

***Assisi Pilgrimage: Walking in Faith With Francis and Clare***  
**set for September 14 release date on ABC-TV affiliates**

(Washington, DC - August 25, 2008) - The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will release *Assisi Pilgrimage: Walking in Faith With Francis and Clare* to ABC-TV affiliates on Sunday, September 14, it was announced by Fr. Dan Kroger, OFM, CEO & Publisher of Saint Anthony Messenger Press. Produced by Franciscan Communications and Feed the Fire Foundation, *Assisi Pilgrimage* takes viewers on a spiritual journey to the key sites in the lives of Saints Francis and Clare. This hour-long documentary is part of the "Vision & Values" series, sponsored by the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission, of which the USCCB is a member. Broadcast of *Assisi Pilgrimage*, which is close-captioned, is at the discretion of the local ABC station as a public service. Go to: [www.interfaithbroadcasting.com](http://www.interfaithbroadcasting.com) for more information on local broadcast dates and times.

For nearly a millennium, Saints Francis and Clare have offered a message of spiritual nourishment for millions that transcends time, place, race, religion, politics and culture. By blending the experiences of various pilgrimage groups, *Assisi Pilgrimage* conveys the universal appeal and affect of traveling to these sacred places. "I've only been here a few days now, but I already feel like a different person," says pilgrim Christopher Leone.

The release of *Assisi Pilgrimage* anticipates the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009 of Pope Innocent III's official recognition of the original inspiration of Francis. Today's Franciscan orders of religious and secular men and women will mark this anniversary and celebrate God's grace-filled call to both Francis and Clare in the coming year.

Born in 1181/2 to a wealthy cloth merchant family in Assisi, Francis was a pleasure-loving youth who longed to be a knight. However, an encounter with God in the dilapidated Church of San Damiano, just outside of Assisi, dramatically altered that dream. Francis broke with his family in order to follow God's call to "rebuild my church." A decade after establishing the Franciscan Order, Francis made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1219 and was respectfully received by Sultan Malek-al-Kamil. Renowned for his poetry, his love of animals and for making available to the common people the live Christmas Nativity scene, Francis died in 1226 and was canonized in 1228. He is the patron saint of the environment, animals, birds and Italy.

Clare of Assisi (1193/4-1253) was also born into a wealthy Assisi family – one of the most prominent noble families of the commune. Clare's own deep spirituality found an echo in the life and message of Francis. She left behind her claim to nobility, risking her family's anger to become part of the new Gospel movement. Today, along with Saint Francis, she is recognized as the co-foundress of the Franciscan Movement. The first woman to write her own Rule of Life, Clare was canonized in 1255.

"Francis and Clare have captured people's imagination since the very beginning of their respective vocations. They could have had comfortable lives in the medieval society of Assisi, but chose to answer God's call to live among and serve the least in that society," remarks Greg

Friedman, OFM, the documentary's writer and director. "The college and high school students we met on pilgrimage are particularly moved by their courage to live the Gospel."

Executive Producer Domenick Morda, a retired businessman, was eager to bring the message of the Franciscan movement and the Assisi pilgrimage experience to a secular audience. "Assisi symbolizes peace, non-violence and universal brotherhood and the message is as timely today as it was 800 years ago."

The broadcast of *Assisi Pilgrimage: Walking in Faith With Francis and Clare* is made possible by the USCCB's Catholic Communication Campaign, which creates media projects to share the Good News. To view a clip of the program, go to: [www.usccb.org/video](http://www.usccb.org/video).

Other members of the Interfaith Broadcasting Commission members are the National Council of Churches, the New York Board of Rabbis, the Reformed Judaism and the Islamic Society of America. The documentaries, produced by the individual faith groups, explore how religious beliefs are lived in today's society.

Franciscan Communications, a part of St. Anthony Messenger Press, is a ministry of the Franciscan Friars (OFM) of St. John the Baptist Province, Cincinnati, Ohio.

To purchase a DVD of the program, or for more information please go to: [www.PilgrimageDVD.org](http://www.PilgrimageDVD.org) or call 800-488-0488.

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