



Franciscan CONNECTIONS

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Following the Example of the Sultan and the Saint

by Sister Rita Goedken, OSF

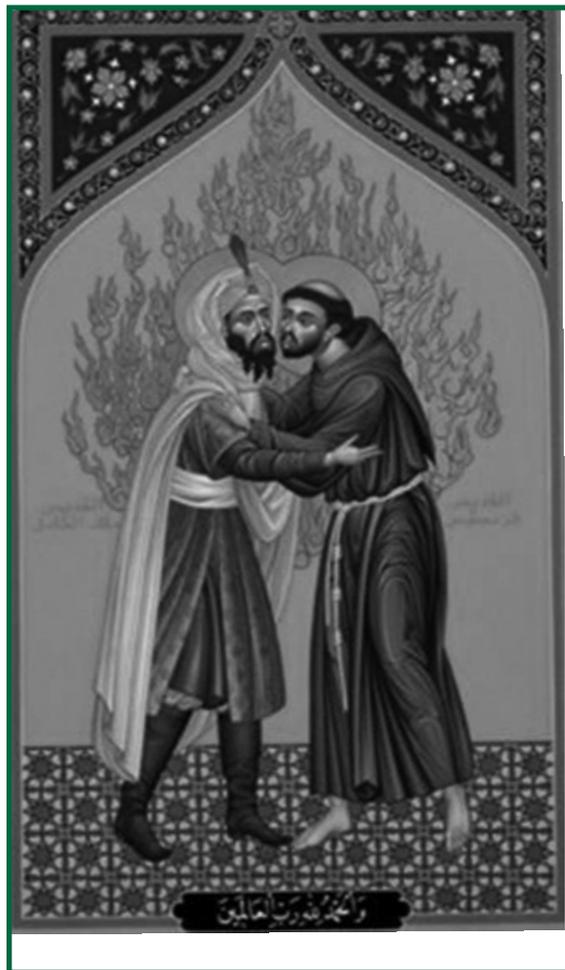
2019 marks the 800th anniversary of a remarkable and powerful event in the life of St. Francis of Assisi. This saint is known throughout the world, but relatively few know of his courageous, faith-filled decision to cross “enemy lines” and enter peacefully into the camp of Sultan Malik al-Kamil near Damietta, Egypt.

When Christian armies from across Europe embarked on the Fifth Crusade in 1219, their stated goal was to recapture the holy city of Jerusalem.

Francis knew something about war, for he himself, as a young man before his conversion, had fought in the battle of Collestrada, hoping to win glory. He not only saw the killing and maiming that violence inflicts, he also suffered the trauma of imprisonment.

God’s grace worked in Francis, leading him out of his desire for glory, urging him to separate from the wealth and the social connections that called young men to war, inspiring him to leave violence behind, and calling him to be a peacemaker and to share the Gospel of Jesus.

Over the years, Francis began every sermon he preached with, “The Lord give you peace!” It was a greeting God had revealed to him. He taught his followers to love their enemies as Jesus taught, perhaps the most difficult lesson of all.



“St. Francis and the Sultan” © Icon by Brother Robert Lentz, OFM -- 2006. Courtesy of Trinity Stores, www.trinitystores.com.

After the Crusader armies had arrived in Egypt, Francis and a few companions also sailed for Egypt and arrived at the Crusaders’ camp. The Crusaders were fighting the Muslim armies at a time when, sadly, Muslims were demonized. Dismay and profound sadness filled Francis’ heart as he saw the ugliness and extent of the suffering, death, and destruction caused by both sides of the conflict. Francis urged the Crusaders not to engage in battle for Damietta. The Sultan, in a willingness to make peace, offered to return Jerusalem to the Christians, and to rebuild the shattered walls of the city. As the leaders of the Crusade considered his offer, Francis asked permission to leave the Crusaders’ camp to meet with the Sultan.

It was considered an outrageous idea, but he persisted in his request and was finally granted it.

What did St. Francis hope to do by meeting with the Sultan? Certainly he would have given his customary greeting of peace. To

the Muslim guards who forcefully stopped him, he declared, “We are ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Amazingly, Sultan Malik al-Kamil agreed to see Francis, who stayed in the Muslim camp for several days, sharing the Gospel, engaging in dialogue, and experiencing Muslim hospitality. Francis had not come to argue, to level insults, nor to criticize the Muslim leader or his beliefs. He had come as a man

Continued on next page

Following the Example of the Sultan and the Saint continued

of peace who deeply desired to share the saving love of God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It seems that the Sultan, a learned man, recognized this visitor as a holy man and engaged him in dialogue.

Francis, for his part, observed how the Sultan prayed five times a day, how the people were called publicly to raise their voices in praise of God the Merciful One. Francis must have been impressed with the Muslims' Ninety-Nine Most Beautiful Names for God, for he seems later to have incorporated many of those beautiful names in his "Praises of God," written on Mount LaVerna. After

several days in the Muslim camp, Francis was given safe escort back to the Crusaders' camp by Sultan Malik el-Kamil's men. He soon returned to Italy.

Separated by culture, faith, and language, St. Francis and Sultan Malik al-Kamil engaged in peaceful dialogue even in the midst of war. What a shining example this is for our time when world conflicts rage or when groups of people are maligned. The respect, tolerance, and openness which Francis and the Sultan showed each other are a wonderful model. These two men encourage us even now to follow their example: to always respect the other. ■

Tri-State Coalition Against Human Trafficking Announces Hotel Training; Inspires Iowa Lawmakers

On January 11, 2019 -- the National Day of Awareness about Human Trafficking -- the Tri-State Coalition Against Human Trafficking and Slavery kicked off its local campaign to train staff of the Dubuque area hotel and motel industry to recognize the signs of human trafficking. At a press conference at the Grand Harbor Resort in Dubuque, the group presented a certificate to the hotel for being the first to complete the training.

This initiative is being completed in conjunction with the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery, and the Coalition on Human Trafficking of Omaha, Nebraska.

"Our goal is to help employees realize, recognize and respond appropriately when they see signs of trafficking," said Sister Mira Mosle, BVM, of the Tri-State Coalition.

Personnel of more than 100 lodgings in Iowa have already been trained. The main authors of the program are retired state and federal law enforcement personnel who have investigated and prosecuted sex trafficking cases in Iowa and Nebraska.

"Because human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal activity in the world, the coalition does its small part by focusing on education and by raising awareness of this activity," said Dubuque Franciscan Sister Mary Lechtenberg.

This initiative by the Tri-State Coalition Against Human Trafficking and Slavery, which includes Dubuque Franciscan Sisters Mary Lechtenberg and Lou Ann Killburg and Associates Lisa Schmidt and Deb Albert, inspired Iowa State Representatives Chuck Isenhart and Lindsay James to introduce a



The subcommittee of the Tri-State Coalition Against Human Trafficking, which includes Sister Mary Lechtenberg, OSF, (left) meets with Iowa Representatives Chuck Isenhart and Lindsay James (back center).

bill (HF 455) to the state floor that would make it mandatory for hotels doing business with government officials to train their staff on how to spot signs of human trafficking and report suspicious activity.

"Addressing this human slavery in Iowa is a priority, so we can show we are serious by using our power to spend public money in a way that supports our values," said Chuck. "We have seen progress by concerned parties in the trucking services industries. I think we can fairly ask leaders in hospitality services to join the effort in a concerted way."

In order to continue qualifying to serve state and local governments and public employees, hotels and motels would have to complete the requirement by January 2022. The certification would have to be updated every two years for new employees.

The State of Iowa would maintain a public database of qualified facilities, and lodgers would be able to display signs and otherwise advertise a seal of certification. ■

Statement of Accountability

Since our Development Office was established in 1996 we have insisted that “*gratitude*” was the foundation of all we did in order to stay in touch with our families, friends, former students, colleagues and benefactors.

We hear so often of the gratitude you have for the ministry of the Dubuque Franciscans, today and over the past decades in your life.

We trust that you know how very grateful the Dubuque Franciscans are for your support of our lives and ministries.

We promise you a remembrance in our prayers!



Sister Cathy (Kate) Katoski, OSF

Last year factors beyond our control prevented us from producing and mailing an Annual Report listing the names of all donors for the year. We have considered listing the report on our website, but are aware that many people don't want their name or connections added to the web. Thus we have chosen to be transparent in this fashion as to our 2018 sources and uses of funds in our Development Office.

DONOR DESIGNATION OF GIFT INCOME

For the needs of retired sisters	\$ 100,998.09
For ministry among poor people	\$ 6,664.30
For wherever our need is greatest	\$ 336,104.54
Birdies for Charity	\$ 18,806.02
Estate Gifts	\$ 501,477.32
Sister Water Project	\$ 290,143.95
	<u>\$1,254,194.22</u>

HOW YOUR GIFTS WERE DISTRIBUTED

By the Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque

Ministry Fund	\$ 100,785.03
Operations	\$ 334,004.38
Birdies purchases	\$ 18,806.02
Sister Water Projects	\$ 290,143.95
Investments	\$ 510,454.84
	<u>\$1,254,194.22</u>

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Mission Statement of the Dubuque Franciscans

Rooted in the Gospel and in the spirit of Francis and Clare, the Sisters of St. Francis live in right relationship with all creation.



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Franciscan Common Venture Seeks Volunteers

The Franciscan Common Venture program is seeking volunteers for its service sites.

The 2019 Common Venture sites include Dubuque, Waterloo, Sioux City, in Iowa; Winnebago, Nebraska; South Bend, Indiana; Busby, Montana; and Morton and Okolona, Mississippi. Volunteer opportunities range from working in a community garden to tutoring children.

There are also one-day service opportunities available in Sioux City, Waterloo, and at Convivium Urban Farmstead in Dubuque.

Franciscan Common Venture is a volunteer program that provides the opportunity for men and women 20 years and older to contribute their time, talents, and commitment in service among people who are poor. Volunteers are asked to contribute a stipend to help cover food and housing costs and are also responsible for their own costs traveling to and from the volunteer sites.

For more information about the service opportunities and sites and also how to apply, visit www.osfdbq.org/commonventure. Contact Common Venture Coordinator Sister Michelle Balek, OSF, at balekm@osfdbq.org or (563) 583-9786.



Sister Erika Calderon helps tutor a little boy in Morton, Mississippi. Photo by Sister Rita Goedken.