

Photo: Father Brendan Wroblewski, OFM

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A Franciscan Reflection on the Cantic of the Creatures

Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity and Franciscan Friars of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province unite on this saint of Assisi's spiritual hymn. Born of intense suffering, its magnificence is in its intimate relationship with all of God's creatures. We invite you our brothers and sisters to contemplate with us the richness of life.

Reflections

Father Placid Stroik, OFM
Sister Elaine Turba, OSF
Sister Judanne Stratman, OSF
Sister Martinella Janz, OSF
Sister Theresa Feldkamp, OSF
Sister Renita Tadych, OSF
Sister Nathanael Jenks, OSF
Sister Julie Ann Sheahan, OSF

Images

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Sister Elizabeth Benvie, OSF
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*Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and all blessing.
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
And no man is worthy to mention Your name.*

Gratitude alone is our constant companion on our discovery journey of the cosmos.

Wendell Berry comments: “The mind that is not baffled is not employed”.

Gerard Manley Hopkins takes note of the grandeur of God to be found in every nook and cranny of the universe.

St. Bonaventure emphasizes that God’s footprints are every place in all creation.

Like Francis of Assisi and others, we too leave footprints for others. Somebody will see ours, inclining them to praise and search for the total good, supreme good, who alone is good.

-Fr. Placid Stroik, OFM

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*Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures,
Especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light.*

*Brother Sun,
center of our system
raising your rays of light
where the unknown dwells,
to penetrate the night,
revealing the course, the way
providing all creation
your blessings for the day.
That children of the earth,
so powerful and bright,
be thankful and grateful
against all evil's might.
You, Brother Sun, don't delay
the radiant splendor,
your beautiful light today.
Praise God! Praise God! Praise God!*

-Sister Martinella Janz, OSF

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*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.*

Sister Moon and Stars are not only precious beautiful, but are mirrors of the Eternal: "of you, Most High, they bear a likeness." In his many foot-travels Francis must have truly been 'taken up' with these creatures of night.

However, how could someone wracked with fire-branding eye treatments praise shining splendor, transcending pain with sheer joy? It had to be that Francis was truly warmly united with his Beloved Crucified Lord.

Thomas Merton caught this Franciscan spirit: "We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time... He is everywhere, He is in everything, and we cannot be without Him."

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Photo: Sister Carmen Marie Diaz, OSF



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*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
And through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather
Through which You give sustenance to Your creatures*

We cannot see the wind, but we can see and experience its effects: cooling us on warm days; drying the soil in spring as it is readied to receive the seeds that, when planted, provide food for all; bringing in cold weather so the earth has time for rest.

The same can be said about God. We are not able to see God, yet we are still able to know of God's presence in our lives. God's presence can be experienced in various ways: in the words or caring actions of another person, in the beauty of a sunset or the majestic mountains or the vast ocean, in the gentle breeze. God dwells within our hearts.

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Photo: Sister Mary Beth Kornely, OSF



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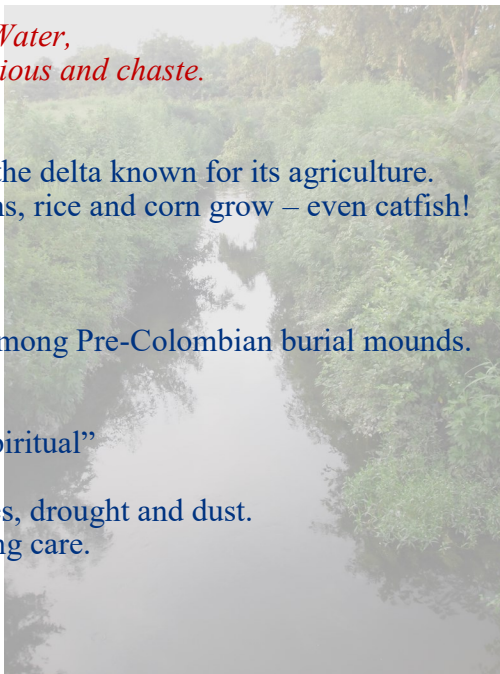
*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
Which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.*

The Yahoo and Mississippi Rivers shape the delta known for its agriculture.
Water, precious water, makes cotton, beans, rice and corn grow – even catfish!
How useful to creation and recreation!
Praise our Creator!

Natural bayous of water wean their way among Pre-Colombian burial mounds.
Praise God!

The humble and resilient “people in the spiritual”
depend upon and fear the power of water:
creeks and rivers, tornadoes and hurricanes, drought and dust.
They look to God and praise his comforting care.
Praise be my Lord

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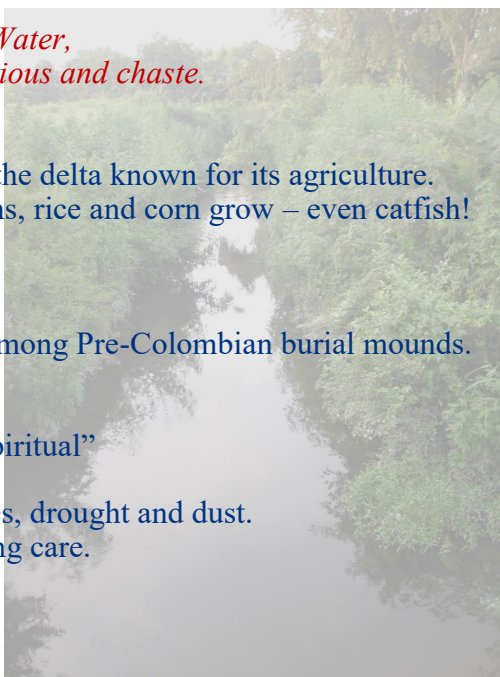
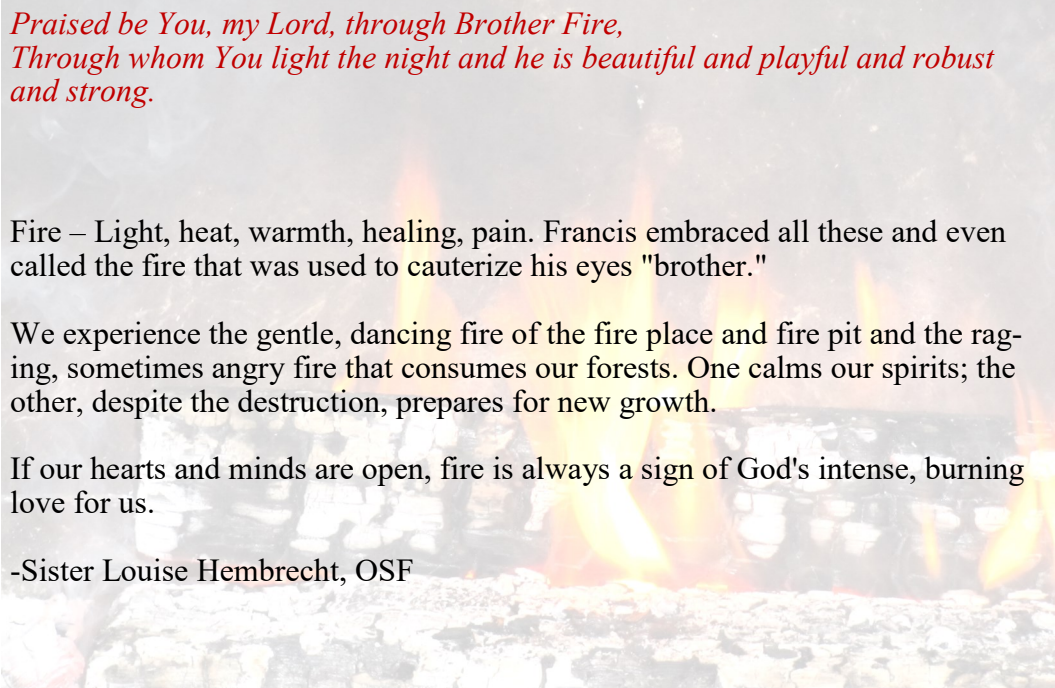


Photo: Sister Louise Hembrecht, OSF



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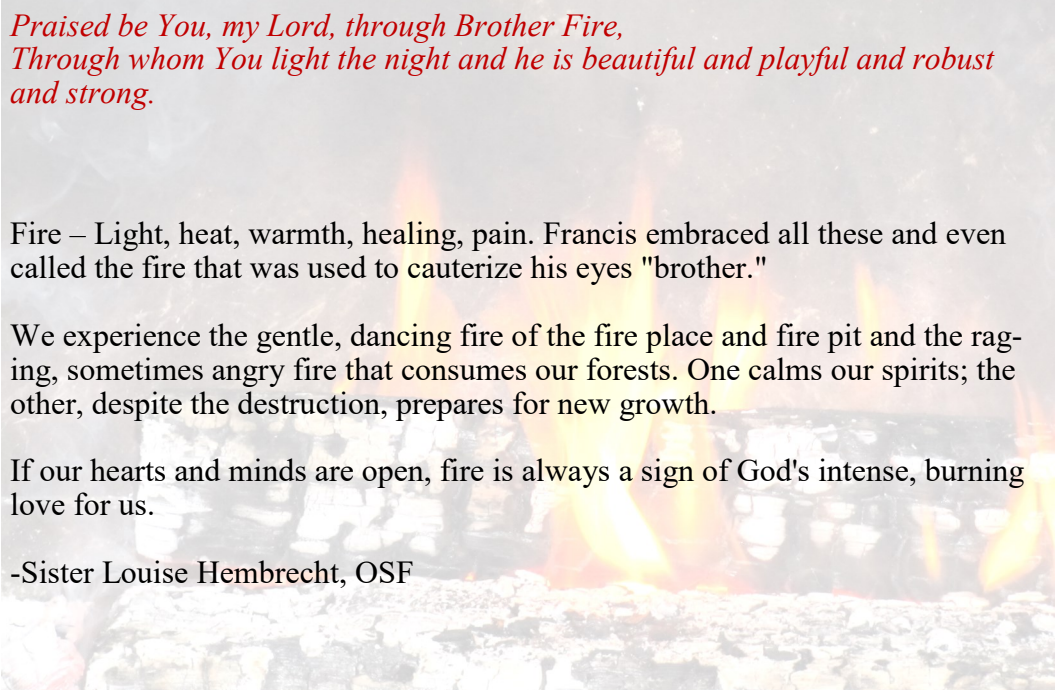
*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
Through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust
and strong.*

Fire – Light, heat, warmth, healing, pain. Francis embraced all these and even called the fire that was used to cauterize his eyes "brother."

We experience the gentle, dancing fire of the fire place and fire pit and the raging, sometimes angry fire that consumes our forests. One calms our spirits; the other, despite the destruction, prepares for new growth.

If our hearts and minds are open, fire is always a sign of God's intense, burning love for us.

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Photo: Sister Elizabeth Benvie, OSF



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*Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

These words of St. Francis come easily to mind and heart as one walks the beautiful grounds of our Motherhouse in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The gardens, trees, and landscaping speak of the deep respect and love for God's creation that is part of our Franciscan heritage.

I believe it is a task of love and a prayer experience for the many Sisters who care for and nurture the beauty of God's creation that surrounds us, a beauty that is a constant reminder of His love and goodness.

What in creation touches your heart and reminds you of God's goodness and love?

-Sister Theresa Feldkamp



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*Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your love and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace for by You,
Most High they shall be crowned.*

Pardon means forgiveness. St. Francis is praising those who forgive because they love God and their neighbors.

Sometimes people are unwilling to accept someone's offer of forgiveness. The rejection of this sincere offer causes the person who extends it to feel sorrow, guilt, and a sense of loss.

St. Francis understood because he extended forgiveness to Brother Elias who refused it. Though Francis suffered because of Elias' rejection, he still prayed for Elias. He also praised God for Elias, and he gives praise for all who have pardoned for love. Lord, help us to follow his example.

-Sister Renita Taddy, OSF

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*Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.*

Death and birth are both part of the mystery of life. Francis speaks of bodily death and seems to relate it to a "second" death. That raises questions about a first death and birth.

Perhaps leaving the security of the womb may be the first death we experience. We passed through birth into a new life filled with the beauty of creation and with some challenges. The second death gives us a promise of birth into eternal life where we will be embraced only by the fullness of God's beauty and goodness in the company of the other saints.

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*Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.*

*Last of all,
But not the least,
Having sought
to praise You
By means of
all Your creatures, Lord,
I turn back
to my own 'creaturehood'
And ask You
to accept 'me'
as praise as well
Promising
to thank and serve You
With "heart-felt"
and "lived humility."*

-Sister Nathanael Jenks, OSF

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