

MISSION WEST

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ISSUE 7 ■■■ SUMMER 2012

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Oldest known depiction of Francis

FRANCIS of Assisi: A New Biography

Beloved by people of all faiths, St. Francis of Assisi is a figure of legend and great importance in the history of Western civilization. But how much do we really know about Francis, the historical man of thirteenth-century Assisi? Perhaps the greatest challenge to modern historians is found in the early hagiographies of Francis, those texts written by his fellow friars and devoted followers. In most biographical endeavors, **historians have often preferred the texts of Francis' contemporaries over the writings of Francis himself, or else they have given equal weight and value to these writings.** But

the followers of St. Francis were naturally influenced by their own personal, theological, or political views and motivations. These hagiographies and legends have a unique value within their own context, but they can and sometimes do obscure the historical figure of Francis.

In his newest work, *Francis of Assisi, A New Biography* (published by Cornell University Press), Fr. Augustine Thompson, OP, employs modern historical methods and a meticulous examination of the primary sources surrounding Francis of Assisi to reveal an historical Francis that is as engaging and zealous as the saint of legend.



Francis of Assisi, A New Biography is presented in two parts. **The first part is a biographical narrative, "The Life," which presents the life of Francis as critically and objectively as possible; a story that is located in the context of his times and according to reliable, medieval sources. Though this historical life of Francis is not the stuff of legends, it is also not correct to call this the "real" Francis, as Fr. Augustine is quick to point out. We cannot know the "real" Francis anymore than we can know any human being we have never met (or perhaps anyone we have). The Francis who emerges in this study is a man typical of the thirteenth century, living in the Umbrian mountains of central Italy. Yet his life is filled with spiritual and temporal concerns that run deeper than**

those often depicted in the simple legends, and Francis himself seems a much more complex character, one who was profoundly set upon living his life "according to the form of the Holy Gospel."

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Mission West is a publication of the Western Dominican Province. For the past 160 years, **the Western Dominicans have preached God's truth and served and comforted His people** throughout a ten state region in the American west, Mexico, and at various missions around the world.

Subscriptions to Mission West are free. Please visit our website at opwest.org, or contact the Western Dominican Province Office of Development for more information.

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From the Provincial ...

On November 9, 1912, the Vicariate of the Most Holy Name of Jesus was elevated to the status of a province by Blessed Hyacinth Cormier, O.P., Master General of the Dominican Order. This coming June, the Dominicans of our Province will gather to celebrate this significant milestone in our history. Our Assembly will not simply be a time to celebrate our history, but also to give thanks for our brothers who have gone before us as preachers and to recognize how we have grown since 1912. We will gather in gratitude as we reflect on what we now offer to the Church with our preaching and ministry. Finally, we will come together to look to the future at the promises and challenges ahead.



There are so many brothers who have contributed to the growth and success of our Province throughout these years. Our founders, Archbishop Sadoc Alemany and Father Sadoc Vilarrasa, guided the nascent Dominican community through their prayers and determined spirit to bring the gospel to the Wild West of 1850. Soon they were followed by tenacious men who were willing to sacrifice everything to preach the gospel. By 1912 the Vicariate was strong enough to be designated a province, and under the leadership of Father Lawrence McMahan began the expansion of the Province which now includes communities as far north as Anchorage, Alaska; south as far as Mexicali, Mexico; and west from San Francisco and Los Angeles to as far east as Salt Lake City. Today we are geographically one of the largest Provinces in the Order.

Besides our parish and Newman Center work, we have a number of other ministries. The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley prepares our young Dominican brothers for ministry as well as many lay students for academic and pastoral ministry in the Church. Our Western Dominican Preaching Office provides itinerant preachers to lead parish missions, preach retreats, and offer classes in Catholic theology throughout the West. The Catherine of Siena Institute carries our Dominican spirituality and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council to Catholic laity to prepare them to become more active members in their local Church. There is no doubt that we have done much and have been given much since those rough and tumble Wild West days, yet there is so much more to do; and going forward we will gather to give thanks and ask for the strength to **fulfill our mission to preach the gospel "in and out of season."**

Throughout these one hundred years, the ability of the Province to fulfill its mission to the Church in the West has been made possible through the kindness of our friends and benefactors who have supported us by their prayers and generosity. Please know that as we gather this June you will be in our deepest prayers as we give thanks to our gracious God for what has been, what is, and what is still to come.

Always,

Father Mark Padrez, OP
Provincial

From the Development Director...

Dear Friends of the Western Dominican Province,

Mission West: Campaign for Dominican Friars is now underway in four parishes: Blessed Sacrament Church in Seattle, St. Thomas More Church in Eugene, St. Benedict Lodge at McKenzie Bridge, and Holy Family Cathedral in Anchorage. **Three other ministries, Holy Rosary in Antioch, St. Dominic's in Benicia, and St. Dominic's in Eagle Rock, have set start dates for their campaigns.** I am very grateful to the staff of these ministries, for all of the hard work they have put into this effort, and for the many creative ideas they have chosen to implement their campaigns!



At this early stage, Mission West has raised close to \$315,000 for the Western Dominican Province. These gifts have been designated according to our donors' specified requests. Here is what the disbursement percentages look like:

Friars' Retirement	5%
Initial and Ongoing Formation	10%
Debt Relief	13%
DSPT	15%
Greatest Need	57%

This graphic is particularly telling, as it is clear that our benefactors are especially sensitive to the greatest needs of the Province; and while all of these categories are essential to our ministry, the Greatest Need designation allows us the financial flexibility to address the critical issues that arise.

Thank you again for your trust, for your continual support, and for being such an essential part of our ministry!

May God abundantly bless you.

Sincerely in Christ,


Fr. Daniel Syverstad, OP
Director of Development

Friars' Retirement:

Providing health and nursing care for our aging friars who have served God and His People with zeal for so many decades.

Initial and Ongoing Formation:
Student formation at St. Albert Priory. Providing tuition, housing, materials and sabbatical programs for studying friars.

Debt Relief:

Relieving facilities and buildings debt. In particular, to help offset the purchase and the refurbishing costs of the DSPT school building.

DSPT - The Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology:

Working to advance the education of our Dominican students, the ordained, and lay church leaders.

Wherever There is Most Need:

Allows us the flexibility to meet our most immediate and urgent financial needs.

ASSOCIATES OF SAINT DOMINIC

For nearly three decades the Associates of St. Dominic have been an important part of the Western Dominican Province. Their generous support has proven to be a vital gift, providing for the essential work of the Province and its many ministries. The Dominicans pray for the Associates at the beginning of each month, at St. Albert Priory, and throughout the Province. We wish to thank all who have joined the Associates, especially those who have been long-time benefactors, and those who have renewed their membership for 2012. If you would like to join these special donors with a gift of two-hundred and fifty dollars or more, please send your membership gift to the Development Office at our Oakland address, indicating that you wish to become an Associate, and we will acknowledge your kindness with a Dominican shield pin which you can wear proudly. For those renewing membership, know that you may continue at your original gift amount. Thank you!



Rosary Sunday Appeal

The Rosary Sunday Student Formation Appeal provides significant support for Dominican student formation. Funds from this appeal work to prepare well educated, well trained, and well formed Dominican priests and brothers. As of May 20, we have raised over \$125,000 for 2011-12, with all but one ministry appeal completed. Congratulations and thank you to the many generous friends of the Dominican friars, for their continuing and extraordinary support!

Dominican Life - St. Albert Priory

Fr. Reginald Martin, OP, Prior

EVERY INCH OF ST. ALBERT PRIORY, and every moment of the Priory's life, is a tribute to the generosity of the friends of the Western Dominican Province. This is never more evident than at the beginning of the New Year, when our friends' investment in the future of the Western Province becomes especially visible. Our Dominican students devote time to the "work days" that protect and improve the Priory building we call home. And when those tasks are completed, they return to the classes that will equip them to embrace the challenge of becoming the next generation of Western Dominican preachers.

The beginning of the year is also the time our students prepare to profess the Solemn Vows that will unite them for life to the Dominican Order, and the time they ready themselves for the ordinations that will identify them as special ministers of God's grace in the Western Province's parishes and Newman Centers.

2012 is no exception to this long-standing tradition. On January 28th, the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert's hosted the Most Reverend Salvatore Cordileone, Bishop of Oakland, who placed his hands on the heads of our brothers Joseph Mary Do, Dominic David Maichrowicz, and Ambrose Sigman. He prayed that the young men might be

strengthened by the gift of your sevenfold grace to carry out faithfully the work of the ministry. May they excel in every virtue: in love that is sincere, in concern for the sick and the poor, in unassuming authority, in self-discipline, and in holiness of life. May their conduct exemplify your commandments and lead your people to imitate their purity of life. May they remain strong and steadfast in Christ, giving to the world the witness of a pure conscience. May they in this life imitate your Son, who came, not to be served but to serve, and one day reign with him in heaven.



Each candidate was given the stole that is the sign of his office as deacon - a narrow band of cloth worn over the left shoulder and crossing over his heart. He was then clothed in the dalmatic - the ancient garment reserved for deacons when they assist at Mass or preside at Baptisms or marriages. Finally, the bishop handed each brother the book of the Gospels, commanding him,

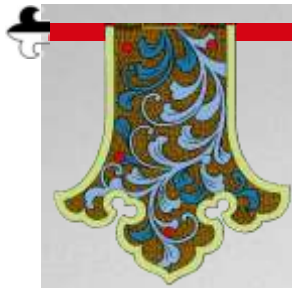
Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.

Each of these prayers and gestures is important, of course, but this final command is, perhaps, the most significant, because our friends will see - and hear - these deacons most often as preachers of God's Word throughout the year of preparation that awaits them before their ordination to the priesthood.

To believe what we read, teach what we believe, and practice what we teach. The elegance of these phrases may hide the seriousness and personal challenge of the deacon's ministry. But the phrases cannot hide the immense contribution our friends have made to the vocation of the young men who have embraced the call to be Christ's heralds. From the moment a student arrives at the door of St. Albert's, our friends' prayers and financial support are essential to his well-being. Each day you provide the necessities of our brothers' lives, and the education and training that prepare them to take their place, as Christ's heralds, among the sons of St. Dominic.

In return, we offer our daily prayers for you, your families, and your intentions. Each day the morning, noon, evening, and night-time hours offer us the opportunity to thank God for the gift you are to us. Our daily Masses, and the special Masses we offer for your concerns, are additional times for us to recall your kindness.

An old legend says that St. Dominic once embraced St. Francis and cried, "You must stand with me, for if we walk together no earthly power can withstand us!" Modern historians - sadly - discount this meeting, but we place our faith in the belief that great souls can overcome the world's ills. With our friends to stand by us in love, Western Dominicans make a pilgrimage in faith and hope into the Twenty-first Century.



Taking On Toto

By Nina Butorac

And Toto Too: The Wizard of Oz as a Spiritual Adventure

By Nathan G. Castle, OP

A VERY DELIGHTFUL WORK coming from our Dominican authors is *And Toto Too: The Wizard of Oz as a Spiritual Adventure*, by Fr. Nathan G. Castle, OP. Here is a fresh, whimsical, and yet a deeply spiritual look at a secular icon, MGM's 1939 classic film, *The Wizard of Oz*.

At first glance, Munchkin Land and the Emerald City would seem unlikely territory for exploring Christian themes, yet Fr. Nathan succeeds in making his case that this cast of characters, who depict some of our finest human traits (and faults), can embark on an adventure through Oz that is not only similar to our own life journeys, but filled with spiritual pitfalls and opportunities.

Boldly honest, Fr. Nathan is not afraid to share stories from his own past as a boy growing up in Groves, Texas, and having to meet the everyday challenges of family, school and gym class, and then later his call to priesthood and the Dominican Order. Fr. Nathan takes the reader through the ordeals of the intrepid characters in Oz, contrasting them with his own struggles, and inviting the reader to reflect on those virtues which might see them through their own adversities. He proposes that a good mind, a loving heart, and a little courage will certainly fortify our journey, but he suggests that there is also one small, seemingly insignificant presence on this voyage,

'I've been a preacher my whole adult life. But most of it's been with people who come to church. It feels like time to get out of the pulpit. As much as I like the choir, I've been preaching to them for a long time.'

a title figure who never fails us, is ready to rescue us from great evil, and who is faithful, loyal, and true.

When asked about the title of his book, Fr. Nathan gives it all away: "...the Word became flesh and made His dwelling in us, and we have seen God's glory.' (1 John 1: 1, 14) I believe God became enfleshed, became human in the person of Jesus. He is simply love, as all of us are when we are stripped of every title and role. We're each a beautiful gift of God, enfleshed. I see Toto as godly, like Jesus. Toto is love enfleshed. He is at home everywhere. He'll be with you whether you're at home, running away or trying to find your way when nothing looks familiar."

But why *The Wizard of Oz*? In this day and age, the movie seems so mild, a child's tale, and a film that is hardly up to the visual caliber of today's

computer-generated cinema. However, there are those of us (of a certain age) who remember when the television event of the year was the airing of *The Wizard of Oz*. Neighborhood children gathered in the living room of that one family on the block who owned a color TV - whether we liked the kids who lived there or not, and usually not! For many of us, *The Wizard of Oz* is a tale permanently etched in our hearts.

Fr. Nathan knows this. He writes: "I am a preacher; the point of preaching is to communicate good news to people. To do that, one first has to gain their attention, and with God's help one hopes to be invited into their hearts. I pay attention to anything that people take to heart. So many people have invited this story and these characters into their hearts. I want to know why."

If you want to know why, remember, it's always best to start at the beginning! *And Toto Too* is available through Good Dog Outreach at andtoto.org, on Amazon.com, or through your favorite bookseller.



Nathan G. Castle, O.P. is originally from Groves, Texas. He graduated from Trinity University in San Antonio and entered the Dominican order in 1979. Father Nathan received MA and MDiv degrees from the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley, and has served in campus ministries in California and Arizona for the last twenty-two years. He came to Stanford in 2007 and currently serves as Pastor/Director of the Catholic Community there.

Continued from Page 1

The second half of this new biography gathers the surviving evidence of Francis' life in Assisi and presents a very authoritative yet readable survey of the source texts. Fr. Augustine approaches the question of these sources carefully, noting that the question of partisanship and bias must be raised when working with material of this kind. And while this does not render the source materials fiction ("though some are" he insists), "it does mean that every source must be read with its purpose, author, and audience in mind." By applying this meticulous method to the well-known stories of St. Francis, as well as to his own "Life" of Francis presented in Part I, Fr. Augustine succeeds in delivering a thoroughly unique, crisp, and authentic biography of Francis (*a new biography* in the best sense of the word) as "real" as we may ever be blessed to uncover.

You can order *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* through Cornell University Press at cornellpress.cornell.edu, or from your favorite bookseller.



As I have worked on this biography, my respect for Francis and his vision has increased, and I hope that this book will speak to modern people, believers and unbelievers alike, and that the Francis I have come to know will have something to say to them today.

- Fr. Augustine Thompson, OP

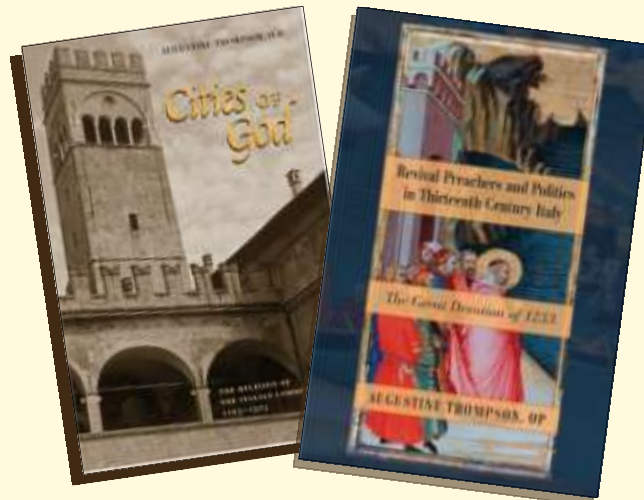
FR. AUGUSTINE THOMPSON was raised in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, and educated in the Hastings Public School system. He credits his interest in Church history to his mother, who loved history and cultivated a deep personal piety. After college in Baltimore, MD, he went to California to pursue a doctorate in medieval history at the University of California, Berkeley, where he met the Western Dominicans, and entered the novitiate in 1977. He ascribes his vocation to religious life to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and his love for the Church to Saint Augustine of Hippo, whose name he took as a Dominican novice. Upon his ordination in 1985, he went to Bologna, Italy, to do research for his dissertation. Fr. Thompson returned from Italy and taught in the history department at the University of California, Berkeley (1988-89); the religious studies department at the University of Oregon (1990-1999), where he also served as department chair; and, finally, as Professor of Religious Studies and History at the University of Virginia (1999-2009), where he was director of the doctoral program in Religious Studies. He has served as the director of the Newman Center at Oregon State College and assistant pastor of Our Lady of the Mountain Church in Ashland, Oregon, 1989-88. After nearly 25 years of teaching in secular institutions, Fr. Thompson accepted the offer of a position to teach at the DSPT, where he has been teaching since 2009.



Two Other Works by Augustine Thompson, OP

In *Cities of God*, Augustine Thompson gives a voice to the forgotten majority - orthodox lay people and those who ministered to them.

Thompson positions the Italian republics in sacred space and time... He takes the reader through the rituals and celebrations of the communal year, the people's corporate and private experience of God, and the "liturgy" of death and remembrance. In the process he challenges a host of stereotypes about "orthodox" medieval religion, the Italian city-states, and the role of new religious movements in the world of Francis of Assisi, Thomas Aquinas, and Dante.



Revival Preachers and Politics in Thirteenth Century Italy: The Great Devotion of 1233
Fr. Augustine Thompson delves into the "Great Devotion" of 1233, analyzing its legal, social, political and devotional contribution to the politics of thirteenth-century Italy. Writing in a lively style, Thompson leads the reader into the complex life of the commune, and shows how the preachers of this revival used preaching as a political springboard into direct political involvement, adapting aspects of the Roman Law in developing and revising city statutes and procedures for legal mediation, and toward social harmony.

TRANSITIONS



Photo by Fr. LaSalle Hallissey, OP

IN MEMORIAM

Br. Raymond Charles Bertheaux, OP
November 22, 2011

Fr. Bede Francis Eugene Wilks, OP
November 25, 2011

Fr. Thomas More McGreevy, OP
February 3, 2012

*Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord;
and let Perpetual Light shine upon them.
May their souls and all the souls
of the faithful departed,
through the Mercy of God, rest in peace.*

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Holy Rosary, Portland
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PhD Studies at Notre Dame

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Fr. Emmerich Vogt, OP
St. Dominic, Los Angeles
Western Dominican Preaching

Br. Christopher Wetzel, OP
St. Dominic, Benicia
Residency Year

Fr. Bernhard Blankenhorn, OP
Assigned: Blessed Sacrament, Seattle
Living and Teaching at the Angelicum
Rome

PRESBYTERATE ORDINATIONS May 26, 2012

Fr. Emmanuel Taylor, OP



Antigua, Guatemala

CORRECTIONS

Fr. David Orique, OP was inadvertently left out of the Transitions Page of our Fall 2011 Issue. Fr. David was assigned to St. Thomas Priory in Providence, RI, and is teaching at Providence College. We regret the error.

- Ed.



Province of the Holy Name
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Prayer of St. Dominic

May God the Father
who made us bless us.

May God the Son
send his healing among us.

May God the Holy Spirit move within us and
give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with, and
hands that your work might be done.

May we walk and preach the Word of God to all.

May the angel of peace watch over us and lead us
at last by God's grace to the Kingdom.

A men.

