller life to others, I must continue listening to the "places" that the Lord chooses for me, just as Mother Frances and Mary did.

Sr. Ambra (Italy)



Talking about obedience is not very fashionable today because it is considered a renunciation of freedom. But that is not the case. Obedience, in its deepest meaning of active and generous listening to others, is a great act of love by which we accept dying to ourselves so that our brothers and sisters may grow and live. When it is professed and lived with faith, obedience reveals a luminous path of self-giving that can help the world rediscover the value of sacrifice, the capacity for lasting relationships, and the maturity in community that goes beyond the "feelings" of the moment by establishing itself in fidelity.

Obedience is a school of freedom in love.

Pope Leo XIV,
September 18, 2025