

Letter from Greg Friedman, OFM, writer and director of *Assisi Pilgrimage*

August 26, 2008

Peace!

Fourteen years ago, I made my first visit as a Franciscan priest to Assisi, the home of Saints Francis and Clare. What a thrill it was to walk the medieval streets, to look out on the beautiful vistas of Italy's Umbrian Valley, to visit the tombs of these two saints. During that visit, I was privileged to be in the city on the Feast of St. Francis, October 4, when the streets were full of visitors and pilgrims. But I also recall an early morning walk through deserted piazzas one morning, as the city was shrouded in fog. The centuries seemed to fall away. In the mystery of God, Assisi became a place where the very stones are witnesses of the message of peace proclaimed by Francis and Clare 800 years ago.

As a Franciscan storyteller, I knew I wanted to share my experience in Assisi with others. I've enjoyed the films by Franco Zeffirelli, Roberto Rossellini and Casablanca's Michael Curtiz, which have brought Francis and Clare to life in very personal cinematic visions. In 2002, I was given the opportunity to craft a film of my own which would attempt to tell their story in a different way.

Francis was once asked by one of his closest followers to explain "why was the whole world running after him?" Indeed, the world has never stopped coming to Assisi to discover the unique way to God which Francis discovered. Pilgrims of many faiths—and of no organized religion—visit Assisi each year in pursuit of that way. They flock to the tombs of Francis and Clare to find peace, to find God.

Our team at Franciscan Communications decided to begin with the pilgrims' journey. We became pilgrims ourselves, and walked again in the footsteps of the saints. We soon decided that the faces and voices of other pilgrims could tell the story for us. They would—in effect—become Francis and Clare, but in terms of their own life-journeys. We believe that no one else has attempted to tell the Franciscan story in quite this way.

We're thrilled that *Assisi Pilgrimage: Walking in Faith With Francis and Clare* is being offered to ABC-TV viewers across the U.S. this fall. It's our hope that each of them will become, for an hour at least, pilgrims on the road to Assisi. And may all those who see it be blessed by the Most High God, who calls us on pilgrimage, and brings us home again.

Fr. Greg Friedman, OFM

Writer and Director

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