In spite of the darkness, cynicism, and disbelief that pervades our culture, our heart is still alive! It still requires “space” for God even if it is only a small space. The poorest among us today seem to be the most powerful people in the world. They are the “sinner” and the “debtor” that “do not know.” And often they are the ones who know the meaning of the “true life.” They believe, even if they are the last few that need to be embraced by God. But they are the true life. It is the poor who have “the greatest need of faith.”

The remarkable power of Saint Francis to change his culture, to “seize the house that was falling into ruin,” came not so much from what he did, but what he became. As Saint Paul proclaims: “Behold, Christ lives in me.” His influence comes not from his programs and projects, but his life. The secret of little Saint Francis’ life – he incarnated the Gospel in his life. The “Vita Crucis” became Saint Francis’ life.

Today, more than in the thirteenth century, the world and the Church need Saint Francis, that which one? Certainly, Saint Francis is a familiar saint in the third millennium. Saint Francis the ascetic, the revolutionary; the rebel; the flower child; the vagabond; the confused dreamer? Which one?

I would like to propose an image of Francis that is also familiar to many of us. It is an image of the Benedictine monk. It was at this time I was still in grammar school that today makes more sense to me than ever. It is the image of Christ crucified teaching Saint Benedict. Saint Benedict of Nursia knew Francis as Francis in fact. He embraced the Christ crucified. In his refutation of “Vino Consolme” in the book A Short Course on Consolator Life, Fr. Pietro Gaetani Colombo, “Vita Sancti Benedicti Elements in the Spirit of the Rule in the Work of the Friars, from the time of the Roman Empire where at least there was an understanding, although often flawed, of right or wrong, and good or evil.

Whoever people realize it or not, practice their faith on the last, not on the first day of the month, our attitude is not the same, our system, our mentality and our understanding of family life, etc. – “The true faith is visible, but it is also true that it is not visible.” In our culture, society, and our country, the word “invisible” is anathema. God and knowledge are “invisible.” Without fail when we returned from Church on Sundays, were the words we heard each time we left home; the cousins on the third floor. “Go with God!” (Idz z Bogem!), the “flower child; the vagabond; the confused dreamer” which one?

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The Friars continue to “get the Word out” through many venues, such as Youth 2000 retreat, parish missions, and the Catholic Underground. The new evangelization is being joined into flame during this year of Faith. Fr. Isaac Spinharney is shown here teaching at a recent gathering of Corazon Puro in the Bronx. Corazon Puro is a movement of young people aspiring to give witness to the freedom and vision of charity according to Catholic teaching. Fr. Appetito Torres and a group of committed lay people are leading up this movement which is quickly spreading in Nicaragua and Honduras as well. For more information visit their website at CorazonPuro.com.

It’s hard to say what’s most exciting about the investiture of the novice—he’s getting some clothing together for our guests at the St. Padre Pio Shelter in the Bronx. Corazon Puro is a movement of young people striving to give witness to the freedom and vision of charity according to Catholic teaching. Fr. Appetito Torres and a group of committed lay people are leading up this movement which is quickly spreading in Nicaragua and Honduras as well. For more information visit their website at CorazonPuro.com.

“No greater love is there than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friend” (Jn 15:13). The prostration during the litany of the saints during the final profession of vows is a dramatically honest gesture of the goal of “all peoples” that the Lord Jesus draws to His humble and personal love for them.

When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself” (Jn. 12:32). Fr. Lewis Leonelli (top left), Br. Crispin Ronaldai (middle) and Br. David Rinaldi (bottom left) worked together with some of the novice to help a friend of the friars in Long Beach, NY to recover from the flood from Hurricane Sandy. Their enthusiastic guests at St. Anthony’s were especially comparative to their prayers and their willingness to serve to help the victims of the storm, perhaps because they already knew what it is like to lose everything. The friars in the New York and New Jersey area have been responding to various needs of the victims of the storm and have gratefully seen how many people also want to help.