

THE OFFERING

Let my body open to you,
completely, without the self
preserving ways of ego.

Let the crematory fires
consume what is false in me,
trusting the thrust of rising fire.

Let no thought impede this flame,
no fear of social opinion.
I agree to be naked now.

Keep me a flesh offering,
a burning coal in your hands,
a necklace for you made of my bones.ⁱ

COOKED IN PURE FIRE

Francis and Clare with the companions sat down on the bare ground together at St. Mary of the Angels to share a simple meal. When they began to eat, Francis began to speak of God's love with passion. The grace of God came upon them as if a wild wind. All were ecstatic and enraptured. Time and place stood still.

Their eyes and hearts shined and heated in the presence of love, like living flames, so much so that the people of the countryside and of Assisi itself saw the skies red with fire over St Mary of the Angels. They thought the church, the convent, and the woods were consumed in flames. Running they called out to their neighbors to come quickly and help. St Mary of the Angels is on fire.

When they reached there they found no fire. They saw Francis and Clare, with all their companions, sitting round their humble meal, absorbed in the godly folly of contemplation. They too felt the heat of the flame as it washed through their bodies and ignited their hearts, for the flame of divine love seeks to set on fire and consume with love even the souls of those who unknowingly approach it, so great is divine love. In this way like a blacksmith, God forges us into the molten love at God's very core. We become who we really are.ⁱⁱ

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the fourth order of Francis and Clare is to continue the Franciscan embrace of the world and its people in the context of our times. We are a community of diverse people from many

faiths and spiritual traditions who maintain their practices within those traditions. This is the foundational strength of our community. What we hold in common as persons is the experience of life. What we hold in common, whether we come from a theist or non-theist tradition, is the universal experience of an emanating love and compassion that infuses the world with life. That infusing compassion summons us all to discard the veils of separation and enter more consciously into union.

OUR MISSION

1. To transform by being transformed.
2. To be fully present in compassion with each other, our brothers and sisters in our own neighborhoods, and throughout the world; through prayer, meditation, service and community.
3. To mirror union to a world suffering under the illusions of division.
4. To invite all to the banquet of holy wisdom, not as converts but as companions. We are not a new religion.
5. To summon the peoples of this diverse world to cultivate a spirit of family and relationship with one another as children of the divine mystery.
6. To mainstream once again the questions that holy wisdom asks of us; as wisdom has asked throughout the generations from the beginning of time.
7. To face the challenges within us both individually and collectively.
8. To repent, reparate, reconcile and forgive.
9. To co-create, re-create, celebrate and play.
10. To be simple seeds of compassion coming from the many traditions scattered upon the earth.

COMING INTO SILENCE

Read three times aloud the following prayer from the Navajo Night Way Chant. Silently sit for a few minutes allowing words from the prayer to resound within you. Move into the silence. Your mission for this prayer is simple: just let it be within you.

In beauty may I walk.
All day long may I walk.
Through the returning seasons may I walk.

On the trail marked with pollen may I walk.
With grasshoppers about my feet may I walk.
With dew about my feet may I walk.
With beauty may I walk.
With beauty before me, may I walk.
With beauty behind me, may I walk.
With beauty above me, may I walk.
With beauty below me, may I walk.
With beauty all around me, may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, lively, may I walk.
In old age wandering on a trail of beauty, living again, may I walk.
It is finished in beauty.
It is finished in beauty.ⁱⁱⁱ

CONTEMPLATIONS

Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O, Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. - attributed to Brother Francis

A Vitality Translated Through You

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all Time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine: how good it is; nor how valuable it is; nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware

directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open ... - from a letter of
Martha Graham to Agnes De Mille

The Place God Calls You to

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. — Frederick Buechner

STORY:

What is the Mission of your soul, underneath all the bullshit? The real mission. Include things like:

What do you love?

What is your passion?

What is the world's deep hunger that touches you most deeply?

Does God love through you? Or not. How do you know?

What do you choose to do/be when no one is telling you what to do/be?

Describe the path of beauty as it is revealed to you.

What fire in you meets the fire of the universe?

BLESSING

You are blessed by your fire. May it burn strong.

ⁱ Flaherty, Barbara. *Spelling the World*. Chanting Press. Anchorage, AK 2008

ⁱⁱ Flaherty, Barbara. Contemporary adaptation from *The Little Flowers of Francis* by Fra Ugolino da Santa Maria, 14th century.

ⁱⁱⁱ From *The Navajo Night Way Ceremony*. Translator unknown.