

we are made in God’s image and likeness, we are able to communicate this divine beauty. We all know that sin alone is what disfigures this beauty, thus we have to constantly seek God in His mercy in order to radiate true beauty.

Years ago, I had the privilege of meeting Mother Teresa. Her bent, worn body, her wrinkly face, her calloused hands were in one sense anything but beautiful, but one look into her eyes and upon her remarkable smile was truly beautiful! The beauty of holiness is breathtaking. Many people who have met Blessed Pope John Paul II in person would never forget the radiance of his eyes, a true reflection of God’s beauty.

But haven’t we all had this encounter with God as beauty? Music that lifts us beyond ourselves, a sunset or sunrise that somehow is totally different, a little child at play! And haven’t we seen in the eyes of people we have encountered the radiance of God’s beauty! My 97-year-old mother is suffering with Alzheimer’s and dementia. She doesn’t speak too much anymore and I don’t know who she recognizes. This past Christmas, while visiting my mom, I had a beautiful experience. One morning, Teresa, my mother’s caregiver, got her out of bed and slowly wheeled her to the kitchen where I was waiting. As the door opened from the bedroom, my mom opened her beautiful blue eyes super wide and with a smile said “I love you!” Yes, God is revealed in beauty.

The “Beautiful Lady” who was seen by Saint Bernadette is humanity fully redeemed. Mary, our solitary boast, reveals the reflection of our beautiful God in her humanity - humanity without the stain and the disfigurement of sin! It is beauty that *reveals* the divine and it is beauty that leads us *to* the divine. Von Balthasar wrote, “Every experience of beauty points to the infinite.” Saint Francis understood this so

well. He would call Mary “His Lady” In his canticle of praise he calls the sun beautiful; the stars precious and beautiful; and brother fire beautiful. Surrounded by the beauty of creation, his heart was with the presence of God. It is no wonder then that both Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict have urged the Church to return to beauty - beauty in celebrating the liturgy, beauty in our church buildings, and beauty in Christian art and music. Beauty redeems!

Fr. Cantalamessa, the Capuchin Friar who is the preacher to the Papal household, writes: “The model and source of redeemed beauty is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ! (2 Cor. 4:6) Beauty is no longer the abstract “splendor of truth,” as Plato defined it, but is concretely the splendor of Christ. Even Beauty was incarnated,” (Contemplating the Trinity, page 83.) Can it be that part of the new evangelization so desperately needed today will come through a rediscovery of beauty?

Fr. Cantalamessa reflects on the words of Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 2: 6-7, replacing the word wisdom with beauty.

“Among the lovers of beauty, we too speak of beauty, although it’s not the beauty of this world, but a divine beauty, which has remained hidden and which God desired before the ages for our glorification.” ~



*(l-r) Sr. Francis, Sr. Francesca, and Sr. Joseph are pictured here with 4 girls from the sisters’ Summer Bible Program at Our Lady Queen of Angels Convent. For two weeks in July, the sisters, along with many volunteers, run a day program for 50 inner-city kids of East Harlem. The days are filled with songs, games, arts & crafts, catechesis, and the Mass. The sisters live in the midst of government housing and the children from the projects many times say that these joyous weeks with the sisters are the highlight of their summer.*

(Kindly call between 9 AM-5 PM and 7 PM-9 PM)

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Nov. 4 - 6 ..... Madison, WI  
Nov. 11 - 13 ..... Oshkosh, WI  
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Nov. 18 - 20 ..... Lombard, IL  
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**For more information on Youth 2000, call 214-361-2581. For Youth 2000 retreats in the New York area, call 718-349-1157**

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

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## ETC.

**Young men and women** interested in discerning their call to our way of life may contact Fr. Gabriel Mary at St. Joseph Friary at 212-281-4355 or Sr. Francis at Our Lady Queen of Angels Convent at 212-831-3322.

**Information about the life and apostolates** of the friars, and upcoming CFR events including the “Catholic Underground,” can be found on our website.

**Traditional and Contemporary Music by the friars:** Sacred Chant and Praise and Worship CD’s are available through Francesco Productions.  
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**Lay persons** who are interested in participating in the work and spirituality of the friars as a Lay Associate should contact Fr. Louis in the Bronx at 718-665-2441 or Fr. Glenn in Newark at 973-622-6622.

**The Friars and Sisters rely on donated cars** to get us where the Lord wants us to go. If you are thinking of passing along your car (tax-deductibly) and it isn’t yet terminally ill, please contact us at any friary or convent.

## FRIARS’ BOOKS, TAPES AND MUSIC

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**Franciscan Friars of the Renewal**

**Issue 44, Summer 2011**

## REDEEMED BY BEAUTY - BEAUTY REDEEMED

By Fr. Mariusz Casimir Koch, CFR

In all the approved apparitions of Our Lady, there are some common themes: conversion, prayer, penance. In addition, Our Lady as the “First Evangelist” who brought the Word to us in her womb, always calls us to obedience to Jesus: “Do whatever He tells you.”

There is something else common to the experience of those who have “seen” an apparition of Mary. In the descriptions of Our Lady she is always called *beautiful*. In fact, she is described as *beautiful beyond description!* Saint Bernadette, the simple peasant girl of Lourdes, would only say, “I saw a most beautiful Lady!”

A young man I know, when speaking of his conversion, tells about his encounter with beauty that changed his life. He was deeply entrenched in the culture of the day. Living in a college dorm, he was surrounded by pornography and all that accompanied the fraternity scene. As a non-practicing protestant, he was far from God and any Christian values. During a visit to the Ringling Museum of Art in Florida, he came upon a painting of Our Lady called the *Blue Madonna*. He was struck by the beauty of the painting and even more so by the beauty of the “Youthful Lady” in the painting. This experience was so profound that contemplating the painting led him to tears. Hours later he left the museum a changed man.



This encounter with beauty led him to God - and eventually into the Catholic Church.

Recently we had a young man visiting our friary who was discerning our way of life; he described himself as an ex-atheist. I asked what happened to bring him to visit our New Jersey friary all the way from the Midwest to discern a religious vocation. He simply said that as he was driving across an expansive field of grain, all of a sudden he became amazed at the beauty of the sky, the sun, the fields, and it struck him in an instant that only the existence of God can make sense of beauty. That was it - he began to believe! Beauty opened his eyes and heart to God!

We speak of God as Truth, as Life, as Love, etc. Saint Augustine, and many Church Fathers, would also call God “Beauty.” Therefore, if God is Beauty, then all that is beautiful reveals God.

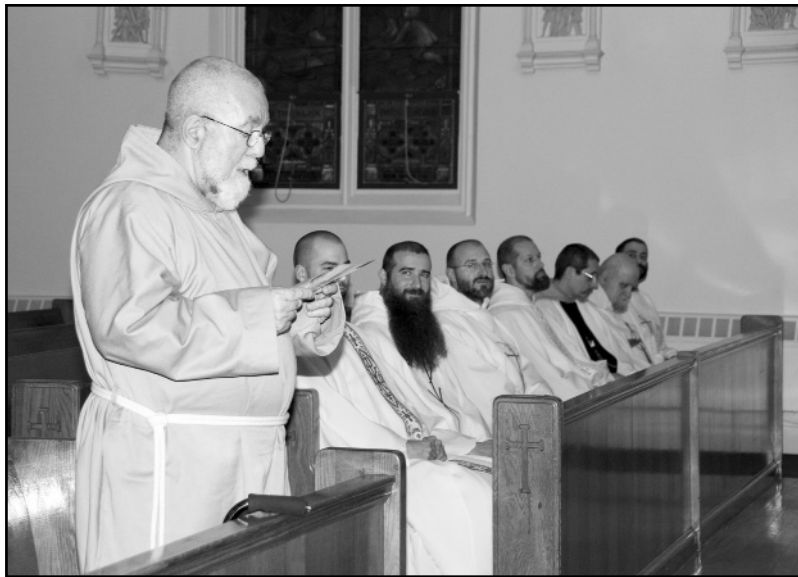
Often I smile when the friars visit one of the nearby cloistered monasteries of nuns. If they have an opportunity to speak to the nuns at the grille, they often have the same experience . . . they fall in love! That is, they see that which is divine reflected in the eyes of the cloistered nuns - women in love with God - and their hearts are touched! Beauty that comes from within radiates beauty all around. True beauty is a glimpse of the divine. Since

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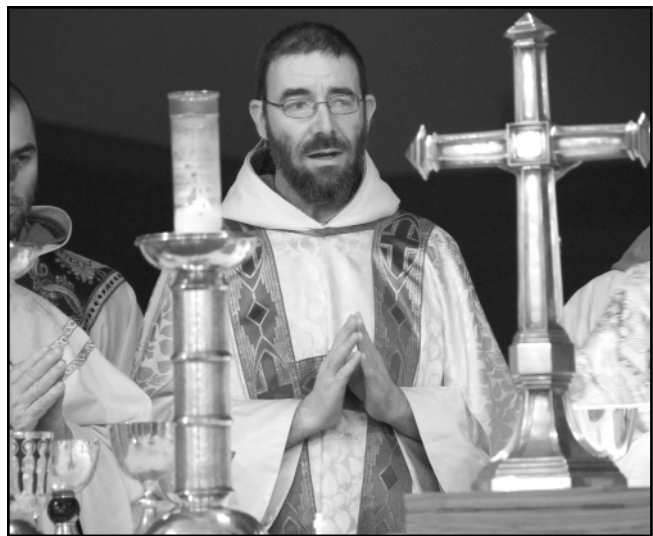




▲ They say that in Texas everything is real big, but not so for the friars' Saint Benedict's Mission in Fort Worth. Yet, for the street weary who receive a cup of cold lemonade and a warm smile, it's big enough! Thanks to the generosity of many faith-filled volunteers who assist in so many ways, the friars are free to fulfill their mission in offering "hands-on" work with the poor. Here we see Br. Matthew Youssef Hawkins distributing fresh pastries and coffee to some of the 200 guests who visit Saint Benedict's every week.



▲ Father James Mary Atkins recently professed his final vows as a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal. After spending over thirty years as a Capuchin friar, Father James Mary brings to a youthful and growing community an invaluable contribution - practical experience! As a finally professed friar, he has been given the responsibility of directing the ongoing formation of the younger friars - a job he does with fatherly affection, which is well seasoned with his Irish wit and wisdom. Welcome home, Father James Mary!



◀ ▲ The newly renovated chapel at Most Blessed Sacrament Friary in Newark proves itself perfect for smaller but solemn events like diaconate ordinations. Bishop Manny Cruz, auxiliary bishop and close friend of the friars, returned once again this year to ordain Br. John Paul Ouellette, who is completing his studies at Saint Joseph Seminary in Yonkers, New York. The diaconate year affords a seminarian time to polish up his preaching skills and closely serve at the holy altar. Next year's photo: Father John Paul in Saint Patrick's Cathedral!



◀ Like a modern day Saint Paul, Father Stan Fortuna brings the gospel message to many places - be they on or a bit off the beaten path! Here we see Father Stan in Uganda at an annual youth festival. Yet not only do the young people look forward to his yearly visit, so do the local clergy who he helps through Francesco International Love Outreach, a new initiative created to assist local clergy in Africa, Malawi, and Poland. For information on Father Stan's extensive apostolate, visit [francescoproductions.com](http://francescoproductions.com).

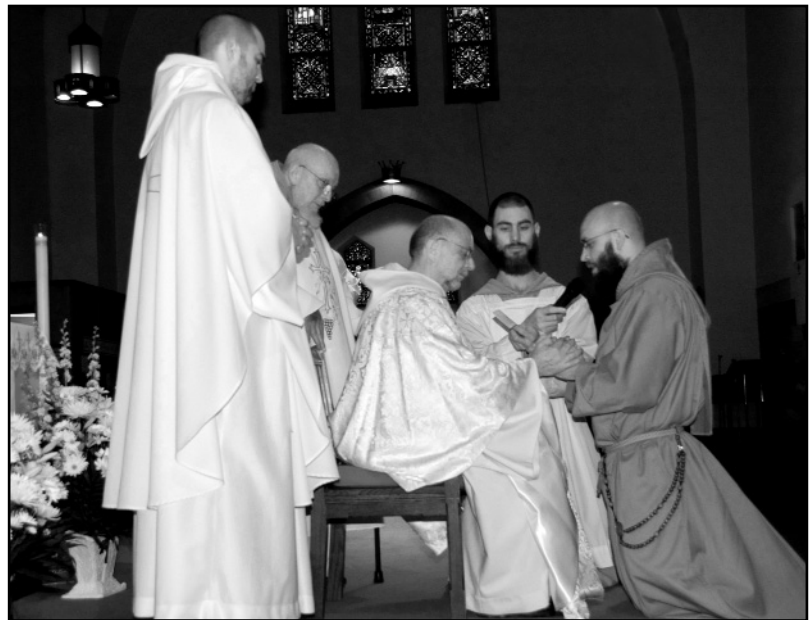
► Not only choir members, but also bikers should hear the gospel! For this reason the friars from San Juan Diego Friary in Albuquerque were requested to participate in an evangelization effort at a biker's convention in Red River, New Mexico. This parish outreach enabled many participants to receive information on the Catholic Church and was even an opportunity for some for a long overdue confession. Posing with some Saint Edwin's parishioners are (left to right) Br. Giles Maria Barrie, Br. Maximilian Mary Stelmachowski, and Br. Andre Mary Manders.



◀ Father Columba Maria Jordan is pictured celebrating Mass with his newly ordained classmates (left to right) Father Sebastian Maria Kajko, Father Daniel Marie Williamson, Father Jeremiah Myriam Shryock, and Father Giuseppe Maria Siniscalchi. Of the five newly ordained, three will be leaving the States to serve the spiritual and material needs of others in Northern Ireland, England, and Central America. Together with their parents, family members and friends, the friars rejoice and thank God knowing that wherever these men serve in their lifetime, their faith and diligence will make that place better and more beautiful than before!



◀ Although the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal were planted like a small seedling in the South Bronx close to 25 years ago, it became clear early on that the community would grow well beyond the borders of New York. Slowly but surely vocational calls would come from England, Ireland, France, and Australia. These inquiries would later inspire apostolic outreaches and then, in some cases, permanent missions. This Grayfriar photo shows a gathering of friars from both England and Ireland at the conclusion of their annual retreat.



◀ We congratulate our eight newly professed friars who made their first vows this past March and are now living and serving in various friaries in the New York area. The spiritual formation and discernment of a young religious continues for approximately five years before profession of perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This Grayfriar photo shows Br. Seamus Mary Laracy professing his first vows by placing his hands in those of Father Mariusz Koch, the Community Servant of the friars.

► Father Luke Mary Fletcher (far left) is one proud father as his former postulants receive the holy habit of Saint Francis and become novices. A new religious name often accompanies the new change of clothes. Let us proudly introduce to you our new novitiate class (l-r): Br. John Ogilvie Marie Larkin (Scotland); Br. Kolbe Immaculata Blashock (Pennsylvania); Br. Ignatius Pio Mariae Doherty (Illinois); Br. Roger Mary Hermans (England); and Br. Damien Joseph Novak (Minnesota)

