

***Praying with Francis of Assisi*, by Joseph Stoutzenberger and John Bohrer (Saint Mary's Press, 1989) 105 pp.**

This little prayer book in the Companions for the Journey series offers a banquet for the spirit. It invites you to savor the life of Saint Francis, to reflect on his sayings, and to grow close to God by meditating on Franciscan values.

Each of its fifteen chapters has a single theme—the central place of the Gospels, holy poverty, the good sense of foolishness, blessed peace, courtesy, right action, simplicity, serving our neighbors, littleness, glorious nature, humility, the church, struggle, worship, and joy. An opening prayer leads to a story from the life of Francis, to some of his words, then to a modern reflection and several suggestions for meditation. Finally, the reader listens to Jesus' words on the topic and offers a closing prayer. Many chapters also include an evocative line drawing by Elaine Kohner.

Here, as a sample, are Francis's words from the chapter on serving our neighbors:

“This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance. When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure; but then God himself led me into their company, and I had pity on them. When I had once become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me.”

You can find this book in the Prayer (PR) section of the Contemplative Outreach Lending Library in Grace Episcopal Church 514 E. Argonne Drive, Kirkwood, MO 63122. When you visit the library, just to the left of the main entrance, you will find yourself in a large, pleasant room with wooden shelves along one wall. Turn on the lights and enjoy yourself among the books!