

...A Book for St Francis

SUMMER 2016 UPDATE

"We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way"

- St Francis of Assisi



From October 4th, 2015 (Feast of St Francis) to October 4th, 2016, the Franciscans of Halifax celebrate the tenth anniversary of foundation.

These ten years of life are the witness of the fidelity of God and the fidelity of His Holy People that desired, prayed and worked hard to give life to the Franciscans and make them grow.

This year is a celebration for the whole Church of Halifax-Yarmouth and in particular for us brothers and sisters, our friends and benefactors, to whom this community has been entrusted as a gift.

God looked upon His People in Nova Scotia, touched our hearts and inspired us, so that all together we may build His Kingdom of love on earth.

This endeavour comes from God and God is giving it the strength to live and to grow, despite any doubts or obstacles, as God's plan is more effective than our human plans. Let us pray that we all may remain always faithful to God's call.

HAPPY TENTH BIRTHDAY FRANCISCANS OF HALIFAX!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It's ten years that we walk together striving to fulfill God's Will in our lives. This is the most amazing adventure that we could ever imagine.

All of us are looking at a miracle of God's Providence as this Franciscan family is walking and growing, in Faith and Service to the Church. Who could have said that we were going to celebrate this anniversary with so many things to be grateful for?

Ten years ago the Holy Spirit moved the hearts of few priests and lay people in Lower Sackville, impelling them to look for a closer and deeper relationship with God. That was most definitely the hand of God touching this Archdiocese, so to transform its future and the future of the whole Church. And God's People answered to His prompting, dedicating themselves to prayer, committing to discover in the depth of themselves the seed of Light that they received in Baptism and make it determine their own lives.

By God's Grace, a little bit at the time, this movement of the Holy Spirit began to involve people from other parishes and finally many friends from everywhere joined in the adventure to rebuild the Church, starting from the spiritual foundation of Faith. And in fact the first step was to rediscover and feed our Faith; and, as soon as the time was right, many vocations flourished, for Priesthood, Consecrated Life and Holy Marriage. All this didn't come from smart programs but from the commitment to live out our Baptism.

What is the secret for all these blessings? We believe that God is always taking care of all of us with infinite Love and Mercy. What makes the difference for us who love St. Francis is the place from where we receive these gifts and answer to them. A superficial answer that will allow us to remain comfortable in the "place" where we are, cannot be the right one. We had enough of that and we can see where this attitude brought us. The difficulties that our Church is facing are a clear evidence of it.

Faith has two components. One is the Truth that we are taught and that we are called to know. The other one is the mystery of our communion with God that happens in the depth of our heart, our friendship, the experience of His Presence in our soul and in our life; an experience that grows and becomes complete trust, like the trust of a child.

This is the foundation where we can build. This is the strength that we need to live our life in holiness, serving our God in all those that He Himself sends us out of His Providence. Many times we heard these words: "Let's go... Let's go to evangelize...". Good! Let's take this invitation seriously and let's begin to evangelize the depth of our souls, so that we may surrender to God and let Him build His Kingdom. And if the Lord will be gracious, He will allow us to help Him through the work of our hands.

I would like to take a quick moment to update you about how our brothers and sisters have been doing in this past year; how we have been helping the Lord by the work of our hands. The biggest thing that happened in our Franciscan Family this year was the death of Sr Phyllis Rooney, one of our contemplative sisters from San Damiano convent. Sr Phyllis served the Lord as a consecrated religious for 56 years, and we were saddened by her loss, but rejoiced to know that now one of our members is praying for us from Heaven. The other sisters at San Damiano, Sr Patricia and Sr Therese along with their chaplain, Fr Joseph, continue to pray for our community and sustain us in our pastoral and study ministries.

This year the brothers were very busy both here in Nova Scotia and in Rome. In Rome, Br Peter has been continuing his theological studies, and will come home in September to be ordained to the transitional diaconate. Br John has been studying philosophy, Br Augustine studying psychology, Fr Pio is studying Patristics, and Fr Christopher is doing Biblical studies. Fr Roberto has been over in Rome with them helping to provide a good environment for studies and encouraging them in their work.

The brothers here in Nova Scotia have been occupied with pastoral ministry. Fr Paul was ordained to the priesthood in February, and was assigned to assist at Blessed Mother Teresa Parish in Halifax, as well as to take up ministry to the sick and suffering. He will be completing a course this fall to help him develop his already well-developed skills in chaplaincy work. Fr James continues to take care of the churches of St Catherine's and St Theresa's, and Br Nathanael the parish of St Anthony's. Br Grant has been coordinating the Daily Bread Outreach program at St Mary's Cathedral, as well as taking over running the Veritas Bookstore since the death of our dear friend Luciano Bianchini in February. Fr Francesco was relieved of his pastoral duties in Truro this year, and has been able to spend some more time working on formation for our community, as well as filing in for priests around the province.

The active sisters have finished their time studying in Ottawa for the time being, and both Sr Edith Marie and Sr Teresa have returned home from their theological studies, ready to help bring their insights and education back to the people we serve here. Sr Ilaria continues her studies at Dalhousie in music, and Sr Miryam joined her there this year to complete some pre-requisite courses to go on to study nursing. Sr Angela, Sr Miryam and Sr Gemma are working on completing a diploma program at the Atlantic School of Theology, to learn more about evangelizing the people here in our diocese. Sr Bernadette and Sr Gemma are serving the diocese by working in the archdiocesan offices downtown, and Sr Rita is helping Fr James to serve the people at St Theresa's parish. Sr Elizabeth has been giving her time and talents in ministry at Veritas Bookstore. Sr Angela has continued her ministry of visiting and helping elderly women in the St Theresa's/St Catherine's area. For the summer, Sr Edith has been helping Br Grant with Veritas, and Sr Ilaria has been helping with the Outreach program.

Let us pray my brothers and sisters that the Lord may give us the courage to enter within ourselves so that we may discover the great beauty of our soul, along with our poverty and weakness that makes us irresistible to God's tender Love. Dwelling in that place, we will discover how much the sight of the world can be different and how close God can be experienced. May God bless you all.