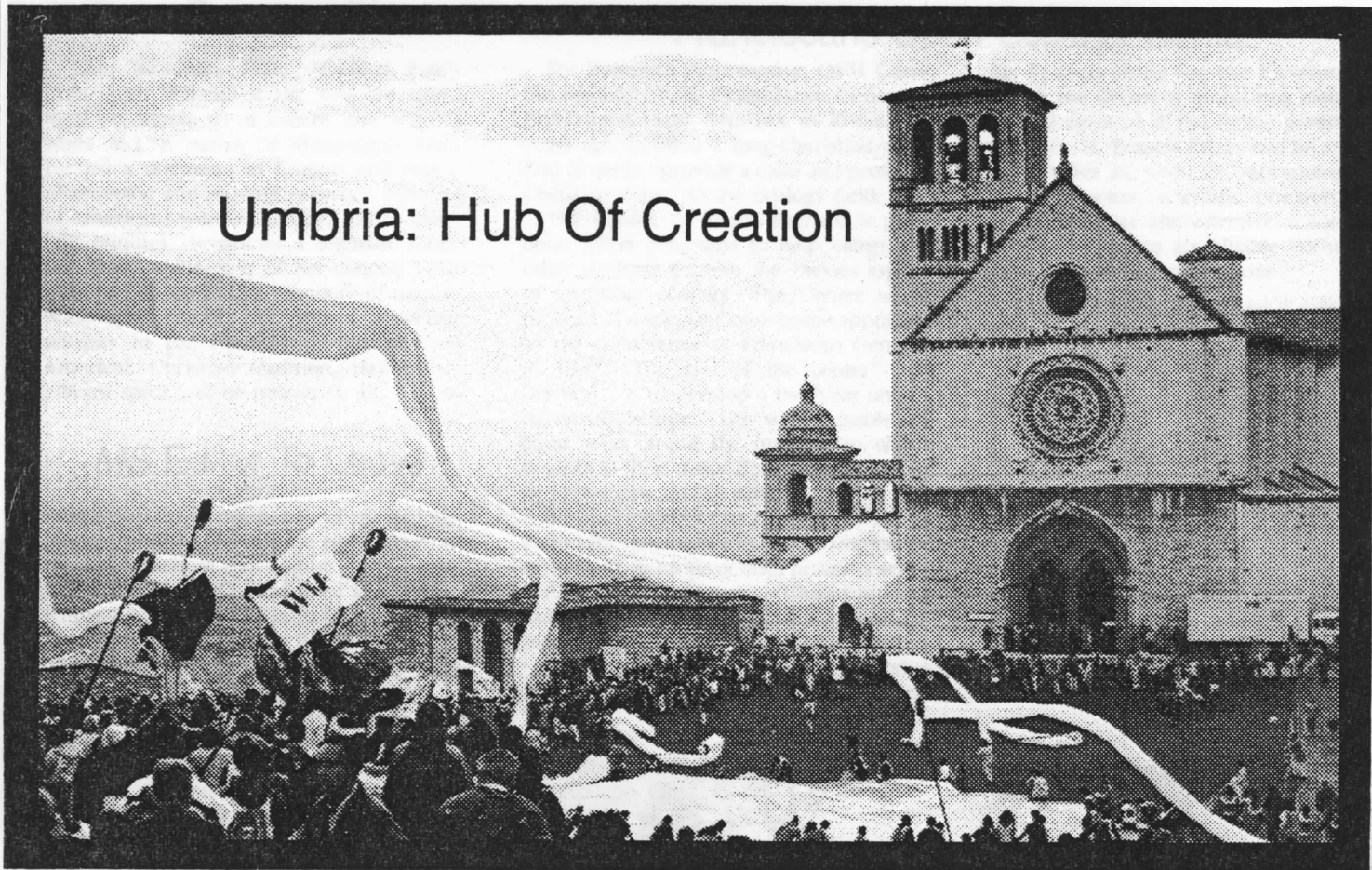


Umbria: Hub Of Creation



M. Franck/WWF

MUSTARD SEED, vol. 7, no. 10 (June, July, August 1990) 5

The land of St. Francis—the Italian province of Umbria—is gaining a reputation as a hub in the growing worldwide movement to protect the environment. The Umbrian city of Gubbio has hosted two **Terra Mater** seminars in 1982 and 1987 (a third is scheduled later this year). Neighboring Assisi was host for the 25th anniversary conference of the **World Wide Fund for Nature** (WWF—formerly the World Wildlife Fund) in 1986. Assisi also hosted the **European Ecumenical Dialogue for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation** in 1988.

The first Terra Mater seminar took place in 1982, honoring the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis. It marked the first formal link between Franciscans and the emerging environmental movement. An international gathering of scientists, activists and Franciscans, the seminar produced *The Gubbio Document*, a world-wide call for the protection of the biosphere.

Participants continued their work by appealing to national and international organizations and government bodies to make choices to resolve the environmental crisis. The Terra Mater group carried out a broad awareness campaign which culminated in the second seminar, held in 1987.

This seminar, highlighting the European Year of the Environment (1987-88), involved the world's great religions, and scientific and cultural establishments. The document it produced, *Gubbio 1987: To-*

ward the Third Millennium, defined a new concept of progress to include a harmonious relationship with nature. This second seminar also created the **Terra Mater Institute**, based in Gubbio, to further the work of the seminars.

The third Terra Mater seminar is planned for October 9-11, 1990 and April, 1991. Its goal is to produce a unified and articulated ethical strategy of caring for the environment, based on scientific and religious principles.

Not far from Gubbio and Terra Mater, in both space and time, the World Wide Fund for Nature International (WWF) held its 25th anniversary conference. The Assisi Event, as it was called, was a pilgrimage, a conference, a cultural festival, a retreat and an interfaith ceremony. From all parts of the world, hundreds gathered in Assisi from September 26 to 29, 1986, to forge "a new and powerful alliance between forces of religion and the forces of conservation."

One of the highlights of the Assisi Event was a pilgrimage of WWF participants which converged on Assisi from four different routes. The pilgrims, who numbered in the hundreds, hailed from all corners of the earth, from New Zealand to Belgium, from Finland to North America. Some hiked from the Arctic Circle, others came by train or on horseback. One group of pilgrims was led by Franciscan friar **Max Mizzi**. Bright vests of Brother Sun emblazoned the pilgrims chests and colorful banners of birds, the WWF panda and the Wolf of Gubbio danced above the crowds.

Pilgrims gather at St. Francis Basilica in Assisi prior to an interfaith ceremony on creation. The ceremony climaxed WWF International's 25th anniversary conference, held in Assisi, September 26-29, 1986.

An interfaith ceremony held at the Basilica of St. Francis drew representatives from the world's major religions. The ceremony was composed of five symbolic rituals from the five great religious traditions of the world. At the end of the ceremony, which marked the end of the Assisi Event, speakers delivered the five Assisi Declarations on Nature. **Lanfranco Serrini, OFM Conv**, Minister General of the Conventual Franciscan friars, presented the Christian Declaration.

Since the Assisi Event, a permanent WWF Network on Conservation and Religion has been established to continue the work of this new alliance of religion and ecology.

In August, 1988, another great assembly of environmentalists and justice and peace activists gathered at Assisi. The event was the Ecumenical Dialogue for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. (See *MS*, November, 1988).

Over 500 participants from all over Europe, as well as guests from around the world, met for a week in the city of Francis to pray, study, celebrate and discuss. The event was part of the process which led up to this year's world gathering on the same theme in Seoul, South Korea. Franciscans played a large role as sponsors, organizers and participants in the event.

Thea Bowman Dies

Thea Bowman, FSPA, *Mustard Seed's* Franciscan Woman of the Year for 1989, died on March 30 of cancer. She was 52 years old. A native of Mississippi, Thea earned a doctorate in English and was a charismatic and moving preacher. Millions of Americans were introduced to her when "60 Minutes" broadcast a segment about her. Despite the pain of her cancer, Thea managed to keep up a schedule of nationwide appearances. She was a powerful witness to the richness of the African-American Christian tradition. Her joyful, vibrant spirit will be missed by all. ❖

MS Editor To Leave

Mustard Seed's managing editor, Stephen Cianca, will be leaving the publication to attend law school this August. Steve began his career with *Mustard Seed* in 1984 as editorial assistant to John Quigley, OFM. He became managing editor in 1987. Steve is married and is the father of a 15-month-old son.

At present time there are no plans to fill the managing editor position after Steve leaves. Duties will be divided among current staff members.

Also leaving the staff is John Moores, graphic designer for *Mustard Seed* for the past 5 1/2 years. He will be pursuing a degree in sales and marketing.

Partly in response to Steve's departure and to continuing financial constraints, *Mustard Seed* will reduce publication from eight to six times yearly. Beginning with the next issue (Sept-Oct, 1990), the newsletter will come out bimonthly. *Mustard Seed* expects to realize a substantial reduction of expenses with less frequent publication and the elimination of a full-time managing editor position.

We wish Steve and John much success as they begin their new careers and we are grateful for their years of dedication and commitment to *Mustard Seed*. ❖

Franciscans Open Ecology Center

For **Bernard Przewozny, OFM Conv**, the opening of the **Franciscan Center of Environmental Studies** in Rome two years ago fulfilled a long-cherished ambition of his to "provide a clear and profound Christian voice" in the ecology field.

The Center, of which Bernard is president, offers programs to help clergy and other students explore the various aspects of Christian ecology. The Center is the product of a special Commission appointed by the Conference of Franciscan Generals in 1987. "The aim of the center," says Bernard, "is to develop a two-year university-level institute." This would enable students who attend the institute to obtain degrees in their major field, such as biology or philosophy and in ecology.

Bernard believes that Christianity has an important role to play in the environmental movement, in terms of both practical action and philosophical truths. "Christianity has truths within it which the secular world of conservation needs to hear," says Bernard.

The Center is also engaged in other projects. One of these is the International

St. Francis Prize for the Environment, which the Center is sponsoring along with several agencies of the Italian government. The first St. Francis Prizes will be awarded on October 20, 1990 for outstanding work in three areas: scientific research, completed projects and effective action. Individuals or groups are eligible without national or religious restrictions.

Another project the Center is sponsoring is the construction of a botanical garden in Assisi made up of plants and trees having significance for the world's religions. The first phase of the "Ara Viridis" (green altar) project, already under way, consists of a study of the plants and trees to be included in the garden and an itinerant exhibit with an accompanying volume in English, French and Italian. The exhibit will be ready in 1991.

The second and third phases are the planning and actual building of the Ara Viridis. These phases may be concurrent with the first. The final phase will be concerned with maintaining the garden. ❖



From all over Europe, activists gathered in Assisi in August, 1988 to discuss ways

to work for peace, justice and integrity of creation.

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