

Reflection

Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate
Joliet, IL

Missioning 2026

By: Sr. Jeanne Bessette, OSF — July 1, 2026

Women of Hope in Times of Crossing

Thank God Franciscans are people of joy because who but Franciscans would spend a year contemplating and celebrating the death of the Founder without entering into deep sadness, even despair?

We've entered into St. Francis' dying for these three days together, but of course what we are really commemorating is not his death but his crossing —

from earthly life to eternal life,
from mortality to immortality,
from being bound in time (kronos) to being
freed from time (Kairos).

Have you contemplated this beautiful painting by Kay Francis? Yes, here is Francis whose body has succumbed to death, but what pulls at our attention is the spirit of Francis called to join Jesus in glory.

He crosses from darkness to light. He cannot enter the eternal glow until he enters the night of death. He cannot be lighter than air until he separates from the dead weight of his frail human corpus.

How often in his life did Jesus experience the deep encounter that brought him face to face with Jesus? In the wondrous cross of San Damiano: "Francis, rebuild my church." In the joy of the creche holding the divine and very human child God. In the bleeding hands, feet and side of Jesus on his very own body. His transitus was the culmination of all of these experiences of the God he so loved.

Like some of us – not all – Francis PREPARED for his death. He instructed the brothers as to where he would cross into the next life. He prayed in the Eucharist and he prayed his own very personal prayers. He drew the brothers and Lady Jacopa around him – more to comfort them than to be comforted.

He was PREPARED for his crossing – because his faith told him what and WHO was on the other side. So what is OUR mission in these days of transition, crossing over, preparing for a life that will unfold in ways we cannot imagine?

Like Francis, like Mother Alfred Moes, like the 1000 plus sisters and associates who have gone before us, we too must cross over. We have to be bold like our founders and ancestors, we have to be faithful like never before, we have to hold one another up when someone is losing courage. We have to be willing to bend so that we do not break. We have to take the first steps — and then the second, third and hundredth steps. We have to keep going and we have to accompany each other in the crossings.

Like Francis who didn't cross alone, let us comfort one another, let us be brave with one another, and let us believe in the light of resurrection that will welcome us as we move through darkness of the crossing.

Missioning Ceremony
July 1, 2026
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