

Since we had left Montpellier so early in the morning, we had not yet celebrated Mass. When we inquired where we would need to go to find a Mass in English, we were informed to go *down* the hill and back *past* the shrine. This did not stir the best attitude in my heart. Yet *down* the hill we trekked and *past* the shrine we walked to find a small chapel to celebrate Mass.

I was now hungry, tired, overwhelmed by the crowds, and beginning to feel confirmed in my conviction that pilgrimages to noted shrines were not in keeping with my general demeanor. All I wanted was some quiet space to pray and experience some solace from the Lord. It seemed none could be found.

I decided to ascend once again to the hotel in hopes of an early evening of rest, determined to try again the next day to find the promised peace of this pilgrimage site. Unfortunately, the hostel was also home to a spirited group of young Spanish pilgrims who felt compelled to spend the late hours of the night serenading an equally energetic troupe from Italy. The gift of utter exhaustion, however, was able to deaden the rhythmic clapping and lull me into slumber.

The next morning I rose early, as is my custom, to head to the grotto of Our Lady for a time of prayer and solitude before the crowds arrived. It was a brisk morning for the month of July. Few pilgrims ventured forth at this moment. I had, at least for a time, the quiet for which I longed.

It was at this moment that I felt my heart stirring to visit the baths. Although I had no noted ailment that would compel me to the "healing waters," I felt this interior need to get on line. Although the baths do not officially open until nine o'clock, the lines were beginning to form. I pondered whether to join the masses. Everything within me wanted to refrain, and yet I felt compelled to follow my heart.

I decided to wander by the exterior pavilions and simply take a look. It was then that I was sighted by one of the attendants, beckoned over, and led by the hand past the waiting crowds to be seated at the forward end of the line. I was embarrassed, a bit self-conscious, and wrestling with the thought that I should leave since I felt I was not in need of a healing.

Just as I thought it was best for me to allow those in greater need to take advantage of the baths, the Rosary was begun. I determined to stay for the prayers and then leave. Halfway through the second decade, a French auxiliary bishop was seated next to me. This only highlighted my sense of being out of place.

As the Rosary came to a conclusion, an attendant invited the bishop and me, along with a few others, to proceed inside the curtains. We were instructed to disrobe leaving on only our

undergarments. I must say that I was feeling considerably self-conscious, especially seated next to a bishop, who was also preparing for the baths. I could only imagine at that moment that this must be what judgment day is like - the universal equalizer.

One by one we were invited to proceed behind the final curtain which shrouded the final place of the baths. I had removed my glasses in preparation for being fully immersed (actually your head is kept above water) and thus was unable to see anything clearly. It was at this moment that someone said to me in heavily accented English, "Face the Lady and tell her what you want." I must admit that my initial reaction was one of shock that there was a woman behind the curtains. I then realized in my blurred vision that the attendant was referring to a statue of Our Lady at the far end of the pool. In what was a few short seconds of immersion, I felt an eternity of presence. Our Lady of Lourdes was lifting the burdens of my office, the challenges of my life, the worries of my family, and the failings of my spiritual life and placing them under Her mantle of protection. I felt exhilarated; I felt restored; I felt the peace for which I had so longed. I knew that Our Lady was present to lighten the burdens of my soul. I knew why I needed to come to Lourdes. I needed the attention of a Mother.

I only had one more day to spend at the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes. I had only twenty-four hours remaining to fulfill the indulgenced walk through town, experience the Eucharistic procession, and participate in the Marian candle-light procession of the evening. I had so much to do, and yet none of it was necessary, for I had experienced my Mother's care in the baths of Lourdes.

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal have a deep devotion to Our Lady. She is a source of consolation and grace that we may live our vocations as friars ever more fully. Our Blessed Mother has been, and we believe always will be, our source of solace in the midst of the many challenges of our days. She is the cause of our joy, the source of our hope. She is our model and our Mother and the one who always brings us to Jesus.

In all honesty, I cannot say that I have overcome my aversion to crowds and pilgrim sites of great popularity. But I can say that I learned a great lesson at Lourdes that day. I know that Our Lady wanted to bring me to a greater appreciation of Her maternal care for me. I know She wanted me to experience the limits of my tolerance that I might learn Her consoling presence. I am confident that She drew me to the distant shrine of Lourdes to strengthen my confidence that She is always close at hand. I am deeply grateful to Our Lady for these lessons learned at Lourdes!

## CFR FRIARIES

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Comayagua, Honduras, CA*

**Convento San Antonio**  
011-505-772-2757  
*Apartado 283  
Matagalpa, Matagalpa  
Nicaragua, CA*

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Newark, NJ 07103*

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*427 East 155 Street,  
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**St. Crispin Friary**  
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**St. Felix Friary**  
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*15 Trinity Plaza,  
Yonkers, New York 10701*

**St. Fidelis Friary**  
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London, E161LX, England*

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(Kindly call between 9 AM-5 PM  
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## YOUTH 2000 RETREATS - 2009

Jan. 9 - 11.....Antioch, CA  
Jan. 16 - 18 .....Midland, TX  
Jan. 16 - 18 .....Island Park, NY  
Feb. 6 - 8 .....Beaumont, TX  
Feb. 20 - 22 .....Indialantic, FL  
March 6 - 8 .....Owensboro, KY  
March 13 - 15 .....Briarcliffe Manor, NY  
March 20 - 22.....Madison, WI  
April 17 - 19 .....Fort Worth, TX  
April 24 - 26 .....Garnerville, NY

**For more information on Youth 2000, call  
214-361-2581. For Youth 2000 retreats in the  
New York area, call 718-349-1157**

## CFR PARISH MISSIONS - 2009

Jan. 10 - 15 St. Mary's  
Washingtonville, NY  
March 7 - 12 Sacred Heart  
Monroe, NY  
March 21 - 26 Our Lady of Fatima  
Scarsdale, NY  
Mar. 28 - Apr. 2 Assumption  
Centereach, NY

**For more information, contact the mission  
office at 973-623-3307**

*For information on the Franciscan Sisters of  
the Renewal, contact:*

**Sr. Lucille Cutrone, CFR**  
Convent of San Damiano  
1661 Haight Avenue, Bronx, NY 10461  
718-829-9466

[www.franciscansisterscfr.com](http://www.franciscansisterscfr.com)



## ETC.

**Young men and women** interested in discerning their call to our way of life may contact Fr. Gabriel Mary Bakkar at St. Joseph Friary at 212-281-4355 or Sr. Francis O'Donnell at Our Lady Queen of Angels Convent at 212-831-3334.

**Information about the life and apostolates** of the friars, and upcoming CFR events including the "Catholic Underground," can be found on our website. **Inspirational messages** written by the friars and sisters can be found by clicking on "e-letter" from the homepage: [www.franciscanfriars.com](http://www.franciscanfriars.com).

**Oratory of Divine Love:** Fr. Benedict provides a weekly meditation on the internet for these meetings which are both instructional and prayerful. Visit the website at [www.oratorydl.org](http://www.oratorydl.org).

## FRIARS' BOOKS, TAPES, AND MUSIC

**Fr. Benedict Groeschel, CFR**  
Spiritual Books  
Box 2003, Larchmont, NY 10538  
[www.franciscanfriars.com](http://www.franciscanfriars.com)

**Fr. Andrew Apostoli, CFR**  
Delight of All Saints  
PO Box 111825, Naples, FL 34108  
(239) 390-2435  
[www.franciscanfriars.com](http://www.franciscanfriars.com)

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Franciscan Friars of the Renewal

Issue 39, Winter 2008

## A LESSON FROM LOURDES

By Fr. Bernard Marie Murphy, CFR

The year 2008 marked the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady to a young French girl, Bernadette, in the mountain village of Lourdes. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were expected to trek to this once-obscure town nestled in the Pyrenees Mountains. Even Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, made the trip from Rome this past September to pay homage to Our Lady and Saint Bernadette. Thousands are drawn to this city noted for miracles and peace, seeking the solace that only the Mother of God could truly offer.



I am generally not attracted to places of pilgrimage. Perhaps it is the crowds or the swirl of merchants. I experience no need or desire to travel many miles to a “special site.” I like to think that I am content with my own special places of prayer and that Our Lord and Our Lady can be encountered anyplace a heart is genuinely given to God. But this summer was strangely different. I felt some prompting, even a desire to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes - particularly during this special year of remembrance.

This summer I had the opportunity to travel to England and France in conjunction with two major events. The first, in London, was a Catholic Miracle Rally. This gathering drew over a thousand participants for a weekend of prayer and fellowship. I was privileged to be a speaker at the event and so focused my remarks on the healing that comes from a good Confession. As is typical of such gatherings, the presenter is often overwhelmed by the participants who desire to take advantage of the speaker’s “expertise.” I heard Confessions for hours! It was grace-filled, but exhausting.

The day following the Miracle Rally I traveled to Paray-le-Monial, a medieval town in Burgundy, made famous as the site of revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the cloistered

Visitation nun, Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. This ancient city was the gathering place of about five thousand young adults who were attending a World Youth Day Conference alternative (these were young people who could not afford to travel to Sydney, Australia). It was a week-long event that included talks, Mass, Adoration, and Confessions. Again, this event was most exhilarating, but overwhelmingly exhausting.

It was following these days of non-stop ministry and fellowship that I was looking forward to a couple of quiet days of prayer and rest at the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, in southwest France. Br. Seraphim, my travel companion, and I went by train from Paray-le-Monial to Montpellier, where we spent the night with his family. Early the next morning we boarded another train for the five-hour trip to Lourdes. The scenery from the window of the train coach was spectacular, but I must admit that I was anxious to arrive at our destination and just relax.

As the hours passed, the exhaustion from several weeks of ministry began to weigh heavily on me. I felt that the train would never come to its final destination. Minutes seemed to slow to hours and hours even to days. Finally, the train pulled into the Lourdes station, and hundreds of pilgrims disembarked. We had arrived - almost.

If you have ever been to Lourdes, you know that the city grew up along the Gave River, nestled in mountainous terrain. Anywhere you travel in this now bustling town is either uphill or downhill. I assure you that this is not what I desired after a five-hour train ride and a two-week ministry marathon. When we inquired as to where our hotel was located, we were told to walk *up* the hill past the shrine. The hostel was definitely *up* the hill and well *past* the shrine!

*(continued in center)*

► **Almost Home**  
*Ordination to the diaconate marks the last major step before a seminarian reaches the holy altar to offer the holy sacrifice. This Grayfriar photo shows Br. Jacob Hausman being ordained by Bishop Sullivan in the beautifully ornate chapel of Saint Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, New York. Br. Jacob was ordained with Br. Louis Leonelli and three other diocesan classmates who look forward to the Spring when they will be ordained to the holy priesthood.*

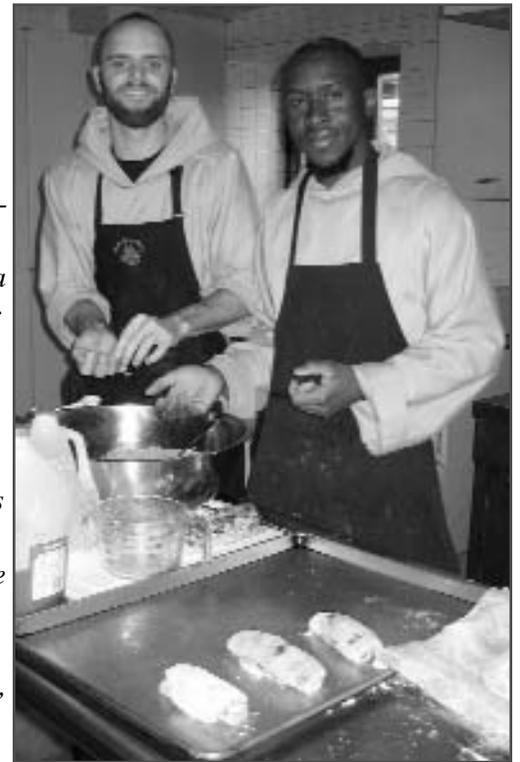


▲ **A Work Well-Done** - *Br. Francis Edkins is happy to present Fr. John Newman with his newest work, an oil painting of John Cardinal Newman. Fr. John Newman is pastor of the parish in which the friars reside in Bradford, England. Br. Francis' painting will be the showpiece in The Cardinal Newman Centre, which will soon be opening in Bradford. One of Br. Francis' other works, a portrait of Pope Benedict XVI, was presented to Bishop Roche and is prominently displayed in the Bishop's residence in Leeds.*



▲ **Election Results** - *Grayfriar News is happy to announce the re-election of Fr. Bernard Marie Murphy to the office of Community Servant. He is shown here (center) with his newly elected Council members: (l-r): Fr. Anthony Marie Baetzold, Community Vicar, Fr. Luke Mary Fletcher, Fr. Richard Roemer, Fr. Benedict Groeschel, and Fr. Mariusz Koch.*

► **A Year To Remember.** *The novitiate can be described as a "spiritual boot camp" or a year-long retreat - either way, it is a year friars never forget! During the novitiate young friars learn much about themselves and the vocation to which they are called. Through instruction, personal direction, and frequent periods of*



*silence, solitude, and manual work the novice enters into a time of trial and learning, yet also forges fraternal bonds which rarely weaken over time. Here are two of our novices in the novitiate kitchen baking some bread for their brothers: Br. Innocent Mariae Montgomery from Nebraska and Br. Tansi Mary Ibisi from Nigeria.*



◀ **Catholic Underground** - Every month many friends of the friars gather for a full evening of Adoration, entertainment, and fellowship at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Manhattan. It appears that the unique blend of the “spiritual and spirited” works very well thanks to the special “CFR touch.” The time and the talents of many friars go into creating an ambiance where young people can meet and enjoy the power and beauty of their Catholic faith. Yet all the friars admit that the secret gauge which measures the success of every gathering is not found in the number of those who surround the stage, but rather those who quietly wait on line for confession.

▼ **Drama in the Bronx** - Every year on the vigil of the feast of Saint Francis, Franciscans throughout the world gather to celebrate the death of their spiritual father. Known as the “Transitus,” this annual commemoration can take many forms, but in recent years, the friars have been celebrating it with a definite dramatic flair. Here we see some of our novices depicting the early friars surrounding the dying saint, played by Br. Juanmaria Arroyo Acevedo. One of our postulants from England, Alan Fimister, displayed some natural talent for the stage as he depicted the devil, who came fashionably dressed and taunted Francesco with a proper English accent!



▼ **A Family Photo** - Here is our most recent photo of all the friars who recently assembled for our General Chapter held at Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut. A General Chapter is held every three years so the friars can discuss and decide upon important issues which relate to the life and the work of the Community.





▲ **Region Being Born** - While our newest mission in Matagalpa, Nicaragua is not “down the road” from our friars in Comayagua, Honduras, it is close enough to offer the mutual fraternal support both of our missions need. Looking to the future, the friars are slowly creating clusters of friaries in and outside the United States which one day will be considered a region - for example, a Latin American and a European region. This photo was taken on a recent fraternal day at the ruins of Copan, Honduras.



▲ **Receiving the Veil** - Consider this Grayfriar photo special since for both the friars and sisters, the ceremony of investiture is a somewhat private affair. Yet here we get a glimpse at perhaps the most dramatic part of the sister’s rite, when Sister Lucille cuts the hair of the soon-to-be novices. Not only do the postulants leave behind their secular clothing and receive a religious habit, but they also receive a new name. The names of the new sister novices are (l-r) Sr. Emmanuel Marie McCabe, Sr. John Paul Marie Spinharney, Sr. Rita Benedicta Traphagan, and Sr. Chiara Rose Fedele.



▲ **Yes For Life** - “Inspiring” and “joyful” are words often used by family members and friends after they participate in celebrations hosted by the friars. This is particularly evidenced when the Community gathers each year to witness a friar’s final profession of vows, which marks the end of years of discernment and is when a friar definitively unites himself to the Community, living in obedience, in poverty, and in chastity. The friars who made their final vows are (l-r): Br. Youssef-Mariam Hanna, Br. David Mary Valenzuela, Br. Joachim Joseph Bellavance, Br. Sebastian Maria Kajko, Br. Paschal Maria Coby, Br. Antonio Maria Diez De Medina, and Br. Paul Raniero Donnelly.



▲ **A Special Call** - The example of holy Capuchins inspires friars to live their Franciscan life with a greater zeal and generosity. Recently, a number of our younger friars gathered at Most Blessed Sacrament Friary to learn more about their unique vocation as lay brothers, a call characterized by humility, availability, and generous service. The day was led by two Capuchins, Br. Leo Wollenweber and Br. Richard Merling, who spoke of their own call to the brotherhood and the heroic virtues of their confrere, Father Solanus Casey, a “brother-priest” who they believe is worthy of the title “Saint.”