

# *Conference of National Spiritual Assistants*

## **Secular Franciscan Order**

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*A SPIRITUAL MESSAGE FOR THE MONTH OF JULY 2023.*

### **I WOULD LIKE TO RISE VERY HIGH.**

I would like to rise very high, Lord,  
above my city, above the world, above time.  
I would like to purify my glance and borrow your eyes.

I would understand that nothing is secular,  
neither things nor people nor events.  
I would understand that the great adventure of love,  
which started at the beginning of the world,  
is unfolding before me,  
the divine story which, according to your promise,  
will be completed only in glory,  
after the resurrection of the flesh,  
when you come before the Father, saying:  
"All is accomplished, I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End."

I would like to rise very high Lord,  
above my city, above the world, above time.  
I would like to purify my glance and borrow your eyes.

### **LORD, WHY DID YOU TELL ME TO LOVE?**

Lord, why did you tell me to love everyone, - my brothers and sisters?  
I have tried, but I come back to you, frightened...  
Lord I was so peaceful at home,  
I was so comfortably settled...  
But Lord, you discovered a breach in my defences,  
you forced me to open my door,  
and like a squall of rain in the face, their cry has awakened me ...  
I did not know they were so near;  
in this street, in this office; my neighbour, my friend.  
As soon as I started to open the door I saw them,  
with outstretched hands, burning eyes, longing hearts.  
The first ones came in, Lord.  
There was, after all some space in my heart.  
I welcomed them.  
I would have cared for them, my very own little lambs, my little flock.  
You would have been pleased Lord,  
I would have served and honoured you in a proper way, respectable way.  
  
Till then it was sensible...  
...But the next ones, Lord, the others,  
I had not seen them;  
they were hidden behind the first ones.  
They crowded in,  
I had to find room for them...  
Now they are everywhere.

They are too hungry,  
they consume me!  
I can't do anything anymore!  
I can't stand it anymore!  
It's too much!  
It's no kind of life!  
What about my peace?  
my liberty?  
and me?  
Lord, I have lost everything,  
I don't belong to myself any longer.  
There's no more room for me.

**Don't worry, god says,  
you have gained all.  
while people came into you,  
I your father,  
I your god,  
slipped in among them.  
[I am here,  
you are not alone,  
I love you.]<sup>1</sup>**

### **THE BRICK LAYER**

The bricklayer laid a brick on a bed of cement,  
Then with a precise stroke of his trowel, spread another layer,  
And without a by-your-leave, laid on another brick,  
The foundations grew visibly,  
The building rose, tall and strong to shelter people,  
I thought, dear Lord, of that brick buried in the darkness at the base of the building.  
No-one sees it, but it accomplishes its task, and the other bricks need it.  
Lord, what difference does it make whether I am on the roof-top  
or in the foundation of your building.  
As long as I stand faithfully at the right place.

The prayers above of the French priest, Fr. Michael Quoist, are as relevant today as when he first wrote them. They were published in French in 1954 and English in 1964. If you have never read this book, you have missed a spiritual classic and a particular way to pray and enter into a deeper relationship with the Lord.

Quoist was born in France to a working-class Catholic family involved with the Young Christian Workers movement. He began to work after his father's death at age 14. Quoist sought the meaning of life and entered the seminary. He was ordained as a priest in July 1947. His work as a youth chaplain and a writer focused on young people. This book changed my inner life.

Fr John Cooper OFM Cap  
Capuchin National Spiritual Assistant OFS

**PLEASE, DISTRIBUTE THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR FRATERNITY,  
INCLUDING ISOLATED MEMBERS**

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<sup>1</sup> This section in brackets is my addition to the original text. There is a point in our lives as Franciscans living Fraternity when the Holy Spirit wants to expand our hearts and make us more Magnanimous.